Connecting the Global Model to Effective Intercultural Communication in English

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Abstract:

English language education policies throughout Asia typically operate on a deficiency model, wherein differences from "native speaker" English are viewed as flaws requiring educational correction. Such a position overemphasizes aspects of English that are relatively unimportant in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication, while simultaneously generating negative attitudes towards learning non-prestige English variants. The Global Model of English (Haswell 2013; Haswell & Hahn, 2016) encapsulates ELF interactional realities and is aimed at being a tool for teachers, curriculum designers, and language policy makers. The model frames English performance in terms of communicative success rather than conformance to an arbitrary (most often native-speaker) standard. The model is particularly valuable in the Asia-Pacific region, where many English varieties exist, as it demonstrates the importance of transitioning from native-speaker-centric language education. To operationalize the Global Model in educational spaces, we must determine practices that centralize intercultural communication while accounting for pre-existing language-related ideologies. To begin this process, a pilot study was conducted to gather data from students in Japanese universities their ideas about how to configure a globally focused language learning program. Results indicate that while students do not always share the desire for a fully globally focused curriculum, there do appear to be some areas of concordance on which new programs can be built that will move us towards greater internationalization.

Key Words: *sociolinguistic modeling; language education; Lingua Franca English; World Englishes*

Introduction

Nowadays, it is fairly uncontroversial to assert that the English language is practically a lingua franca, operating worldwide in a majority of countries to one degree or another in personal, political, commercial, and cultural domains. As such, the pursuit of English language competency is a worldwide phenomenon, as the ability to access English can provide numerous benefits to both individuals and groups (commercial, national, transnational). However, despite the fact that much (perhaps most) English use takes place in transnational spaces, involving no L1 speakers of English (Sung, 2014), and that L2 speakers significantly outnumber or, at least, will soon outnumber L1 speakers (Graddol, 2003) those so-called "non-native speakers" (NNS) are more often than not judged against "native speakers" (NS), and found to be deficient or incompetent whenever their varieties of English do not match the norms of those countries where English historically originated. Such a situation produces a lingua franca that privileges a minority of its

users.

In this paper, we present sociolinguistic evidence that the NS model of English is inaccurate and out-moded, and argue that a model representing effective communication through an acceptance of English as the international lingua franca (ELF) will lead to a more egalitarian use of the language. Then we discuss steps taken by others and ourselves to place this approach at the center of English language teaching.

Deficient models reinforcing deficiency models

International EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning is dominated by NS English. This domination, often called "native-speakerism," pervades all aspects of teaching both in and out of the classroom (Holliday, 2006). Such a focus has lead to claims of linguistic imperialism, which are rooted in the history of actual imperialism conducted by the British and the United States, and of linguistic hegemony (Ishikawa, 2009; Tsuda, 2008). The latter is a difficult claim to refute given the continuing NS biases of the language teach-ing and language use communities. While the reasons for this continued dominance are linked primarily to sociopolitical inequities that lie outside of the scope of this paper, we believe that that the models com-monly used by sociolinguists and educators to represent English language varieties can be seen as at least complicit in the centralization of the English of the colonizers.

Modeling of English—providing a visual representation of worldwide English use—is not a new activ-ity in sociolinguistics. When presenting his Three Circle Model of English in 1985, Braj Kachru referred to the model of Daniel Jones, first produced in the 1930s, which was a cone of comprehensibility. This cone shape was most recently expounded upon by Pung (2009), adding newer varieties and demonstrating how development added dynamism to the model, but actually moving the field forward very little. The Three Circles model remains the most famous of all sociolinguistic models of English, remaining in use to this day in many research papers as academic short-hand for a mapping of language variety to geographical location: the Inner Circle are native speaker (NS) English-use countries; the Outer Circle are former colonies of the Inner Circle that use English as a second or supplementary language on a national basis; the Expanding Circle is everywhere else that English is used. The major criticism of the Three Circles is that it seems to support the centralization of the countries from which English linguistically originated, and thus also pre-serve their status as controlling agents of the language. However, the Three Circles model does not ade-quately represent the now widely-accepted transnational blends of English, nor performance varieties that are brought into being by communities of use; neither does it account for variation among individuals since the only identifiable tokens in the model are nations. Although still widely-used and well-known both inside and outside the field of sociolinguistics, the Three Circles model is clearly in need of retirement.[1]

