The Perceptions of University English Teachers in Japan about Teaching English as an International Language

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of English teachers teaching English as an international language (EIL) at Japanese universities through a focus group interview. Eight experienced full-time English teachers at a medium-sized comprehensive university in western Japan shared their thoughts on the ownership of English, the varieties of Englishes, raising students' awareness, pronunciation models, and cultural input in the English classroom. Most teachers believed that English, which exists in many varieties, no longer belongs to any English-speaking country. Furthermore, they preferred letting their students experience various Englishes in the classroom. But they had diverging opinions on pronunciation models and most leant towards intercultural competence when asked about cultural input in the English classroom. Study results provide some pedagogical implications for English educators, especially in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, and directions for further studies.

Keywords: ownership of English, varieties of Englishes, students' awareness, pronunciation model, cultural input

1. Introduction

For several years, English as an International Language (EIL) has been extensively discussed in the fields of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT). In many Asian countries where English as a Foreign Language (an EFL context) is taught, such as Taiwan, China, and Korea, more research studies have explored this subject and provided some insightful results. As a researcher myself who is interested and experienced in the concept of EIL (Lai, 2008a, 2008b, 2011; Lai & Kawauchi, 2019), I noted the scarcity of research on English teachers' perspectives on this subject carried out in Japan. I was fortunate to serve as a visiting researcher at a university in Fukuoka Prefecture in western Japan for a period of one year. After arriving and settling down in Japan, I had the opportunity to observe how the Japanese implemented English education at various levels as an outsider as well as an insider. I noticed many Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), who were mainly native English speakers with a bachelor's degree, assisting their certified Japanese colleagues at high schools. The ALT scheme is supported and funded by the Japanese government to improve their students' English language oral ability. According to Iwamoto (2016), many Japanese university students are not good at English because high school education focuses on grammar, vocabulary and reading English abilities in preparation for their university entrance examination. She even pointed out that the students' "pronunciation was understandable but unlike that of a native" (Iwamoto, 2016, p. 11). Limited oral proficiency results from inadequate experience in English oral communication; a fact that may have prompted the Japanese government to initiate the ALTs scheme to improve students' English oral proficiency at high school level. Based on my observations, English education at the tertiary level of education is dependent to a great extent on the major norm-providing countries (that is, the UK or the US). Many English teachers at universities emphasise both accuracy and fluency in their students' English ability to equip them with more advantages in their future career prospects. These observations triggered me to investigate university English teachers' perceptions of teaching English as an international language in Japan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Debates on the Ownership of English

Despite Crystal's (2003) viewpoint that the economic, cultural, and technological dominance of the UK and the US in the past has contributed to the extensive use of English worldwide, the ownership of English is an emotionally charged and hotly debated issue (Deniz et al., 2016; Lai, 2008a, 2008b; Schmitz, 2013). On one hand, the English language can no longer be viewed as a cultural asset of one or two countries. Diverse varieties of Englishes exist in the contemporary world (Lai, 2008a, 2008b, 2011) and the number of non-native English speakers exceeds that of native English speakers (Jenkins, 2000, p. 1). On the other hand, the English language "stems from [native speakers], especially historically, and resides in them" (Trudgill, 2008, p. 87). But the later viewpoint does not imply that English-speaking countries continue to own the language they developed in the past, or that they have the right to impose the norms and standards on learners of English. It is more appropriate to acknowledge that the English language has been exposed to various changes throughout the centuries that cannot be attributed to a particular nation.

Despite the validity of this line of argument, the extant research (see, for example, Kacar & Bayyurt, 2017; Lai, 2008a, 2008b; Sutherland, 2012) reveals that teachers of English differ in their views on the ownership of English. Thus they find it very difficult to come to terms with the choice of an appropriate teaching model or strategy. But students, based on the study done by Lai (2014), share a common vision on the ownership of English, namely that the English language does not belong to any of the English-speaking countries. Lai's findings (2014) are consistent with the opinions expressed by Holliday (2005), Lai (2011), and Widdowson (1994), who acknowledge that it is wrong to label the English language as the possession of the UK or the US on the premise that the colonial past provided these countries with the power to develop and spread specific language standards. Holliday (2005, p. 1) further claims that the standards created in the past are "no longer connected in a unitary way with an English-speaking West or its cultures." Moreover, the accuracy of these standards is debatable since not all native English speakers use the language in the same way, and some native English speakers develop personal varieties of Englishes (Sutherland, 2012). Considering this situation, it is difficult, maybe even impossible, to determine who owns the "larger shares of English" (Sutherland, 2012, p. 179): the native English speakers who conform to the specified lexical, phonological, and grammatical norms, or the native English speakers who adjust their language to the changing linguistic realm.

