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Critical Issues Around World Englishes: Ownership, Attitudes, And Pedagogical Implications

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Abstract

The emergence of World Englishes has unsettled long-established assumptions about who owns English, which cultures English represents, and whose norms should guide English Language Teaching (ELT). This qualitative narrative review examines two closely connected debates in the field: the ownership of English and the attitudes directed toward localized non-native English varieties. Drawing on foundational World Englishes scholarship and recent work on English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT), translanguaging, native-speakerism, and decolonial ELT, the paper argues that English can no longer be treated as the exclusive property of Inner Circle native speakers. The review shows that localized Englishes are not failed approximations of Standard British English or Standard American English but historically grounded, socially meaningful, and communicatively functional varieties. Negative attitudes toward these varieties are sustained by standard language ideology, colonial residues, native-speakerism, and institutional assessment practices that continue to privilege Inner Circle norms. The paper contributes to the debate by linking classical World Englishes arguments with current pedagogical developments and by proposing that ELT should move from an Inner Circle-dominant orientation toward a context-sensitive, pluricentric, multilingual, and intelligibility-oriented model. Such a shift requires changes in teacher education, curriculum design, materials development, speaking and listening pedagogy, academic writing instruction, and assessment. The paper concludes that recognizing World Englishes is not a lowering of standards but a more accurate response to the multilingual conditions under which English is now used.

Keywords: World Englishes; ownership of English; native-speakerism; non-native varieties; English as an International Language; English as a Lingua Franca; Global Englishes Language Teaching; English Language Teaching.

Introduction

English was once associated primarily with a limited group of native-speaking territories, yet its contemporary use extends across almost every region of the world. Crystal (2011) estimated that the number of non-native users of English substantially exceeds the number of native users, and this demographic imbalance has changed the sociolinguistic status of the language. English is now used for international trade, education, migration, digital communication, diplomacy, tourism, higher education, and intercultural exchange. A large proportion of these interactions occur among bilingual or multilingual speakers who do not share English as a first language. This situation makes it increasingly difficult to treat English as a uniform, native-speaker-owned code.

The plural term World Englishes captures this transformation. It refers not only to geographical varieties of English but also to the social, cultural, pragmatic, and ideological conditions through which English is appropriated in different communities. Kachru (1996) explains that the plural form emphasizes variation in function, form, creativity, and cultural location. Bolton (2006), Jenkins (2003), and Brutt-Griffler (2002) similarly show that the global history of English cannot be understood through a simple division between correct native English and deficient non-native English. Englishes are not peripheral copies of one central language. They are locally embedded forms through which communities express identity, negotiate meaning, and participate in wider communication.

The long-standing debate around World Englishes is closely associated with the tension between exonormative authority and endonormative legitimacy. Exonormative authority assumes that external standards, especially Standard British English and Standard American English, should remain the principal models for correctness, education, and evaluation, although other standardized Inner Circle norms may also circulate in international ELT. Endonormative legitimacy recognizes that communities using English regularly may develop their own norms when those norms are systematic, socially shared, and communicatively effective. This tension underlies debates about ownership, linguistic standards, cultural identity, language education, and language policy.

The research gap addressed in this paper should be understood carefully. The ownership of English, attitudes toward non-native varieties, EIL, ELF, GELT, translanguaging, native-speakerism, and decolonial ELT have each been studied extensively. The gap is not that these areas have been ignored. Rather, the need remains for a focused synthesis that connects the classical Quirk-Kachru debate with recent pedagogical research and applies that synthesis to the linked issues of ownership, cultural legitimacy, attitudes towards non-native English varieties, and classroom practice. Rose et al. (2021) show that Global Englishes pedagogical research has expanded, while Rose and McKinley (2025) call for further innovation in TESOL research and practice. Recent studies also demonstrate that positive attitudes toward GELT do not automatically translate into materials, assessment, or classroom change (Miao et al., 2025; Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025; Tardy, 2025). The present

review therefore addresses a continuing synthesis gap rather than claiming that no prior scholarship exists.

The paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. What major arguments define the debate over the ownership of English?
2. How does the relationship between English and culture influence the legitimacy of localized English varieties?
3. What attitudes are directed toward non-native Englishes, and how are these attitudes shaped by standard language ideology, colonial history, and native-speakerism?
4. What implications do World Englishes, EIL, ELF, and GELT scholarship have for ELT?

The objective of the paper is to examine critical debates around World Englishes by reviewing the ownership of English, the cultural positioning of English, attitudes toward non-native varieties, and the implications of these debates for ELT and language policy. The argument developed throughout the paper is that the legitimacy of World Englishes depends on understanding English as a shared global resource rather than the possession of a single speech community. Such an understanding does not deny the usefulness of standard varieties in particular contexts. It questions the assumption that standardized native-speaker varieties should be the only acceptable models for all learners, all institutions, and all communicative purposes.

Methodology of the Review

This paper adopts a qualitative narrative review design. A narrative review is appropriate because the purpose of the study is not to measure the frequency of a phenomenon but to synthesize theoretical positions, identify tensions in the literature, and develop a critical argument across related areas of scholarship. Snyder (2019) explains that literature reviews can be used to integrate established knowledge, identify inconsistencies, and generate conceptual insight when a field contains diverse theoretical and empirical strands. This design is suitable for the present paper because World Englishes is shaped by sociolinguistic theory, postcolonial criticism, language ideology, teacher education, and classroom pedagogy.

The literature was selected in two stages. The first stage retained key foundational texts that shaped the World Englishes debate, including scholarship by Kachru, Quirk,

Jenkins, McKay, Kirkpatrick, Widdowson, Bolton, and related scholars. These sources are necessary because the ownership debate cannot be understood without the historical opposition between standard language ideology and the recognition of pluricentric Englishes. The second stage added recent scholarship published mainly between 2019 and 2025 on GELT, curriculum reform, teacher attitudes, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom intervention, multilingual writing, translanguaging, and decolonial pedagogy. Recent sources include Rose et al. (2021), Fang et al. (2022), Canagarajah (2023), Miao et al. (2025), Rose and McKinley (2025), Suejam and Walkinshaw (2025), Tardy (2025), and Budiman and Liu (2025). This step was included to strengthen the currency of the paper and to connect the classical ownership debate with current ELT concerns.

The inclusion criteria were relevance to the ownership of English, attitudes toward non-native English varieties, the cultural positioning of English, EIL, ELF, GELT, multilingual practice, teacher education, materials design, assessment, or language ideology. Sources were excluded only when they referred to ELT in general without addressing language variation, ownership, multilingual practice, ideology, or pedagogy connected to English diversification. The review is therefore interpretive rather than statistical. Its purpose is to compare major scholarly positions, identify their assumptions, and evaluate their implications for English teaching and language policy.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this paper combines four related perspectives. The first is Kachru's World Englishes paradigm, especially the distinction among Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle contexts (Kachru, 1985, 1996, 2005). This paradigm is useful because it explains why English develops different forms and functions in communities with different colonial histories, institutional uses, and educational traditions. It also supports the claim that Outer Circle varieties such as Pakistani English, Indian English, Nigerian English, and Singaporean English are not simply learner errors but institutionalized varieties shaped by local communicative needs.

The second set of perspectives is EIL and ELF. EIL scholarship, especially McKay (2002, 2012), Alsagoff et al. (2012), and Clyne and Sharifian (2008), asks ELT to respond to English as a language of international and intercultural

communication. ELF scholarship, represented in this review through Jenkins (2006, 2015), shifts attention from native-speaker correctness to intelligibility, accommodation, negotiation of meaning, and multilingual communication. These perspectives are important because many English users communicate mainly with other multilingual speakers rather than with Inner Circle native speakers. In such contexts, the ability to communicate effectively across difference may matter more than imitation of a single native English variety.

