Developing students' awareness of global Englishes

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Although research on Global Englishes (GE) has demonstrated the potential for a new perspective of ELT, studies of GE in an Asian ELT context are relatively rare. As current mainstream ELT practice in China still largely emphasizes 'native English', university courses related to GE are scarce. This paper aims to unpack the influence of a course on English as a World Language in Chinese university students' awareness of their own English and GE. Data were collected from students taking the optional course at a university in southeast China. After reporting the findings, the paper further discusses the pedagogical implications of integrating GE into English learning and teaching. It also argues for raising students' GE awareness and applying critical pedagogy in ELT for GE-oriented instruction.

Introduction

The momentum of English as a world language has propelled the trend of ELT across the globe (Cogo 2012; Galloway and Rose 2015). However, against the background of globalization where various languages meet and multifaceted language ideologies are discussed, it has also compelled the ELT industry to re-evaluate the purposes and targets of ELT. It has been argued that the traditional framework of EFL, in which 'native English' is the sole standard for evaluation, does not reflect today's linguistic landscape (Jenkins 2015; Seidlhofer 2011). One of the reasons is that the number of NNSs has surpassed the number of NSs of this international language.

Although the ownership of English is being challenged (see Ren 2014; Seidlhofer 2011), the ELT field today still largely focuses on 'native' ideology, particularly in many expanding circle settings. Awareness of Global Englishes (GE) is generally lacking in ELT practices. To a large extent, many language practitioners and learners perceive 'native English' as a golden rule that should be strictly followed (but see the criticisms in Ren 2014). However, English users will participate in various communities of practice with multilingual speakers in a more international context, the majority of whom do not speak English as a mother tongue (Seidlhofer 2011). Therefore, the status quo of English use requires that English language teachers and learners raise their awareness of GE and acknowledge the importance of integrating a GE-oriented pedagogy into ELT. In this transition era of ELT, however, there is still

a lack of research at the classroom level exploring what GE refers to and the possible influence a GE-oriented pedagogy would bring to learners, as noted by Galloway and Rose (2018).

In this paper, GE is operationalized as the metamorphosis of English across borders in today's globalized world (Jenkins 2015). Accordingly, a GE-oriented pedagogy focuses on the authentic use of English in international situations to (re)construct and (re)negotiate meaning for intercultural communication. Rather than promote a native-oriented ideology in ELT, GE-oriented pedagogy argues the need to develop students' communication strategies from the GE paradigm and raise their awareness of diverse varieties, identities, and the current development of English. Based on the need to offer a GE-oriented pedagogy in ELT (Galloway and Rose 2015, 2018), the first author designed the course 'Introduction to English as a World Language' at a university in southeast China. The course introduces various language ideologies, both 'native and postcolonial' varieties of English, English and globalization, and the future of English. This paper first introduces the relationship between GE and ELT, and discusses the design of the course, followed by the analysis of student interviews and their reflective journals. It concludes by discussing the implications of incorporating a GE-oriented pedagogy in ELT.

Global Englishes and ELT

English has not only formed a number of 'postcolonial' nation-bound varieties, but has also witnessed newer non-nation-bound developments as used by people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds (see Galloway and Rose 2015; Jenkins 2015). The development of different varieties and English as a lingua franca (ELF) challenges the traditional 'native-speaker' norms in ELT (Cogo 2012). ELF can be defined as 'any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option' (Seidlhofer 2011: 7). By contrast, GE is an umbrella and a more inclusive term that encompasses recognized English varieties and ELF (Jenkins 2015), referring to the spread, development, and use of English in various contexts.

Although it is a challenge to implement GE in ELT, some proposals have been suggested. For example, the post-method pedagogy developed by Kumaravadivelu (2003) emphasizes the local context of English use, argues for the importance of context-sensitive teaching, and recognizes the sociocultural reality to empower learners as to their individual identities. Although Kumaravadivelu's (2003) approach did not directly use the term GE, it is relevant in that it positions ELT from a critical perspective that challenges the fixed teaching model in the traditional EFL pedagogy. Fang (2016) drew upon the post-method pedagogy and raised a model of teaching pronunciation for intercultural communication, which required teachers to break through the 'native-speaker'-oriented approach where 'native standard' English was viewed as the only yardstick in many ELT contexts.