2.2 Emergence and spread of English varieties

The emergence and spread of varieties of Englishes undermines the ownership rights of English-speaking countries over the English language. The model coined by Kachru (1992, p. 356) clearly demonstrates that English is spoken in countries belonging to three different circles: inner (norm-providing), outer (norm-developing), and expanding (norm-dependent) circles. Although the language norms used in the inner and expanding circles' countries may coincide, varied norms exist in the countries of the outer circle due to speakers' efforts to adjust English to local contexts. As Kachru's (1992) model depicts, newly developed varieties of Englishes challenge the prior division of foreign and native-language speakers. Persons speaking a particular variety of English may be regarded as foreign and native-language speakers simultaneously (Graddol, 2006). Moreover, following Kachru's (1992) model, varieties of Englishes should not be assessed using criteria developed by the countries of the inner circle (McKay, 2018).

Yet despite the need to adjust English teaching to certain varieties of Englishes and not to native English language norms (McKay, 2018), previous studies (for example, Jin, 2005; Lai, 2011; Sachiko, 2009) show that English learners are cautious about the use of varieties of Englishes in the classroom until these varieties are more widely accepted within international academic and business circles. The learners' preference for native English language norms implies that they are more willing to engage in communication with native English speakers than with non-native English speakers (Jin, 2005). Moreover, the preference for either British or American English over other varieties of Englishes results from learners being more exposed to British or American English and cultures through media and through their interactions with people from countries belonging to the inner circle (Sachiko, 2009). In view of these factors, it is understandable why Holliday (2005, p. 2) considers that English teachers will find it difficult to integrate the concept of EIL into their teaching. Above all, it is necessary to stop labelling learners as foreigners who need to acquire native-like competence in speaking, echoing Holliday's viewpoint (2005, p. 6).

2.3 The Shift Towards Intercultural Competence in the Globalised World

While the traditional teaching of English aims to shape a native-like competence among learners (McKay, 2003a, 2003b), the contemporary globalised and intercultural realm requires the development of intercultural competence and the acquisition of language norms to help speakers understand each other (Bhowmik, 2015). Lai's (2008a, 2008b) analysis shows that it is impossible to develop native-like proficiency in a second language (L2) among foreign learners because native English speakers differ in their language competence. Moreover, most English language communication currently occurs between non-native English speakers (Jenkins, 2000). Because the aspirations and needs of these non-native speakers (NNS) significantly differ from those of native English speakers (Graddol, 2006), teachers should shift from native-like English norms to norms which are adjusted to local cultural heritage, learning contexts, and the academic achievements of learners for the benefit of global citizens (Lai, 2008a, 2008b; McKay, 2018).

But English teachers often encounter certain barriers when attempting to integrate new norms into their teaching. They are required to follow either British or American language norms that are prevalent in both the business and academic realms (Lai, 2008a, 2008b). Hence, teachers focus their efforts on preparing students for English proficiency tests and to succeed in the job market, instead of focusing on the development of intercultural competence and shaping the skills of learners to achieve successful communication in different situations (Hu, 2012). However, learners should be aware of certain varieties of Englishes to effectively communicate in specific intercultural communities and to be accepted by the members of these communities (McKay, 2018). The present study aims to investigate the perceptions of university English teachers who teach English as an international language (EIL) in Japan.

3. Method

I conducted a focus group interview to obtain information regarding the present study. However, there are several downsides to focus group interviews. For example, the time and effort required to prepare for a focus group discussion, and to transcribe and analyse the interviews (Dörnyei, 2007; Krueger, 1994). Furthermore, Smithson (2000) points out that the interviews may be dominated by some participants; an attribute also mentioned by other authors (also see, for example, Johnson & Turner, 2003; Krueger, 1994). Despite these downsides, there are advantages of focus group interviews. According to Krueger (1994), focus group interviews are less costly, provide speedy results, and allow the moderator to probe participants for further information. I opted for a focus group interview to rapidly obtain information from "a socially oriented research procedure" as posited by Krueger (1994, p. 34). In a focus group discussion, participants

listen to each other and spontaneously respond to comments, an interaction not possible during one-to-one interviews (Gillham, 2005).