There are several other less famous but also important models of English, each informative yet defi-cient in their own way. Contemporaries of Kachru, McArthur in 1987 (in McArthur, 2002) and Gorlach in 1990 produced wheel models of English, arraying varieties of English around a central hub representing 'Standard English.' While they left this Standard English undefined, its presence in the center suggested the potential existence of a core set of English characteristics that might be agreed upon by all users. However, in the 30 years since their publication, no standard English has been agreed upon; in fact, quite the opposite is the case. While the models moved away from appearing to privilege one variety over any others, as the varieties were equidistant from the center, they both suffered from a lack of representative

functionality as they included only varieties, not users.

Two turn-of-the-century models significantly re-conceptualized how varieties of English could be placed in relationship to one another, focusing in different ways on how the productivity of linguistic features of each variety could be used to compare them. Yano (2001) visualized varieties as cylinders of varying depth (measured mostly by the amount of lexical and grammatical structures that existed in the variety) and containing one to three levels: an acrolect (high-status), mesolect (middle-status) and basilect (low-status). Generally speaking, the longer the variety has been developing, the larger its cylinder was and the more levels it was assigned. For instance, Yano assigns all three levels to NS varieties, while more recently hypostatized varieties such as Japanese English had only an acrolect. The acrolects of each variety were represented as being mutually-intelligible, whereas the basilects were not. Users in each context moved within the cylinders demonstrating their proficiency at modulating their speech acts to match their context within their own variety. Modiano (1999) uses a two-dimensional model to represent a similar idea of varieties being connected by shared features, but he began to blur the idea of fully distinct varieties by showing the varieties as overlapping. As with Gorlach and Macarthur above, Modiano imagines a 'Standard' or 'EIL' variant in the center of this model, with the American and British variants more fully overlapping than other "major varieties" like Indian English, and with foreign language varieties having much or even most of their space outside of the central core. Both models thus still preserve a special place for NS. Modiano's defines his/her Standard as features that are comprehensible by native speakers and "competent non-native speakers"; Yano makes the NS varieties more 'valuable' in that they have (often significantly) greater depth and also a higher tendency to allow users to shift to other, nearby varieties. It is (probably) worth noting that neither model is based upon direct observations of transnational English use, and thus neither considers cases in which comprehensibility may be linked more to effort, willpower, employment of strategies, or even localized (geographic or domain-based) features.

User proficiency was a determining factor in the work of Yano, and *the* determining factor in the work of Modiano, yet their models did not adequately address the complexity of language use worldwide. The element of user-defined value came most recently to the field of sociolinguistic modeling. Park and Wee's Market-Theoretic model of English (2009) suggested that varieties, transnational, sub-regional, national, and localized could gain or lose value relative to one another depending on the market-accessibility granted by utilization. Although easily criticized as unworkable, and indeed only proposed as a theory, the Market Model represented a fresh view of the language, one that placed the needs of the user at the very center, and one that was literally a dynamic vision of the language's future.

The Global Model of English

Having reviewed the past attempts to model the use of English around the world, there are clearly several intersecting concerns. First, the model should account for English as it is actually used in the real world, where drawing neat categories between national varieties fails to represent both transnational language use and intranational variation. Second, the model needs to have explanatory power, in the sense that it helps users (we focus on teachers and administrators as our primary audience) both understand the linguistic landscape and then use that understanding in their practices. Putting these two together, the model needs to account for sociolinguistic complexity while also being accessible and potentially transformative.

