

English as Lingua Franca: Teachers' Perception Toward English Varieties in Teaching English as Foreign Language

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Abstract

English Language Teaching (ELT) in English as Foreign Language (EFL) countries are not far from the concepts of English as Lingua Franca (ELF). This study aimed to investigate how teachers' perceptions toward English varieties in ELT. This study was carried out using a qualitative design with interviews as the instrument. This research involved three teachers of Senior High School in Kutai Kartanegara with different schools, backgrounds, and experiences. There were three aspects discussed; teachers' perception of the native speaker model, teachers' perception of variations of English, and teachers' perception of ELF and cultural understanding. The results showed English teachers still oriented to the native speaker's model since the goal of learning English refers to English proficiency in standard English. However, the teachers were also aware of the English variations which were used globally. This research contributed to the consideration of incorporating the idea of native speakerism and ELF into English language teaching.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception, English Varieties, English Teaching, Foreign Language, Lingua Franca

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid use of English has made English grow over time. In this era, English has become an International Language which is used all over the world with varied uses. English was used not only as a tool for communication, but also in societal needs such as education, politics, and economics (Hülmbauer, 2013; Kachru, 2019). Based on Kachru in (Crystal, 2023), English is classified into 3 categories which are inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle. The classification is determined by the acquired and the use of English in the country. Inner Circle uses English as a first language or Native English Speaker (NES). The countries included the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The outer circle uses English as a second language (ESL). The countries included Singapore, India, and Malawi as well as more than fifty additional regions. The expanding circle uses English as a Foreign Language (EFL) where they teach and learn English because they are aware of its importance. The countries included China, Japan, Greece, Indonesia, and others. Following the outer and expanding circles were not using English as the first language, then the circles in Non-Native English Speaker (NNES). This phenomenon makes English as Lingua Franca (ELF)

which became a bridge for NNES countries to communicate with each other (Santoso et al., 2023).

The concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) refers to the use of English as a common language of communication between speakers of different native languages. In ELF concept, (Rose & Galloway, 2019) revealed the goal of learning English language is to communicate with speakers in different languages, backgrounds, and identities. In line, (De Bartolo, 2014) added in the EFL context, speakers from different linguistics and backgrounds use English based on purpose. Therefore, in this era, the varieties of English have shown since the use of English in different countries and cultural backgrounds (Crystal, 2023; Kachru, 2019). The varieties of English were shown in vocabulary adaptation, word formations, word meanings, collocation, and idiomatic expressions. Cultural elements might motivate the new words as English users adapt the language to suit evolving communication requirements. ELF focuses on the functional use of English as a shared means of communication among individuals who do not share a common mother tongue (Crystal, 2023). As a global lingua franca, English faces two criteria; 1) it needs to be stable enough for people to understand each other, 2) yet flexible enough to be used in various situations and global contexts (Hülmbauer, 2013). Therefore, many NNES countries use English as Lingua Franca, the use of English by NNES has grown and the use of English by native English speakers has turned into a minority (Gunantar, 2016).

In Indonesia, English is learned and used as a foreign language since Indonesia is expanding. In the Indonesian context, multicultural backgrounds from students become challenges to develop English in native context. Sometimes, students still use their L1 to support their ideas, especially in cross-cultural communication contexts. This phenomenon illustrates how English acquisition is dynamic and expands the nature of language learning, especially in countries where English is acquired as a foreign language (Saputra, 2022). In a multilingual context, individuals have the ability to use elements from their various language skills during ELF interaction (Pitzl, 2018). However, some studies emphasized Indonesia's teaching materials were in particular varieties of English which are American English and British English. It was shown by (Santoso et al., 2023), that from EFL learners' perspective, English learning models in Indonesia are still needed to use native speakers' ideology and reject ELF ideas. In line, (Silalahi, 2021) revealed NESs and NNES teachers' perspectives are still oriented to the use of American and British English as teaching models.