The third perspective is GELT. Rose and Galloway (2019) conceptualize GELT as a pedagogical response to the global spread and diversification of English. Rose et al. (2021) review pedagogical research showing that English teaching should respond to World Englishes, ELF, EIL, and multilingualism rather than remain organized around a narrow native-speaker model. More recent work has extended this agenda into EFL listening, pronunciation, textbook evaluation, materials design, and multilingual writing (Miao et al., 2025; Rose & McKinley, 2025; Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025; Tardy, 2025). This framework is used in the present paper to translate theoretical debates into classroom implications.

The fourth perspective is translanguaging and decolonial language education. Translanguaging scholarship challenges monolingual ideology by recognizing multilingual speakers' full semiotic repertoires, while decolonial ELT asks teachers and institutions to question inherited hierarchies that position native-speaker norms as naturally superior. Fang et al. (2022) argue that Global Englishes and translanguaging have important implications for textbook design and curriculum development, and Canagarajah (2023) frames decolonial pedagogy as a reflective praxis that connects language learning to social, cultural, and geopolitical conditions. These perspectives allow the paper to examine World Englishes as both a linguistic and an educational issue.

Conceptual lens	Main concern	Function in this paper
World Englishes	Institutionalized local varieties and plural norms	Explains why localized Englishes can be legitimate linguistic systems.
EIL and ELF	International intelligibility,	Shifts attention from

Conceptual lens	Main concern	Function in this paper
	accommodation, and multilingual communication	native-like imitation to communicative success across contexts.
GELT	Pedagogical response to English diversification	Connects theoretical debate with curriculum, materials, teacher education, and assessment.
Translanguaging and decolonial ELT	Multilingual repertoires and critique of linguistic hierarchy	Links World Englishes to equity, identity, classroom agency, and critical pedagogy.

Table 1. Conceptual lenses used in the review

The Ownership of English

One of the most contested issues in World Englishes is the ownership of English. The question is not merely symbolic. It determines whose norms are treated as legitimate, whose accents are heard as educated, whose literature is considered authentic, and whose classroom practices are viewed as acceptable. If English belongs exclusively to native speakers, then non-native speakers are positioned as permanent learners who must approximate native-speaker forms. If English belongs to all who use it, then multilingual speakers have the right to adapt it, localize it, and develop norms suitable for their contexts.

Graddol (2000) predicted that the growing number of non-native English users would shift authority over the language away from native speakers. Later World Englishes, EIL, and ELF scholarship supports this shift by showing that Inner Circle speakers represent only one part of the global English-speaking population and no longer exhaust the social meanings, communicative functions, or pedagogical goals of English (McKay, 2002; Clyne & Sharifian, 2008; Jenkins, 2015). Kachru (1985) similarly challenges the assumption that linguistic authority naturally resides in Britain, the United States, or any other Inner Circle context by emphasizing the sociolinguistic realism of English in Outer Circle societies.

Widdowson's position also supports a broader understanding of ownership. As discussed by Jenkins (2015), Widdowson argues that English as an international language cannot be placed under the custody of one nation or one native-speaking group. Once a language is used internationally, its development depends on the communicative practices of diverse users. Kachru and Smith (1985) express a similar view by treating English as a language shaped by all its users, whether it is their first language or an additional language. Ownership is therefore not inherited only through nativeness. It is produced through sustained use, institutional function, creative adaptation, social investment, and the ability of communities to make English serve their own communicative purposes.

The ownership debate is inseparable from culture. Some critics of English in postcolonial contexts view the language as a carrier of Western cultural values and therefore as a threat to indigenous identities. This position is understandable because English spread in many societies through colonial power, missionary education, administrative control, and elite schooling. The concern is that English may carry a "Western Judeo-Christian tradition," may not belong to the "linguistic stock of the region," and may represent a foreign culture rather than a local worldview (Kachru, 1990). Such concerns explain why some writers and educators remain skeptical of the claim that English can be fully localized.

A contrary position argues that English does not permanently carry only the culture of its original native-speaking communities. Kachru (1990) maintains that the strength of English lies not in a fixed British or American cultural identity but in its ability to acquire multicultural specificity in different regions. When English is used in South Asia, West Africa, East Asia, or the Caribbean, it absorbs local idioms, discourse patterns, rhetorical styles, religious references, and social meanings. It becomes a resource through which users express local identities rather than only a medium through which Western values are transmitted.