As opposed to setting up a number of semi-constructed interview questions, I approached the study with an open mind to see what findings would emerge. This study adopted grounded theory (GT), with its process of analysis including open coding, axial coding and selective coding as its research method (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). I invited twelve (*n* = 12) full-time English language teachers at a medium-sized comprehensive university in Fukuoka Prefecture in western Japan for a focus group discussion of whom eight (*n* = 8) agreed to participate. Table 1 shows the profiles of the eight respondents. Most respondents were experienced English teachers with a background in English Language Teaching (ELT), Applied Linguistics, and/or Literature or Education. At the beginning of the focus group interview, I, as the moderator, introduced participants to each other, obtained their verbal consent to record the interview, and assured them of their anonymity. I informed them of the aim of the study and how the interview would proceed. I had pre-prepared some probing questions in the event of any communication breakdown. These questions included: 1. Their thoughts on the ownership of English; 2. The existence of varieties of Englishes in today's world; 3. Their preferred pronunciation model in the classroom; 4. The cultural input they preferred to adopt in the classroom; and 5. Other thoughts on EIL.

Table 1. Respondents' Profiles (*n* = 8)

	TeacherA	TeacherB	TeacherC	TeacherD	TeacherE	TeacherF	TeacherG	TeacherH
Age in years	31-40	41-50	41-50	41-50	51+	51+	31-40	31-40
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Years of teaching experience	1-5	16-20	21-25	11-15	26+	26+	16-20	6-10
Professional qualifications	MA in Arts (English Literature)	MA in TESL	MA in TESOL, PhD/EdD in Applied Linguistics	MEd in Educational Administration, PhD/EdD in Education (Comparative Education)	MA in English Literature	PhD/EdD in TESOL	MA in TESOL	MA in Applied Linguistics, PhD in Applied Linguistics

The interview that was conducted in English in a quiet classroom on campus lasted for about two hours. In the beginning, a couple of teachers did not understand the concept of EIL; however, on further probing, the eight teachers began a heated discussion about teaching English as an international language. After transcribing interview data, I followed the three steps of grounded theory (open coding→axial coding→selective coding) to analyse the data (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). First, I did line by line coding to create subcategories and categories. Second, I identified relationships and connections among categories. Finally, I integrated categories into a GT. I asked two of my colleagues with PhDs in ELT and/or Applied Linguistics to help me define the categories and the connections between categories to limit analytic biases.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows the categories and subcategories that emerged from the interview data.

Table 2. Categories and Subcategories Emerged from the Interview Data

Categories	Subcategories					
	A		B		C	
1. Ownership of English	Belongs to the US/UK	(*n* = 1)	Does not belong to the UK/US	(*n* = 6) *	Not sure	(n = 1)
2. Varieties of Englishes	Many varieties are the norm	(*n* = 5) *	Standard English means American or British English	(*n* = 2)	Not sure	(*n*=1)
3. Raising students' awareness	Students should be aware	(*n* = 6)	Depending on students' level	(*n* = 1)	No need, but will be aware when needed	(*n* = 1)
4. Native English speaker-like pronunciation	Important	(n = 3)	No need	(*n* = 4)	Depending on the situation	(n = 1) *
5.Cultural input adopted in the English classroom	Various cultural elements and customs	(*n* = 7)	Language is for communication, not the content	(*n* = 1) *		

The above five categories (1. Ownership of English; 2. Varieties of Englishes; 3. Raising students' awareness about varieties of Englishes; 4. Native English speaker-like pronunciation; and 5. Cultural input adopted in the English classroom) to some extent align with the previously discussed. But some new themes emerged from the data. These new themes, that provide us with some new insight into teaching English as an international language, are discussed in detail in subsequent paragraphs.

4.1 Ownership of English

One (*n* = 1) out of the eight (*n* = 8) teachers still believed that English had its place in English speaking countries.

Teacher A said*, "Yes, to the US, the UK and some other countries whose first language is English."*

However, most of the teachers (*n* = 6) argued that English is an international language and does not belong to any country or community.

Similar findings were illustrated in Lai's (2008a) research findings. Lai (2008a) conducted a focus group interview with five experienced university English teachers' (*n* = 5) about their perceptions of the ownership of English in Taiwan; two teachers (*n* = 2) felt that English was owned by English speaking countries (e.g. the UK or the US), while the other teachers supported the notion that English was shared by people who spoke it. These disagreements on native English speakers' ownership of English is consistent with many scholars' argumentation (see, for example, Kachru, 1992; Brumfit, 1995; Widdowson, 1994; Jenkins, 2003; Mckay, 2003a).