However, the ELF idea was considered as knowledge to enrich students' English skills, especially in global communication context. Further, (Ramadhani & Muslim, 2021) revealed teachers in NNES countries were attached to native speakers' teaching model, still ELF concept could still contribute to effective communication in global context. Therefore, English Language Teaching (ELT) in EFL countries is not far from the concepts of English as Lingua Franca. To see the depth of ELF in ELT, this study investigated of teachers' perception toward English varieties in English Language teaching based on teachers' experiences in learning English in Native and Non-Native English-speaking countries.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was qualitative research design which conducted interviews with the teachers of Senior High School. Qualitative design was chosen because this design involved investigating an issue to gain a thorough understanding of a key concept, experience, or phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). This research used purposive sampling which selected the sample from some particular criteria to meet the goals of the research (Dattalo, 2008). This research selected three teachers to be interviewed. The three teachers meet the following criteria: 1) have taught English for nearly or more than 10 years, 2) every teacher has different experiences and backgrounds. The purpose of selecting these teachers was to see ELF teachers' perception toward English varieties, were they in the same perception or not when teaching English as Foreign Language. The details in the table;

Table 1. Participants' Information

Informants	Gender	Background
T1	Male	Has experience studied English in English as Foreign Language country
T2	Female	Has experiences studied in Native Speaking countries
T3	Female	Has experience studied in Native Speaking country

The interview questions were adapted from the questionnaires by (Santoso et al., 2023; Silalahi, 2021). The questionnaires were adapted into open-ended questions for interview to find teachers' perception toward varieties of English. Cell phones were used to record the answer of the interview which was in the form of audio. There were teen questions for the interview. They consist of three main categories of topics. The details are as follows:

Table 2. List of Interview Questions

Categories	Questions	Total
Teachers' Perception towards Native Speaker Model	1,2,3	3
Teachers' Perception on Variations of English	4,5,6,7,8	5
Teachers' Perception on ELF and Cultural Understanding	9,10	2

The results of the interview were recorded through a cell phone. In order to analyze the data, qualitative data analysis was applied (Creswell, 2012). The qualitative data analysis was prepared and organized the data for analysis which was taken for the references. After that, represent and report the results which were changed into transcribed text according to the information needs. Last, I interpreted the transcribed text into findings and discussed the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview provided a picture of English teachers' perception toward English varieties in Teaching English as Foreign Language. The questions consisted of three main categories of topics. They are Teachers' Perception towards Native Speaker Model, Teachers' Perception on Variations of English, and Teachers' Perception on ELF and Cultural Understanding The perceptions were further seen by the following answers to the interview questions:

Teachers' Perception towards Native Speaker Model

- 1) Question number 1: teacher's perception about English learning material which must refer to native speaker's model.

All teachers indicated that they would agree if the material in the English learning subject referred to the native speaker's model because it had standard rules, grammars, vocabularies, etc. One teacher believed English material must refer to the native speaker's model, considering the English speaker model was the standard English that was used to test students' English proficiency. These results are in line with the study of (Rahayu, 2023; Ramadhani & Muslim, 2021; Santoso et al., 2023), the study revealed participants in the studies believed English language materials must be standardized English materials. Standard English which was mostly used in Indonesia was American and British English, the native speaker model was used in terms of consideration of English formal context. Moreover, (Muid et al., 2024) explored students' references to the difference between British and American English, from the study revealed most students use American English preference. It indicates the influence of the native speaker model is still used as a reference in English learning, both for teachers and students.

Still, teaching other variants of English could be an alternative and authentic material for teaching English in the classroom. Teaching other variants of English could enrich students' knowledge of English.

One teacher felt native speaker's model was not an exclusively necessary model for teaching English.

"The material used in an English learning subject doesn't necessarily have to exclusively refer to native speaker models, while native speaker models can offer insight into language usage, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge, the idea of native speaker models as the sole standard for English proficiency..." (T1)

In line, one teacher felt English varieties could be authentic materials for teaching English in the classroom. The teacher provided information based on her experiences in teaching different students' levels and needs.

"For me myself, it would be better if I use authentic material.... as an English language teacher, I have to do SARA, select, adapt, reject and add. And that really depends on my students' level.... if I think they are good enough, I have to upgrade their skills as well..." (T3)

From teachers' perception toward native speakers' model, the teacher argued if the material in the English learning subject must refer to the native speaker's model. Two teachers believed that the material in the English learning subject must not 100% refer to the native speaker's model. They added that English teachers can use other English variations in teaching English. However, the other English variations were only used as supplementary material or authentic material. These results are in line with the study from (Mairi, 2016; Ramadhani & Muslim, 2021), in which the study concluded non-native English material could contribute to English language teaching.