Kumaravadivelu (2008) questions the assumption that language and culture are inseparable in a fixed and one-directional manner. He argues that if the connection between the two were inseparable, as stated by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, successful translations from one language to another and effective communication between people belonging to different cultures would not be possible. His argument implies

that speakers do not simply receive culture from language; they mediate, reinterpret, and reshape cultural meaning through use. Lantolf's sociocultural position, as discussed by Marlina and Giri (2014), similarly emphasizes speakers as mediating agents between language and culture. From this perspective, culture is not simply stored inside a language. It is activated, reshaped, and negotiated by users in particular social settings.

Postcolonial literature illustrates this point. Achebe's view, discussed by Ashcroft (2009), is that English can be transformed so that it carries African experience when it is adapted to African contexts. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's rejection of colonial languages as adequate vehicles for African identity, discussed by Gagiano (2000) and Booker (2003), represents the counter-position that colonial languages may continue to reproduce symbolic domination. These positions reveal a productive tension. The rejection of English highlights the historical violence of colonial language policy. The adaptation of English demonstrates the ability of formerly colonized communities to transform the language into a medium of local expression. World Englishes scholarship does not require all communities to celebrate English uncritically. It asks scholars to recognize that many communities have already made English their own through sustained use, creative adaptation, and local norm development.

Pakistani English offers a useful example. Rahman (1990) documents Pakistani English as a localized variety, while Mahboob (2009) argues that Pakistani English can carry Islamic values and local ideological meanings rather than simply reproduce Western discourses. Such examples weaken the claim that English is culturally fixed. They show that ownership is enacted when communities use English to express their own religious, social, literary, and national experiences. The question is therefore not whether English originally came from elsewhere, but whether present users have the social and linguistic agency to reshape it for local purposes.

Attitudes toward Non-native English Varieties

The emergence of non-native English varieties has generated both recognition and resistance. Positive attitudes treat localized Englishes as legitimate outcomes of language contact, multilingual creativity, and sociolinguistic adaptation. Negative attitudes treat the same features as errors, corruption, decay, or evidence of incomplete learning. The difference between these attitudes often depends less on

linguistic facts than on ideological assumptions about standardness, nativeness, prestige, and power.

Kachru (1990) states that responses to innovations in "non-native institutionalized varieties" are determined by linguistic attitudes. This point should not be reduced to a simple claim that all innovation is judged negatively. Kachru's argument is more precise: the interpretation of innovations depends on whether readers, teachers, institutions, and scholars approach them through deficit-oriented or variety-sensitive assumptions. Kachru (1990) also notes that British reactions to American, Canadian, and Australian English once included accusations of decay and corruption. This historical example shows that features initially treated as deviations may later be accepted as legitimate markers of variety when attitudes and power relations change.

Quirk remains the most prominent defender of a common standard model. He argues that tolerance toward non-native varieties can harm learners by lowering standards and limiting their educational and professional opportunities (Quirk, 1985, 1990). His position reflects a strong preference for upholding native English standards and a disregard for non-native English varieties. It should not be dismissed without consideration because learners often need access to high-prestige written standards, especially in academic and professional domains. The weakness of Quirk's position lies in its assumption that a common standard can adequately serve all communities and that localized varieties are mainly failed attempts to reach native-speaker norms.

Kachru's (1991) response is that Quirk's model does not account for the sociolinguistic realities of multilingual societies. In many Outer Circle contexts, English is used for intranational communication, administration, education, media, literature, and local identity construction. In these contexts, British or American norms may not always be relevant to local communicative purposes. Treating localized forms as fossilized errors ignores the fact that many features are socially shared, systematic, and functional within a community. It also imposes monolingual expectations on multilingual users.