Focusing on pedagogical implications of ELF in secondary schools in Germany, Kohn (2015) argues for a reconciliation between ELF and ELT,

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and the implementation of a pedagogical space for ELF-related learning activities, which enable students to reflect their own ELF-specific creativity within an overall standard English orientation. Likewise, Sifakis (2017) proposes a framework of ELF awareness for integrating ELF research in ELT pedagogy and teacher education. The framework focuses on enhancing the awareness of ELF among teachers and learners, as well as other ELT stakeholders, consisting of awareness of language and language use, awareness of instructional practice, and awareness of learning. This approach emphasizes the 'dynamic, recurrent interplay of *negotiations* involving purpose, syllabus, method, and evaluation within a milieu of attitudes and expectations of everyone involved' (Sifakis 2017: 9, emphasis original).

Galloway and Rose (2018) explored Global English Language Teaching (GELT) to raise students' awareness of the diversity of English and to challenge the traditional ELT approach. The authors reported on an experiment in a Japanese university that asked students to select and present an English variety. Findings showed that students developed positive attitudes towards and raised their awareness of English varieties. This activity not only helped them note morphosyntactic and phonological differences in each variety of English, but also enabled them to 'reflect on the linguistic history of a nation in order to understand the processes that helped shape the English spoken there' (Galloway and Rose 2018: 10). Under GELT, the ownership of English is revisited and norms are more diverse and flexible. Learners' first languages and cultures are regarded as a resource rather than a hindrance or a source of interference. Thus, GELT is seen as a more appropriate approach, in line with the current emphasis on multilingualism, in contrast to traditional ELT practices which continue to be overwhelmingly monolingual.

Despite the above-cited works which attempt to incorporate various aspects of GE into the classroom, actual ELT practices seem to be relatively slow to reflect on GE. In many settings, especially in EFL contexts, classroom practices are still very much 'native-speaker oriented'. As noted by Seidlhofer (2011: 183), one of the essential problems in ELT is the entrenched assumption that 'the only English that is worth striving for in the language classroom is that which conforms to some native-speaker norms'. Therefore, a course was designed to introduce a GE-oriented pedagogy to equip students with more up-to-date comprehension of the current linguistic landscape of English.

The study
Research questions

By recognizing the importance of introducing GE to students and the gap between theory and practice in ELT, this study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. To what extent does this course on English as a World Language influence the Chinese university students' attitudes towards their own English?
2. What are the students' attitudes towards the concept of GE after taking the course?

These two research questions aim to determine the effect of taking the course on changing the students' attitudes towards English, and the

feasibility of incorporating the concept of GE into language classrooms in China.

The course: 'Introduction to English as a World Language'

The first author designed a course to introduce different language ideologies, the spread and use of English worldwide, and various language attitudes in relation to ELT. It was a 16-week optional course offered to undergraduate students with a higher-intermediate level of English. The coursebook written by Jenkins (2015) was used as the main textbook with supplementary materials including academic papers and an online course named 'Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching' on the FutureLearn website. The lecturer presented a sample of 'native and postcolonial' English varieties and the current status of English use in a broader setting. Linking to the local setting, the course also focused on language policy, planning, and ELT practice in China for students to discuss and debate certain topics in relation to globalization and the localized variety of English. With respect to assessment, students were required to perform a mid-term discussion, choose and present a relevant topic of GE at the end of the semester, and submit a portfolio including reading reports and reflective journals (see Appendix 1 for the weekly schedule of the course). We believe that the introduction of such a course is an important way to raise students' awareness of the diversity of English and multilingualism in order to equip English learners and users for their future use of English in today's globalized world.