However, one teacher offered a different perspective from that seen in existing literature (* 1b in Table 2):This teacher argued that English-speaking countries are more powerful due to the advantageous status of their L1, as previously mentioned with respect to the debates on the ownership of English (Crystal, 2003). Of late, many universities are focused on world ranking, including QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. Obviously, main norm-providing countries (the UK or the US, for example) and some other norm-developing countries (such as Singapore) dominate these rankings possibly because English is widely used for teaching, learning and publishing in these countries.

Apparently, English does not belong to any country because there is no governmental institution to control its grammar or vocabulary. It is also true however, that countries whose first language is English are gaining more power. For example, most highly ranked universities in the world are now located in English-speaking countries. More people now speak English as a second language, but this trend also seems to benefit people whose L1 is English. (**Teacher C**)

4.2 Varieties of Englishes

The respondents' thoughts on the varieties of Englishes in today's world emerged as the second category. Participants had divergent opinions about the varieties of Englishes. Five teachers (*n* = 5) said that Standard English did not exist and that the varieties of Englishes were an inevitable phenomenon. As one teacher argued:

Varieties of English are inevitable to make communication between and among cultures more interesting. Culture is reflected in language, and in some cases, the way something is expressed must change to precisely convey its meaning. Having said this, I do think that teachers should adhere to a standard/rule/canon when teaching for consistency. (**Teacher D**)

Another teacher said: *I think that Standard English no longer exists. However, there are many reasons why English speakers are influenced by the two main Standard English types. The popularity of TV entertainment, news broadcasters, music and movies around the world may help to support this claim. The prominence of educational institutions in the UK and the US may also impact their learners with either British or American English varieties.* (**Teacher G**)

The term "World Englishes," which first emerged in 1978, has been discussed extensively in the fields of ELT and Applied Linguistics. The journal of World Englishes is devoted to empirical research on Englishes in various cultural, global, linguistic, and social contexts. However, two teachers (*n* = 2) strongly believed that Standard English means British or American English. They argued that these two varieties provide a convenient teaching model in the English classroom.

Teacher F claimed, *"…considering the rapidly growing number of EFL learners, people need to accept varieties of Englishes. However, American or British English should remain a standard model to serve as a lingua franca."*

Teacher B said, *"Standard English should mean either American or British English because we need an English learning and teaching model in the classroom."*

Controversies related to varieties of Englishes have stimulated several discussions. Lai (2011) found that while 430 Taiwanese university students agreed to varieties of Englishes, they needed a suitable English model (e.g. American or British English) to follow in the English classroom (see, for example, Prodromou, 2007a; 2007b; McMaster, 2008). However, when the teachers were asked about their willingness to let their students experience varieties of Englishes in the classroom, six teachers (*n* = 6) pointed out that their students should acknowledge English varieties. One teacher said:

It is important for our students to know that there are thousands of different accents around the world and many varieties of spoken English besides the typically British and American ones. By providing our students with the opportunities to be in contact with such accents (by attending workshops), we can help them realise that there is no standard and if their pronunciation and grammar is comprehensible, all forms of English are accepted around the world. (**Teacher A**)

Teacher C also claimed, *"I think they [students] should be aware of it [varieties of Englishes]. They will face communication difficulties if they do not know that some expressions are not so widespread."*

Interestingly, the other two teachers (*n* = 2) had different opinions regarding this issue as detailed in the third category of findings, raising students' awareness.

4.3 Raising Students' Awareness

One teacher preferred to raise students' awareness on the varieties of Englishes based on the students' level.

Teacher F said, *"It depends on the level of learners. Feeding introductory level learners with varieties of Englishes might simply confuse them."*

Teacher H stated that students would naturally come to understand varieties of Englishes when the timing was right: *"…not necessarily*

because they need some standards to follow when they study foreign languages. They [students] should learn a variety of Englishes when they need to use it or when making friends from many other countries."

These two teachers' perceptions reflect Harmer's (2007; 2015) submission that English language teachers should decide on the number and degree of the exposure of varieties to Englishes to their students. Furthermore, teachers' mindset affects their way of teaching and how they influence their students. According to Lai's (2008a, 2008b, 2013) research, teachers play a crucial role in the English classroom. English teachers can either motivate or demotivate their students. Students who are uninterested or demotivated may be inspired during the learning process by their teacher. On the other hand, students may be discouraged by their teacher's teaching methods, content and/or characteristics. In the present study, teachers who believed in varieties of Englishes in the world would raise their students' awareness of the concept in the classroom and vice versa.