The distinction between error and variety is central to this debate. An individual learner's unstable form may be treated as an error when it is not shared, systematic, or communicatively stable. A community feature may be treated as a varietal characteristic when it appears regularly across speakers, performs a social or

pragmatic function, and is recognized within the speech community. Brutt-Griffler and Davies, as discussed by Mollin (2006), emphasize that legitimate non-native varieties are not random accumulations of deviant forms. They display systematicity and community distribution.

Negative attitudes are also found among ordinary users, not only among linguists. McKay (2002) discusses concerns in Singapore about Singlish being perceived as bad English, while Ngefac (2016) describes similar devaluation of Cameroonian English. Belibi (2013) also shows how the issue of teaching a standard variety or a local standard becomes politically and pedagogically complex in Cameroon. Such attitudes often reflect what Bokamba calls ukolonia, a postcolonial mindset in which locally oriented practices are viewed as inferior to colonial or external standards. The problem is not simply linguistic insecurity. It is also the internalization of social hierarchies that associate native-speaker forms with intelligence, modernity, and upward mobility.

Recent research on native-speakerism helps explain why these attitudes persist. Native-speakerism refers to the ideology that native speakers are inherently better models, teachers, or authorities on English. Wang and Fang (2020) show that attitudes toward native and non-native English-speaking teachers continue to be shaped by this ideology in ELT contexts. Brandon et al. (2009) similarly illustrate how language, teaching, and teacher education are connected to deeper assumptions about legitimacy, identity, and institutional authority. Such attitudes affect teacher recruitment, learner confidence, pronunciation goals, classroom materials, and institutional policy. They also sustain the belief that multilingual speakers must measure their competence against an idealized native-speaker norm even when their actual communicative contexts are multilingual.

A critical position must avoid two extremes. It should not romanticize every local form as automatically appropriate in every context. At the same time, it should not treat every difference from Inner Circle norms as an error. The more defensible position is contextual evaluation. A form should be evaluated according to its intelligibility, systematicity, social distribution, communicative purpose, and domain of use. This approach allows learners to develop academic and professional competence while also recognizing the legitimacy of local Englishes.

Attitudes toward Non-native Varieties in ELT

The debate over attitudes becomes especially significant in ELT. Traditional ELT has often treated British or American English as the preferred target, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, textbook dialogues, academic writing models, and assessment. This model gives learners access to globally recognized standards, but it can also produce unrealistic goals, accent anxiety, and devaluation of local identities. In many classrooms, learners are taught to imitate native speakers even though their future communication may take place mainly with other multilingual users.

Quirk's argument for standard English is grounded in the idea that learners deserve access to a powerful international medium (Quirk, 1990). This concern remains relevant because academic writing, formal examinations, and professional communication still require high levels of control over standardized written English. The problem arises when standard English is presented as the only legitimate English and when native-like speech becomes the measure of communicative success. Such a model does not reflect the diversity of English use in the contemporary world.

EIL and ELF scholarship offers an important correction. McKay (2002) argues that teaching English as an international language requires rethinking goals and approaches rather than assuming that native-speaker cultural content and native-like norms are universally appropriate. McKay (2012) applies this position to materials development by calling for teaching materials that represent international uses of English. Jenkins (2006) argues that World Englishes and ELF perspectives require teachers to rethink the relationship between pronunciation, intelligibility, and target norms. Clyne and Sharifian (2008) also emphasize that English as an international language creates challenges and possibilities because it is used across diverse cultural and linguistic settings. These EIL and ELF perspectives strengthen GELT by explaining why multilingual communication, accommodation, and intelligibility should be central to classroom goals.

Kirkpatrick (2007) argues for endonormative models that acknowledge the variety of English and respond to regional communicative realities. Kachru (1992) similarly recommends exposing learners to major English varieties and helping them understand their functions. The aim is not to teach every variety in detail. It is to develop learners' awareness that English varies across contexts and that successful

communication requires flexibility, accommodation, and critical understanding of language ideology. This means learners should be able to recognize how power shapes judgments about accents, vocabulary, grammar, and classroom models rather than assuming that every native-speaker form is naturally superior.