Setting and participants

The study was conducted in a university located in southeast China, which has more than 7000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. All of the students are required to pass certain levels of English during their study. In particular, the university values students' English ability as a key element for their applications to participate in exchange programmes with overseas universities.

This research was conducted with undergraduate students who had finished their general English courses and had achieved a high-intermediate level of English. They had all passed College English Test Band 6, and some of them had also obtained IELTS scores of 6.5–7 and had travel and exchange experiences abroad. They chose this course because they regarded English as an important tool for their further study, or they took English as their second major and needed certain credits for optional courses. The course was taught in both spring and autumn semesters with approximately 50 students enrolled altogether in two semesters from the 2016–2017 academic year.

In order to improve the quality of the course and to understand any attitudinal changes towards students' own English and their perceptions of GE, particularly for the application of GE in ELT, students were asked to participate in face-to-face semi-structured interviews at the end of the course. In order to minimize researcher influence and for ethical purposes, the students were told that their participation in this study would not affect their final results in the course. At the end of the spring 2016 semester, the first author conducted a series of interviews (n = 12), asking students to reflect on what they had learned from the course. They were also asked questions related to their English learning motivation,

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their perceptions of their own English before and after taking the course, their understanding of GE, and the potential benefits of and suggestions for the course (see Appendix 2 for the interview prompts). Another group of students who took the course in the autumn 2016 semester wrote reflective journals (n =13) as part of their course portfolio (see Appendix 3 for the guidelines for the reflective journal). The interviews were conducted in Chinese and the examples from interview data were translated into English by the authors; the students' reflective journals were originally written in English.

Findings and discussion
Changes of attitudes towards English

The students reported mixed attitudes towards their own English before taking the course. For example, a student responded: 'I do not want to have an accent' (Int, Participant 11). Another student reported: 'Especially when talking with native speakers, I am worried if my interlocutors cannot understand my accent, or I cannot understand other people's accents. So I seldom use English to start a conversation' (Int, Participant 7). Another participant was even more direct by admitting 'my English is poor' (Int, Participant 9).

Nine out of 12 students reported imitating other people's accents, either intentionally or unintentionally. These students stated that they would imitate their teachers' accents or, more often, certain 'native' accents from TV series or films. Among them, four students reported that they were explicitly told to imitate either British or American English accents. Only three out of the 12 interviewed students (25%) reported that they never or seldom imitated others. As the interview data indicated, accent particularly attracted the students' attention, although they also commented on their English in other aspects such as grammar and writing (Int, Participant 5, Participant 12). For example, one student reported: 'I was afraid of my grammar mistakes when using English and dare not express myself in English' (Int, Participant 5).

After taking the course, the students generally developed an awareness of the diversity of English and did not feel ashamed of their own English. For example, one student commented: 'It is more important to express your ideas clearly during communication, and not to judge whether someone can speak *standardly*' (Int, Participant 1). Another student reported a similar understanding: 'I feel that it is not a failure if you speak English with a local accent' (Int, Participant 5). Also, 'I regard myself now as an English user. I am able to express myself and I am not afraid of making grammar mistakes anymore' (Int, Participant 12).

These comments showed that students learned not to judge local accents and usage. They started to realize that it was not a shame to use English with deviations provided that intelligibility was achieved. It is worth reminding that the GE approach does not abandon *accuracy*, but views the concept of *mutual intelligibility* through meaning *negotiation* as a priority for communication. The students seemed to have become aware of that. For example, a student wrote in his journal: 'In the past, ... I should speak English as the native speaker, ... and it is in this class that I know I don't have to speak as native people. I just need to express myself clearly and make myself understood' (Jour, Participant 2). The students' reflective

journals revealed that they also developed a critical awareness of English. For instance, a student reported that prior to the course, she was told to imitate NS uses, whereas after the course, she maintained that the concept of NS should be re-evaluated and reconceptualized (Jour, Participant 3).