4.4 Native English Speaker Pronunciation

Iwamoto (2016) pointed out that although Japanese university students' pronunciation was comprehensible, it was unlike that of a native English speaker. In this study, participating teachers had contradictory thoughts regarding the importance of possessing a native English speaker's communicative competence. Three teachers ($n = 3$) claimed that their students should speak like native English speakers.

Teacher H argued, *"Some compromise with their native language is ok. But when communicating with people with different L1s, someone should attempt as much as possible to pronounce English words like a native speaker of English."*

But **Teacher A** had a stronger opinion. *"[it is important for students to possess a native English speaker's communicative competence]... because they should try to follow the phonetic rules of English as native speakers do. They can choose whichever pronunciation they want to follow but I think Japanese people find it easier to imitate British English than American [English]."*

Takahashi (2010, 2014) investigated the attitudes of Japanese learners and teachers of English to ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)-oriented coursebooks and audio-visual materials using questionnaires (717 students and 28 teachers) and focus group interviews (16 students and 9 teachers). In her study, both teachers and students had negative attitudes towards a non-native speaker (NNS) English and did not consider NNS English as a target model that could be used in the English classroom. She pointed out that Japanese high school students needed to pass a university entrance examination that assessed them according to the English as a Native Language (ENL) model. Lai (2008a) also discovered that some university English teachers in Taiwan felt that they had the responsibility to equip their students with a "prestigious" English ability (that is, British or American English) for their students to succeed in the competitive job market.

Conversely, four teachers ($n = 4$) argued that if students had intelligibility for communication, they did not have to speak like a native English speaker. The words "intelligible ($n = 2$)", "intelligibility ($n = 2$)" or "comprehensible ($n = 1$)" occurred five times in their discussions.

Teacher A stated, *"Pronunciation is important, but a near-native speaker's pronunciation is not. If the message is comprehensible and conveyed, then there is no problem in my opinion."*

Teacher C said, *"If students can learn to speak like native speakers of American or British English, it would help them communicate. .... it does not matter which variety. It is not necessary for all students to master native-like pronunciation if they are intelligible."*

The quotations above remind us of the famous Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model, which is comprised of four native English speakers' competences – grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Controversies surround possessing native English speakers' communication ability in ELT; however, many scholars argue that it is immaterial whether a learner can speak like native English speakers in terms of pronunciation and pragmatics (McKay, 2002; 2003a). Alptekin (2002, p. 57-64) even criticised the notion of communicative competence as being "utopian, unrealistic, and constraining." But one teacher ($n = 1$) offered a neutral aspect of looking at this issue by stating (*4c in Table 2):

Pronunciation differences can facilitate or hinder communication. Students need not anguish about "perfecting" their pronunciation so long as their basic meaning is conveyed (for those aiming for basic fluency). But students pursuing certain professions (translators, etc.) can focus on pronunciation more than those not pursuing such professions. (**Teacher D**)

Teacher D categorised pronunciation into two aspects, a basic level in which students could convey meaning successfully and a more advanced level where a student's pronunciation was vital, for instance the English language was required for professional use. The above findings reflect scholars' conflicts regarding the concept of EIL and the ENL model in the English classroom.

4.5 Cultural Input Adopted in the English Classroom

The cultural content teachers preferred to use in class ranged from 1) Japanese culture and customs only, 2) American and British culture and customs only, to 3) Various cultures and customs, including English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. Most teachers ($n = 7$) believed that their students should be aware of different Englishes existing in today's world and would spontaneously provide their students with various cultural inputs in the English classroom. As one teacher said:

"[I provide cultural inputs] because the world is an exciting place, for globalisation and internationalisation, to show that many countries and cultures use English, to show that English is a tool to open many doors in many places, to broaden the students' horizons, etc. I have travelled to and used English in a variety of other countries, and I enjoy sharing these experiences with my students so that

they might one day challenge themselves in a similar way." (**Teacher D**)

Interestingly, another teacher shared a similar opinion but offered a further new angle on looking at this issue (*5b in Table 2). The teacher emphasised focusing on the English language itself instead on different cultural elements.