These concerns led to the creation of the Global Model (Haswell, 2013; Haswell & Hahn, 2016).

Just prior to explaining the Model, it is helpful to review terminology currently used to describe internationalized English, since often these terms appear quite close but actually represent different concepts. Three main terms concern us. World Englishes (WE), arising out of the work of Braj Kachru and Larry Smith in the 70s and 80s, originally referred non-native Englishes (NNEs) operating in every space on the globe where the language was used, but is now generally used to refer to codifiable varieties of the language that can be connected to one location, country, or region. The term Global Englishes (GE), sometimes called Global Englishes or English as an International Language (EIL) refers to non-national varieties (McKay, 2000), including those linked to communities of use, such as scientific English. Finally, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is used to describe English-in-use (Seidlhofer, 2009)—that is, it is not a single defined variety but rather the stance of participants that arises among willing users when English is the means of communication for speakers who hold otherwise different linguistic backgrounds (Meierkord, 2004).

First proposed in 2013 and refined in 2016, the Global Model is comprised of three zones (see Figure 1). The first is the Inner Core, which represents ELF, and thus contains no varieties of English but rather the tools necessary to succeed at communication across what would otherwise be borders. The surrounding sphere is the Outer Core, which contains the transnational blends of EIL and GE. Finally, the Surface arrays national and sub-regional varieties of English in accordance with their geographical location. This hopefully simple visualization exists to help teachers navigate the difficult waters of sociolinguistics while having a truth of internationalized English made abundantly clear: it is not NS-like performance but rather confident proficiency in the language that is the truly desirable goal. NS models seem to loom large when we look only at the surface of the model, but when we see those varieties as only occupying a small volume
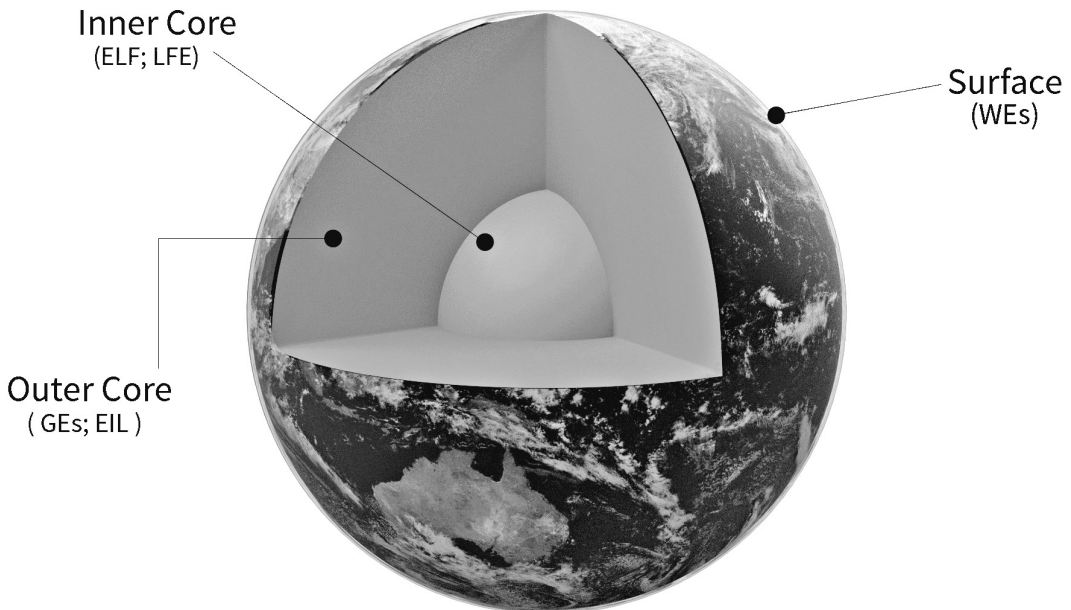

Inner Core
(ELF; LFE)

Surface
(WEs)

Outer Core
(GEs; EIL)

Figure 1. The Global Model of English

of the overall linguistic sphere, educators can more easily reconceptualize them to exert little influence on when determining what can and should be taught.