GELT offers a more recent pedagogical framework for this shift. Rose and Galloway (2019) present GELT as a response to the global diversification of English, while Rose et al. (2021) review pedagogical research showing growing interest in classroom-based and teacher education approaches informed by Global Englishes. GELT does not ask teachers to abandon accuracy or standards. It asks them to broaden the target of English education from native-like imitation to communicative competence across diverse global and local settings.

Recent 2025 scholarship strengthens this point. Miao et al. (2025) show that incorporating Global Englishes varieties into EFL classrooms can support listening comprehension and pronunciation development. Suejam and Walkinshaw (2025) find that materials designers may report positive attitudes toward GELT while their materials still overwhelmingly present Inner Circle norms and cultural representations. Tardy (2025) extends GELT into multilingual writing by arguing that it can counter homogenizing pressures in academic writing and support more flexible understandings of English variation. Budiman and Liu (2025) further suggest that GELT can reduce language anxiety and increase willingness to communicate by validating diverse English varieties. These studies show that the field has moved beyond abstract recognition of World Englishes toward classroom intervention, materials analysis, writing pedagogy, and learner psychology.

Practical implementation can occur at several levels. In curriculum design, learning outcomes should include awareness of English variation, intelligibility, intercultural communication, and accommodation strategies. In teaching materials, learners should encounter voices from different English-using communities rather than only British and American speakers. In teacher education, teachers should critically examine native-speakerism and learn how to distinguish between errors that obstruct communication and local features that reflect legitimate variation. In assessment, speaking rubrics should give appropriate weight to intelligibility and interactional effectiveness rather than treating native-like accent as the highest goal.

Academic writing assessment should still require clarity, coherence, evidence, and disciplinary conventions, but it should avoid penalizing multilingual rhetorical identity when communication remains effective and contextually appropriate.

Translanguaging also has relevance for World Englishes-informed ELT. Fang et al. (2022) argue that Global Englishes and translanguaging can inform textbook design and curriculum development by challenging traditional monolingual ideology. A translanguaging perspective recognizes that multilingual learners draw on their full linguistic repertoires to understand, negotiate, and produce meaning. This does not mean that formal English proficiency becomes unimportant. It means that multilingual resources can be used strategically in the learning process rather than being treated automatically as interference.

Decolonial ELT extends this discussion by asking educators to examine the power relations behind language norms. Canagarajah (2023) presents decolonial pedagogy as a praxis of action, reflection, and relearning. Applied to World Englishes, this means that teachers and institutions should question why certain accents, textbooks, and cultural models are privileged over others. A decolonial approach does not reject English. It seeks to make English education more equitable by recognizing multilingual learners as legitimate users rather than deficient imitators. Baumgardner and Brown (2003) also remind the field that the ethics of World Englishes pedagogy cannot be separated from questions of learner dignity, access, and representation.

World Englishes-informed ELT must still be careful. Learners may need Standard English for examinations, academic publication, migration, or employment. A pluricentric pedagogy should therefore teach standard written conventions while also explaining that standards are socially produced and context-dependent. The most useful classroom model is not a simple replacement of British or American English with a local variety. It is an additive model in which learners develop control over formal academic English, awareness of local Englishes, and strategies for international intelligibility.

Pakistani English as an Illustrative Case

A focused local illustration strengthens the argument. Pakistani English occupies an important position because English functions in Pakistan as a language of education, administration, law, media, elite mobility, and professional advancement, while also

carrying local cultural, religious, and pragmatic meanings. It is shaped by contact with Urdu and regional languages (Baumgardner, 1993), by Pakistan's history, culture and religion (Rahman, 2014). This gives Pakistani English both symbolic complexity and practical importance.

Pakistani English is not only a literary medium; it is also a sociolinguistic reality in classrooms, universities, bureaucracy, journalism, advertising, and digital communication. Its features may include localized lexical choices, discourse patterns, honorific expressions and culturally specific metaphors (Baumgardner, 1993; Mahboob, 2009; Rahman, 2014). These features deserve systematic description, positive recognition, and responsible pedagogical discussion because they form part of the lived English repertoire of Pakistani speakers. This framing avoids treating Pakistani English as a problem to be tested for legitimacy; it treats it as an established variety whose patterns, functions, and classroom relevance should be more fully documented and understood.