"People who learn English are obviously interested in travelling and meeting foreigners or foreign cultures of any disposition or another. Moreover, anyone interested in travelling to either the UK or the USA could quite easily encounter several other cultural customs other than the ones which are native to the country they are visiting. Some examples would be eating Mexican food in New York, going to Chinatown in Chicago, London, or Manchester, or simply meeting any of the hundreds of different foreign nationals living in these countries. Both the UK and USA are saturated by the influence of other cultures and foreigners, far more than you would typically see in Asian countries. For example, in London there are now more foreigners than British nationals. Of the entire population in London, just 40% are stereotypically Caucasian British. There are hundreds of other ethnic groups of foreign origins that coexist in peace. This, in my opinion, is the future of every global metropolis. We should not be focusing on one or the other, but on just English in general to communicate internationally. Students in Japan, India, and China, Botswana or anywhere else, need to learn the varieties of Englishes used around the world and not focus on either, in my opinion." (**Teacher A**)

Lai (2014) investigated 20 Taiwanese university students' perceptions of cultural knowledge acquisition in the English classroom through one-to-one in-depth interviews. These EFL learners believed it was not only necessary to have some input from English-speaking countries/cultures, but to also explore various cultures worldwide using English as a communication tool to become global citizens. Likewise, Byram's (1997, 2006) concept of intercultural communicative competence describes intercultural competence as an individual's overall ability to deal with various challenges of intercultural communication, such as cultural differences, unfamiliarity, and the tensions and conflicts that come with this process. We do not need to address various cultures in the English classroom. If our students possess an intelligible English ability for cross-cultural communication, they can survive in any conversation.

Based on the five categories that emerged from study findings, the teachers who supported the concept of EIL were in favour of promoting varieties of Englishes, raising students' awareness of various Englishes, and adopting various cultural inputs in the English classroom. However, the participants were in a dilemma when teaching English as an international language, especially regarding varieties of Englishes and whether their student pronunciation should be like that of a native English speaker. But study findings reveal new perspectives. First, two teachers offered a novel approach to raising students' awareness of the various Englishes in today's world. They argued that the elementary (or introductory) level learners should not experience varieties of Englishes to limit confusion, but that such learners would encounter varieties of Englishes when communicating with people from various countries and cultures. Second, it was the "purpose" of English language use that mattered, and not pursuing native speaker-like pronunciation. For most students, intelligibility is the most important goal when learning English. However, students who want to pursue certain occupations (for example, as an interpreter), require near-native competence. Thus English learners should identify their personal needs, wants, and goals and not focus on whether or not to attain a near-native speaker's pronunciation. Third, most English teachers previously adopted cultural elements from English-speaking countries in the classroom. However, with the development of EIL, teachers have gradually shifted to adopting the students' own culture and various cultures in the world. However, one teacher offered a novel perspective by stating that it is the language that matters and not its cultural elements.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study explored university English teachers' perceptions about teaching English as an international language in Japan using a focus group interview. Although study findings may not be representative of most university English teachers in Japan, they still shed some light on teaching English as an international language. Because I was a foreign visiting researcher at the university, participating teachers were more willing to share their insights with me. I am very grateful for their participation. English teachers face a dilemma around teaching EIL. The majority were in favour of varieties of Englishes, were moving towards a teaching model of intercultural competence, and felt that English is shared by anyone who speaks it. However, some teachers were unsure whether they should let their students experience varieties of Englishes or speak English like a native English speaker. I also faced similar challenges as an English teacher at a university in an EFL context (Taiwan). I think the major problem lies in the English proficiency tests like the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), etc., and the numerous exams in Asian cultures. In Asian countries, high school entrance exams and university entrance exams play a crucial role in their education systems. Chen et al. (2005) even came up with the term "Chinese Imperative Motivator" to illustrate a deeply rooted motivation, or required motivation, in Chinese culture. Required motivation refers to the obligations and expectations to pass exams to become successful. English teachers in many Asian countries may wish to equip their students with the most advantageous skills to qualify for reputable high schools and universities, as well as for their future career prospects. I believe future research should delve into the connections between EIL and assessments. Nevertheless, I would like to make some recommendations regarding teaching English as an international language today for English educators (especially in an EFL context). First, English assessments (tests and exams) are here to stay. As long as there is no EIL or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) model, teachers should adopt an "appropriate" model in the English classroom to equip their students with an ability and skills to complete their studies and enter the job market. Second, raising students' awareness about the varieties of Englishes and the ownership of English is key to moulding them to become global citizens. At the high school level, English teachers can easily show their students that there are various Englishes in today's world through YouTube and social media. For university students, every English teacher should emphasise the EIL concept because their students are likely to meet non-native-English speakers at

work or during travel. If students can respect other Englishes and cultures, their intelligibility will take care of the rest. Therefore, including EIL in teacher development courses at both the pre-service and in-service levels can inform English teachers of the EIL concept who will in turn influence their students.

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