Having said that, the model does operate in the real world. This is to say, we accept the overwhelming proclivity of many users, including both teachers and students in Japan, to elevate native speaker proficiency; however, we do not believe this it is a permanent artifact of the historical hegemony of NS varieties of English. Our intent with the Global Model is to assist with the navigation of the complex field of sociolinguistics, and we would prefer that teachers prepare their students for the workplace that exists rather than the NS-focused world that is presented in most textbooks. Having already established the basic operations of the Global Model in past papers, we set out to determine how to implement what we felt to be its greatest strength, its manifest pluricentricity, in a context where such an ideology currently holds little leverage, the Japanese university EFL classroom, our immediate teaching context.

Operationalizing the ideology of the Global Model within an EIL framework

Ours is not the first attempt to teach to a pluricentric ideology of English, nor is ours the only method one could employ to achieve these ends. Probably the most well-publicized large-scale attempt to implement the ethos of Braj Kachru in Japan is the Department of World Englishes at Chukyo University in Tokyo. This department has been the source of several large-scale studies into student attitudes to World Englishes, specifically Asian Englishes (see Sakai & D'Angelo, 2005, and D'Angelo, 2016) which have, to this point, shown that the direct teaching of this ideology has little effect on students' long-term beliefs about the English language.

The background to our study is best explained by the 2011 paper from Aya Matsuda and Barbara Freidrich, "English as an international language: a curriculum blueprint." The paper outlines the elements that would be necessary for ELF curriculum materials that represented NNS English varieties, the teaching of communicative strategies that allow for negotiation of meaning, and the teaching of culture as a tool of communication. Our interest was how a teacher with an ELF ideology who taught a course that was expected to be NS-centric could retrofit their teaching. Matsuda and Friedrich already envision such an eventuality, suggesting that there are times when this is all a teacher is able to achieve:

There are several approaches to increasing students' awareness of English varieties. One is to expose students to different varieties of English through teaching materials. Rather than relying exclusively on CDs that accompany the textbook, teachers can supplement them with textual, audio, and visual samples of other varieties of English. Differences in vocabulary, grammar, and usage can also be presented through media texts and other written materials.

Our question was, "What materials could be used to support a pluricentric ideology of English that would be seen as both helpful and interesting to our students?" That is, given that the direct, teacher-dominated approach at Chukyo University showed very slight to modest gains, we wanted to get student input so that we (and other educators) could select materials that would have a higher likelihood of providing exposure to NNS English and potentially raising awareness among students about the value of Inner Core skills.

Study

Our study was conducted at two universities in Western Japan: University A is one of the top institutions in the country and is also a member of the Japanese Ministry of Education's (MEXT's) Top Global University Program (TGU), which incentivizes the internationalizing of universities for the purposes of raising participating schools in international rankings and thereby promoting Japanese universities abroad; University B is a large, private university in Western Japan and is considered to be an average, city-based institution. The surveys were collected in general English classes from students of a variety of majors. While the students surveyed don't represent the totality of students in Japan, we do believe that as a pilot study the two fairly different schools provide enough of a cross-section of student abilities and purposes as to provide a good guide for future work as well as hints about positive steps that can be made to design ELF classes.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in the first weeks of the semester, as close as could practically be achieved to the start of the Spring semester. Students were given a paper survey containing a list of activities divided into Vocabulary, Communication, and Video categories, and asked to rate them on a Likert scale of 1 to 4 in terms of both their usefulness and helpfulness in a course of Global Communication. Table 1 lists the 16 activities that were included in the survey. These activities were chosen to include those which involved interaction with both native and non-native English, as well as to include a variety of types of activities and registers of language used.