- 2) Question number 2: teacher's perception toward the focus of learning English was oriented toward how students communicate with native speakers.

All teachers indicated that they disagree if the focus of learning was oriented on how students communicate with native speakers only. It should be considered meaningful learning to create successful communication and avoid misunderstanding. The successful communication was when the speakers and interlocutors could understand each other, so the focus was how to communicate with others, not only with the native speakers.

“Not really, I think in the field of Foreign Language Learning interaction has long been considered important in making activities meaningful and leading the learners to a successful situation. So, it's really dependent on how we can communicate, not how we communicate with native speaker's only...” (T3)

However, one teacher added, if the focus of learning English was English as knowledge. Then, the successful communication was oriented to a native speaker.

“Yes, the better students can communicate with native speakers, the more successful they are in learning English..” (T2)

- 3) Question number 3: teacher's perception of must students be able to speak like native speakers.

The teachers disagreed with this question. Even the students were not really required to communicate like native speakers, but the correct pronunciations, and developing fluency were needed to successful communication in English.

“Since we're not the native speakers, we could speak like a native speaker. So, we don't need to sound like them, But it's really important to pronounce the word correctly and then we have to develop our fluency so it could sound like native..... When we could answer and respond the communication, I think that's not a big deal” (T3)

In line, one teacher added that English Language Teaching in Indonesia needed to consider the various cultural backgrounds of the students. Not all students can speak or communicate like native speakers.

“They don't need to speak like native. Students' competence, backgrounds, and cultural differences can be factors which make students unable to communicate like native speakers.” (T2)

In conclusion, there were two perceptions of English communication. If English is a tool for communication, the learners must be able to understand each other when communicating, even if they are not native speakers. However, if English is knowledge, then the communication must be done with native speakers.

In terms of communication, all teachers agreed students were not forced to communicate like native speakers, this research supported by (Ramadhani & Muslim, 2021). As long as the interlocutors could understand the communication, then the students were not necessary to communicate like native speakers. In teachers' opinions, not all students could speak or communicate like native speakers. Students' various cultural backgrounds need to be considered as factors that could influence the way students communicate in English. In line, this result is supported by (De Bartolo, 2014; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Saputra, 2022) where multilingualism was in the field of ELF. Moreover, the analysis of English word pronunciation from (Agustin et al., 2023; Arjulayana & Márquez Martínez, 2022) revealed one of the

factors that influence students' error pronunciation in speaking English occurred because of the effect of students' L1 interference.

In conclusion, if English was learned as knowledge, then the teachers agreed that the main model for English was the speaker's model. If English was used as a tool for communication, then students were not forced to perform like native speakers. Therefore, this study had two different perspectives. Teachers tended to use native speaker model in teaching English as knowledge, and also considered the ELF idea as the contribution in learning English for global communication.

Teachers' Perception on Variations of English

- 4) Question number 4: teachers' perception toward students' ability to know various native English and pronunciation.

There were no different arguments with these answers, all teachers agreed that students must know the variety of native English. Having more knowledge in various native English and pronunciation could help students understand the communication.

"Yes, I think understanding the various native English and pronunciations can be beneficial for students in learning English...." (T1)

In conclusion, English teachers agreed that if students knew the variety of native English, it would be easier for them to get knowledge and understand the native speakers.

- 5) Question number 5: teachers' perception toward students' ability to understand English spoken by native speakers.

To respond to this question, the teachers agreed that students should understand the English spoken by native speakers since native speaker models were used as global tests of English proficiency.

".....if students want to apply for a scholarship they should do it like IELTS or TOEFL so the better they understand the better the result will be....." (T3)

In conclusion, English teachers agreed that understanding the English spoken by native speakers was very important for students. English spoken by native speakers was used as the standard to measure English proficiency such as IELTS and TOEFL. If students used English for academic purposes then understanding the English spoken by native speakers was very important.

- 6) Question number 6: teachers' consideration toward English variation besides American and British English.

There were no different arguments with these answers, all teachers agreed that they would notice if there were variations of English besides American and British English.