At the pedagogical level, Pakistani English raises difficult questions. Should learners be taught only British or American norms, or should they also be made aware of Pakistani English as a legitimate variety? A balanced approach would teach formal academic English for examination and professional writing while also helping learners understand Pakistani English as part of their linguistic identity. Such an approach can reduce linguistic insecurity and help students understand why English varies according to audience, purpose, and domain. Rahman (1990) and Mahboob (2009) are important here because they show that Pakistani English is not merely a set of learner deviations but a variety shaped by local history, religion, education, and public life.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The review suggests several implications for research, policy, and classroom practice. Teacher education is the most urgent area. Teachers often reproduce native-speaker ideology because their own training has framed British or American English as the natural standard. Professional development should therefore include World Englishes, EIL, ELF, GELT, intelligibility research, translanguaging, and critical reflection on linguistic bias. Teachers need practical tools for explaining variation without encouraging careless language use.

Textbooks and teaching materials also require revision. Many ELT materials still present English-speaking culture through a narrow set of Inner Circle references. A World Englishes-informed curriculum should include texts, dialogues, recordings, and examples from multiple English-using communities. Learners should encounter English as it is used in South Asia, Africa, East Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and online multilingual spaces. Such exposure helps learners develop listening flexibility and reduces the assumption that only one accent or cultural model is legitimate. Suejam and Walkinshaw (2025) show why this point matters: positive beliefs about GELT may coexist with materials that continue to reproduce Inner Circle linguistic and cultural dominance.

Assessment practices should be reconsidered. Written academic English can continue to require clarity, coherence, grammatical control, and disciplinary conventions. Spoken assessment should avoid equating native-like pronunciation with proficiency. Rubrics should reward intelligibility, interactional competence, appropriate register, and the ability to negotiate meaning. This approach aligns assessment with real communicative needs while maintaining academic seriousness.

Research should also move beyond theoretical debate. Future studies can investigate learners' attitudes toward local Englishes, teachers' preparedness to teach World Englishes, the representation of English varieties in textbooks, the intelligibility of Pakistani English in international settings, and the effects of GELT classroom interventions. Corpus-based and classroom-based studies can describe Pakistani English features, document their functions, and show how awareness of English variation affects confidence, identity, and communicative performance. Such research should proceed from a positive recognition of Pakistani English as a legitimate variety rather than from a deficit view that assumes local forms require validation by Inner Circle standards.

Conclusion

The discussion demonstrates that English is no longer the exclusive property of Inner Circle native speakers. Its global spread has created a pluricentric linguistic reality in which multiple communities use English for local, regional, and international purposes. The ownership of English must therefore be understood through use,

function, institutionalization, and cultural adaptation rather than through nativeness alone.

The cultural debate shows that English does not permanently carry only Western values. Although English has a colonial history and can reproduce inequality, it can also be appropriated by postcolonial and multilingual communities to express local identities. Pakistani English, African literary Englishes, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, and other varieties demonstrate that communities can reshape English according to their own experiences and meanings.

Attitudes toward non-native varieties remain divided because standard language ideology and native-speakerism continue to influence scholarship, public opinion, teacher education, materials design, and assessment. This claim is supported by studies showing continued preference for Inner Circle models and persistent native-speaker assumptions in ELT contexts. The critical task is to distinguish between random learner errors and systematic community features. A variety should be assessed according to its social distribution, communicative function, intelligibility, and contextual relevance. This position protects standards where they are needed while rejecting the unfair devaluation of localized Englishes.

The implications for ELT are substantial. English teaching should not abandon formal academic standards, but it should also not reduce English competence to native-like imitation. A more defensible model combines standard written proficiency, awareness of World Englishes, multilingual communicative strategies, and critical understanding of language ideology. Recognizing World Englishes is therefore not a decline in quality. It is a necessary response to the multilingual world in which English now operates.

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