Table 1. Activities listed in order of the survey.

Abbreviation	Activity
(V) J	Watching videos of Japanese people speaking in English
(V) USVid	Watching an English lecture by a famous American speaker
(V) Ind	Watching videos of Indian people speaking together using English
(V) Am+Brit	Watching videos of Americans and British people speaking together in English
(V) AsianVid	Watching videos of people from several different Asian countries speaking together in English
(V) Kor	Watching a lecture in English by a famous Korean speaker
(V) US+J	Watching videos of people from the US speaking with people from Japan in English
(W) Bus	Learning English vocabulary used in business meetings
(W) SciConf	Learning English vocabulary used in scientific conferences
(W) IntOnline	Learning English vocabulary used in international emails, websites, and other online communication
(W) TOEIC	Learning English vocabulary used on the TOEIC test
(W) BritAmVoc	Learning the difference between common British and American vocabulary
(C) AsianChat	Having a video chat with someone learning English in another Asian country
(C) WritEur	Having an online written discussion in English with someone from Europe (not the UK)
(C) USChat	Having a video chat with someone from the US in English
(C) Wiki	Working on an international online English project such as Wikipedia

(V) = Video activity, (W) = Word (vocabulary) activity, (C) = Communication activity

The surveys were produced first in English then professionally translated. Demographic information on the students was also collected regarding their year of study, major, and purpose of English study. The total number of surveys accepted for analysis, once partially or incorrectly completed papers were rejected, was 282, with 129 from University A and 153 from University B.

Findings

Given here are findings from the survey of classroom activities. Firstly, the broader issue of which activities were accepted and which were rejected (that is, sorting the activities between those which received more positive responses from those which received more negative responses) are discussed. Secondly, the ranking of the activities based on their average responses is covered.

The first key point is that very few of the activities received a majority of unfavorable ratings (either unhelpful/very unhelpful or uninteresting/very uninteresting). Table 2 lists the rejected activities, broken down by university.

Table 2. Activities rejected by students (listed in order of decreasing acceptance)

	Rejected by University A	Rejected by University B	Rejected by Combined (A+B)
Helpfulness	(V) Kor	(V) Ind	(V) Kor
		(V) Kor	(V) Ind
Interestingness	(V) Kor	(W) SciConf	(W) TOEIC
	(W) SciConf	(V) Kor	(V) Kor
	(V) Ind	(W) TOEIC	(V) Ind
			(W) SciConf

There are several points to be noted with these negatively rated activities. The first is that all of these activities are either video or vocabulary-related; no communication activities were rated as either unhelpful or uninteresting. Secondly, these negatively rated activities can be divided into two main categories. The first are those which involved passive reception of two Asian-English language variants (Indian and Korean). While past studies have also shown that Japanese students generally have negative images of these language varieties (Haswell, 2017), it is useful to note that, in comparison, the activity of watching people from several different Asian countries was not rejected. Further open-ended input in the form of focus groups or interviews would be helpful to explain the difference between these results. The second type of negatively rated categories were linked to specific genres of English: TOEIC and scientific conference vocabulary. It may be that students find these uninteresting because they are both formal skills and unrelated to students' direct interest (unfortunately, there were not enough study participants to make meaningful distinctions by student major).

Turning to the overall ranking of the average scores of each activity, Table 3 shows the ranked averages of the helpfulness measurement, and Table 4 shows the ranked averages of the interestingness measurement.