"yes.. for the first time I heard about Australian English, it sounds very strange for me because I've never watched any Australian movies.... there are also many others like Canadian, Scottish, Indian, and Singapore English... etc..." (T3)

In line, one teacher added the variations in English arose due to cultural variations and L1 interference since English was used all over the world.

“Yes, because language is dynamic and used by many people. So, it’s very possible if the variations rise up. The variations can certainly be easily noticed, whether in pronunciation, vocabulary and others. Cultural differences and also the L1 interference are also the influence of variations in the English language. For example, Japanese English finds it difficult to pronounce the letter ‘L’ and ‘R’ in English because in their language there are no sounds of ‘L’ and ‘R’ which are similar in English, and Chinese people are used to speaking quickly and many more.” (T2)

Both teachers’ responses regarding this matter were influenced by teachers’ educational backgrounds. Both teachers had experienced studying abroad and interacting with inner, outer, and expanding circle countries. One teacher had studied in Australia, and one teacher had studied in Australia, England, and Malaysia. Therefore, they could easily notice and directly interact with different English users.

- 7) Question number 7: teacher’s perception toward students’ ability to know non-native English varieties.

To respond to this question, teachers agreed that students should know non-native English varieties. Knowing non-native English varieties was very beneficial for students.

“Yes, it’s beneficial for students to be aware and familiar with non-native English varieties..... There are several advantages: 1. Global communication, 2. Cultural understanding, 3. Enhancing communication skills, 4. Professional and academic advantages” (T1)

All teachers believe that if students could understand the varieties of non-native English, they could be ready to use English globally. It was not only for students’ effective communication, but also contributed for students’ cultural awareness, professional readiness, and linguistic skills.

- 8) Question number 8: teachers’ perception toward teaching English using new variations of non-native English.

To respond to this question, all informants had similar perceptions. All teachers thought that it was hard to use new variations of non-native English as a model for teaching English.

“if a new variation of non-native English was used as teaching English. I think that’s impossible. The goal of learning English is to learn standard English such as American and British English. Because standard English has standard grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and is mostly used as an English proficiency test.” (T2)

However, the teachers also considered, if non-native English could be added as supplementary materials in teaching. Moreover, not for the main materials. There was also a teacher (T3) who introduced non-native English variations in her classroom. The goal was to make students understand that there was other English used by non-native speakers with different backgrounds and cultures.

The responses from teachers’ perception of variations of English showed all teachers were aware of the variations of English. The responses were based on their experiences studying abroad, interactions, and information in the media. They believed students needed to know non-native variations of English to enhance their

understanding of learning English. This result is in line with the studies from (Rahayu, 2023; Ramadhani & Muslim, 2021; Silalahi, 2021), the studies revealed even though teachers tended to teach standard English materials, English variations in global communication exist. Thus, the teachers cannot deny the existence of English variations as a result of ELF concepts.

Besides, being able to understand communication with the native speaker, it also built students' knowledge of native English context, especially for English proficiency tests, where the speaker or the context was based on native speaker context. The study (Saputra, 2022) revealed English in Indonesian context was different from NES. Therefore, building communication with the NES by EFL students could build students' knowledge of native English context. In line, the study from (Lengkoan et al., 2022) revealed one of the problems faced by students in listening to TOEFL-like tests was the pronunciation of speakers. Unfamiliar text topics also contributed to listening comprehension problems. Therefore, understanding the communication to the native speakers was important to students.

For that reason, one teacher argued non-native English variations can not be used as English material. Learning English must meet goals to understand standard English and pass English proficiency. However, one teacher added the variations of English arose due to cultural variations and L1 interference since English was used all over the world. The study (Sung, 2014) investigates the perception of Hong Kong bilingual users in ELF. The results revealed some participants used local accents as preferences when using English in ELF context to show their identity as non-native English users. Moreover, the accents were not only to express the identity but also pragmatic considerations. Participants tended to add local context to achieve an understanding of communication between the speaker and interlocutor in ELF context. Thus, from teachers' perspective, English variations both native and non-native English contributed to students' English acquisition.

Teachers' Perception on ELF and Cultural Understanding

9) Question number 9: teachers' perception toward their knowledge of social-cultural context of communication events from a variety of social and cultural perspectives.

All teachers agreed that English teachers needed to know the social-cultural context of communication events from a variety of social and cultural perspectives. Understanding the cultural context from various social and cultural perspectives will help teachers to understand communication and avoid misunderstanding.

"....For example, in Australia, when Australians say 'tea time' it doesn't mean the same as in Asia, where people drink a cup of tea, and eat snacks. But in Australia it is for 'dinner' but they use 'tea time' for politeness." (T2)

The responses were based on the teacher's experiences in Australia. Australian people said 'tea time' to indicate it was time for dinner. At first, she did not notice if 'tea time' meant dinner, because she did not get any tea on her table. After several times she noticed that tea time was not always the same in Asia. Knowing the social and cultural context of communication can help teachers to understand the communication and avoid misunderstanding.

10) Question number 10: teachers' perception towards the need for native tradition and culture to be introduced to students.

There were no different arguments with this question, all the teachers agreed that students needed to be introduced to native traditions and culture. All the English teachers believed that if students knew native traditions and culture, they would understand the language they were learning easily.

“Yes, of course. By introducing traditions and culture, students will more understand the use of the English language. Because from tradition and culture, words/proverbs may be created. Examples are like hubby/lippy. If students understand the existing culture and traditions, it will make it easier for students to remember the word.” (T2)

In line, one teacher added, students needed to learn and be introduced to traditions and culture. Learning English was not only about the language but also the culture.

“Yes, that is why it is important for the students to learn cross-cultural understanding, so when we present, for example American, we could give an example of the culture and compare it to Indonesian culture or any other native languages like British and anything else. So, we could enrich their knowledge not only about the language, but also the culture and tradition.” (T3)

In conclusion, all teachers agreed that traditions and cultures were part of language. By introducing traditions and cultures to students, it would be easier for them to understand the English language.

The responses from teachers' perception of ELF and cultural understanding showed all teachers were aware that English was not only about how to learn the language (grammars, vocabularies, pronunciations, etc.) but also about the cultures. For this reason, (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022) concluded teachers needed to understand Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and its instructional approaches to help students understand their own cultures and others. It was beneficial for promoting the effectiveness of communication in multilingual and multicultural communities. The teachers confirmed they found it easier to teach English when they knew about its culture. Therefore, the teachers could give examples to students on how to use the word or proverb, how they were created, and what kind of situation it was used in. Introducing cultural understanding to students is also beneficial to students to learn cross-cultural understanding and create meaningful lessons. In line, (Gómez Rodríguez, 2013; Hibbs, 2016; Snigdha, 2022) confirmed different cultural awareness provides an understanding of the communication in the language used.

In short, there were two perceptions of teaching English language teaching as a foreign language. First, native speakerism in teaching English as knowledge, the goal of native speakerism was to use standard English which was used in a formal context and measuring English proficiency. Teachers also had a positive attitude toward ELF ideas. Thus, incorporating the idea of native speakerism and ELF into English language teaching could be considered. Therefore, both English proficiency and global communication could be achieved.

CONCLUSION

All responses from the teachers showed English teachers from different backgrounds of school, teaching experiences, and educational backgrounds mostly dealt with the same conclusion. This research showed there were two functions of the English language. The English language is learned as knowledge, and the English language is used as a tool for communication. There were three aspects discussed; teachers'

perception of the native speaker model, teachers' perception of variations of English, and teachers' perception of ELF and cultural understanding.

This research met the final conclusion. English teachers are still oriented to the native speaker's model since the goal of learning English refers to English proficiency in standard English (American and British English). It was also influenced by English textbooks which used mostly American or British English. However, the teachers were also aware of the English variations which were used globally. The teachers believed when students had an understanding of various variations of English and also the cultures, the students could enrich their English to prepare for communication globally. However, bringing the English variations, especially non-native English needed to meet consideration to select and adapt the materials. Thus, incorporating the idea of native speakerism and ELF into English language teaching can be considered. Therefore, both English proficiency and global communication can be achieved.

Next research is expected to develop this research. Next researchers are suggested to increase the number of informants and add both teachers' and students' perspectives. In addition, a mixed-method (quantitative-qualitative) approach is appropriate for the next research to provide depth results.

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