Table 3.　Helpfulness ranking of all activities

University A		University B		University A + B	
Activity	Average rating	Activity	Average rating	Activity	Average rating
(C) USChat	3.48	(W) TOEIC	3.53	(W) TOEIC	3.46
(W) IntOnline	3.40	(W) IntOnline	3.45	(C) USChat	3.44
(W) TOEIC	3.39	(C) USChat	3.41	(W) IntOnline	3.43
(W) Business	3.35	(W) Business	3.36	(W) Business	3.36
(C) WritEur	3.30	(C) WritEur	3.22	(C) WritEur	3.26
(C) Asianchat	3.26	(C) Asianchat	3.20	(C) Asianchat	3.22
(V) USVid	3.17	(V) US+J	3.16	(V) USVid	3.14
(V) Am+Brit	3.11	(V) USVid	3.12	(V) US+J	3.14
(V) US+J	3.11	(W) BritAmVoc	3.09	(V) Am+Brit	3.05
(W) SciConf	3.11	(V) Am+Brit	3.01	(W) BritAmVoc	3.03
(W) BritAmVoc	2.97	(C) Wiki	2.89	(W) SciConf	2.90
(C) Wiki	2.91	(V) AsianVid	2.84	(C) Wiki	2.90
(V) AsianVid	2.83	(V) J	2.78	(V) AsianVid	2.83
(V) J	2.63	(W) SciConf	2.73	(V) J	2.71
(V) Ind	2.60	(V) Ind	2.53	(V) Ind	2.57
(V) Korean	2.46	(V) Korean	2.41	(V) Korean	2.43

Note. Internal horizontal lines represent cases where there is a statically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between adjacently ranked activities.

Table 4.　Interestingness ranking of all activities

University A		University B		University A + B	
Activity	Average rating	Activity	Average rating	Activity	Average rating
(C) USChat	3.22	(C) USChat	3.32	(C) USChat	3.28
(C) Asianchat	3.09	(C) Asianchat	3.20	(C) Asianchat	3.15
(W) IntOnline	3.07	(C) WritEur	3.14	(W) IntOnline	3.11
(C) WritEur	3.07	(W) IntOnline	3.13	(C) WritEur	3.10
(W) BritAmVoc	2.94	(V) USVid	3.00	(V) USVid	2.96
(V) USVid	2.91	(V) US+J	2.97	(W) BritAmVoc	2.95
(V) US+J	2.90	(W) BritAmVoc	2.95	(V) US+J	2.94
(V) Am+Brit	2.86	(W) Business	2.80	(V) Am+Brit	2.78
(V) AsianVid	2.71	(V) AsianVid	2.73	(W) Business	2.73
(W) Business	2.66	(C) Wiki	2.73	(V) AsianVid	2.72
(C) Wiki	2.63	(V) Am+Brit	2.71	(C) Wiki	2.69
(V) Ind	2.51	(W) TOEIC	2.69	(V) J	2.57
(V) J	2.50	(V) J	2.63	(W) TOEIC	2.57
(W) SciConf	2.47	(V) Korean	2.39	(V) Korean	2.43
(V) Korean	2.47	(W) SciConf	2.31	(V) Ind	2.40
(W) TOEIC	2.43	(V) Ind	2.30	(W) SciConf	2.39

Note. Internal horizontal lines represent cases where there is a statically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between adjacently ranked activities.

The first point that should be noted is that in most cases, there is not a statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between adjacent items (exceptions are represented with internal horizontal lines in the tables). However, in most cases, there are statistically significant differences in the averages between 2-4 ranks away (for example, in the combined ranking for helpfulness, the TOEIC vocabulary activity was statistically significantly higher ranked than the business vocabulary activity, but not significantly higher than chatting with someone from the US or learning internet vocabulary). Therefore, this ranking is only tentative; more data might provide more clarity, but it could be that the measurement instrument is simply not precise enough to provide a ranking of this type. Nonetheless, assuming that the overall pattern is approximately correct, there are still important things to be gleaned from these results. First, communicative activities ranked relatively highly when compared to video activities in both helpfulness and interestingness. This suggests that the students were responding to the call for a "Global Communications" class, selecting communicative activities over those that might be considered more academic and/or teacher-fronted. Second, the field-specific activities were not rated particularly highly (including those mentioned above as fully rejected), suggesting that teachers need to take care in choosing things specifically because they believe something is matching to their students' field. Third, given that the US chat activity was ranked very highly in helpfulness and was statistically significantly in first place in interestingness, and that the likely highest ranked video activities on both measurements involved US speakers, these results do coincide with those many prior studies that indicate that Japanese students (and the education system) tend to give prominence to US speakers as ideal models.

Finally, it is worth noting that students often drew a strong distinction between what they considered interesting and what they considered to be helpful. A good example is TOEIC vocabulary, which was rejected as uninteresting but judged by the combined population to the most helpful. This suggests that although the students would not choose to do these activities, they recognize their value. The TOEIC test is, in Japan, often used by corporations as a key measure of English language proficiency, and is therefore used as a method of selecting employees for assignments and promotion. As such, the students may be projecting into their professional future, post-graduation, and perceiving value in a class that is not particularly interesting. The responses to the activities were, therefore, more nuanced; helpful and interesting were not considered synonymous.

Discussion and considerations for future studies

This pilot study presented both information and opportunity. By asking the students directly, we were able to discover that, while a preference for NS varieties over NNS varieties can be observed, the students were not entirely closed to the idea of using NNS-focused materials in terms of either helpfulness or interestingness. In part, the rejection of the Korean and Indian English materials can be attributed to the manner in which the activities were framed as being part of a 'Global Communications' course. Having established the methodology and research space, future studies can build on these findings, expand the range of activities being considered, and seek to understand the specific reasons for students' preferences, especially in cases where two activities which appeared similar received ratings that were substantially different.

However, what cannot be ignored is that the preference for NS-based materials for English study

activities remains among students. Our research must remain in the real world and not in the world we and other sociolinguists would like it to be in. We are not yet at a time when a wholly EIL or Global Model-based curriculum can be implemented in general English language classes – the chance for outright rejection remains. The data does suggest that teachers wishing to incorporate these types of activities should probably look towards those which involve active communication (either videos of authentic discussions or, even better, involving students in actual international conversation) rather than those which involve consumption of lectures. In fact, it may be that the respondents themselves were yearning for what the Global Model actually centralizes in importance: learning which is linked to communication and communication strategies, rather than learning which is linked towards receiving and mimicking a fixed standard.

One final note worth considering when designing courses is how much weight to give each of the two different measurements (helpfulness and interestingness). While the ideal goal is not to set the two against one another, the highly opposed ratings for TOEIC learning indicate that we must understand that student feelings about some activities are complex and conflicting. Our belief, though it rests closer to the category of opinion than verified claim, is that the interestingness measurement is probably more helpful when considering what activities to include. Students are not necessarily the best at measuring what teaching/learning techniques and activities will be most effective (in a sense, if they were, we would not really need teachers or teacher training). However, students who want to pass a class are likely to do, to at least some degree, whatever task teachers set for them; thus, if a teacher chooses an activity that they have good reason to believe is effective, and that also happens to be interesting for the students, it seems reasonable to believe that students will be more likely to be more enthusiastic about the task, and thus commit more attention and effort to the task, and thus hopefully actually learn more.

Conclusion

This study was an early pilot in a much longer and necessary research effort. The failure of previous attempts by 'enlightened' sociolinguists remains a warning that merely showing the reality of global English use is not sufficient, and that minds cannot be changed in limited time frames, but this does not mean that there are not positive steps that can be taken. Being a sociolinguist in the era of English as a Lingua Franca requires vigilance to prevent reinforcing stereotypes and hegemony while operating pragmatically in our professional efforts. Students will be the ultimate beneficiaries of improvements in course materials and teacher attitudes towards NNS English varieties.

Note

1　Note that we are not asserting that we are the first to say this—many others have taken issue with the uncritical way that the Three Circles model seems to have become ubiquitous. Park and Wee (2009) note that the problem isn't really with the model itself but with the fact that it is overused and misapplied in ways that Kachru never intended.

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