Another participant also elaborated on this attitudinal change (Jour, Participant 9). She expressed that when she first entered the university, she felt inferior because she could not speak English fluently and was told to take a pronunciation course. The teacher told her to change her 'Chinese English accent' and imitate native accents, but she was not able to do so. Her teacher interpreted this as a lack of effort and gave her a low grade. She shared: 'I felt frustrated and more inferior because I could not speak standard English.' After the course, she did change her attitude towards English, though she still admired people who speak with a 'beautiful' accent:

> To be honest, I cannot let go of the accent but I felt more relieved after this course. I used to stick to the so-called standard accents and believed that they are the correct accents. Now, I still admire people who can speak beautiful British or American accent, but I felt ok about my own accent. (Jour, Participant 9)

The above data indicated that the students may still display different language ideologies during their English learning process. Although they came to challenge the necessity of learning to become native-like, they still lamented the current ELT situation in China. A student asked, 'Why do we need to learn "their English"?' (Int, Participant 4) after taking the course, but she also reported that 'at least many Chinese still believe British and American English are excellent English' (Int, Participant 4). To some extent, this deep-rooted ideology was embedded in many students' minds.

Attitudes towards the concept of GE

In general, the students raised their awareness of GE and believed in the importance of incorporating GE in ELT. They learned to challenge some entrenched language ideologies and view English from a more critical perspective. One student commented, 'I found a "new continent" because I used to see only one side of the coin (EFL or being native-oriented)' (Int, Participant 4). The students reported that they better understood linguistic and cultural diversity compared to restricting their English learning journey to an EFL approach. One student highlighted the importance of moving from being a language learner to being a language user and understanding that language was a channel for communication: 'We should focus on raising awareness of GE and English functions for various purposes' (Int, Participant 7).

The students became more tolerant of people's 'non-standard' uses of English after they were exposed to the knowledge of GE. For example, one student stated: 'I have developed my linguistic awareness and will respect other people when they use English' (Int, Participant 3). She also compared GE to traditional EFL instruction and commented that EFL was rather 'prescriptive', whereas GE had more freedom of choice. Another student reported: 'Apart from British and American English I shall try to develop my awareness and understand English of other countries' (Int, Participant 6). In many aspects, the students perceived English from a

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broader perspective and viewed English from a more critical perspective, both socioculturally and ideologically, though the ideological conflicts remained in their minds. For example, although three students (Int, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 11) reported that they started to feel proud of their own English and respected other uses of English, they had to shift to a traditional EFL model in their own general English courses.

The students' journal entries reflected a positive perception of GE and the course overall, and an understanding that English had an impact on people's attitudes, identities, and behaviours. Three participants also challenged the Anglophone-oriented English learning materials (Jour, Participant 1, Participant 3, Participant 5), and the notion of 'native-speakerism' in ELT (Holliday 2006). They argued that the notion of 'native-speakerism' was 'a problematic concept that needs to be rethought, re-evaluated and re-conceptualized' (Jour, Participant 3). They felt it necessary to discuss various language ideologies from a GE perspective and hoped the conversations held in this course could be extended to regular English courses (Jour, Participant 5). Overall, the students gained a more pluricentric perspective, raised their awareness of GE, and challenged some deep-rooted concepts of traditional ELT.

Pedagogical implications

Although the present study was conducted in China, the findings and implications can shed light on other ELT communities, particularly at tertiary level with a large class size. It is worth noting that course feedback is just one of the many end products that can indicate students' attitudinal change in their English learning and their understanding of GE. However, several pedagogical implications can be drawn from the present study. By adopting GE, the ELT classroom would incorporate the perspective of critical pedagogy (Norton and Toohey 2004) to challenge the deep-rooted 'standard' language ideology for teachers, students, and other stakeholders to understand the complexity of ELT against the backdrop of globalization.

First, the traditional ELT practices based on 'native standard' should be re-envisaged. Instead of following a native-oriented monolingual English approach without scepticism and adaptation, stakeholders should understand local creativity as a resource rather than a hindrance and empower themselves accordingly. The present study has documented the potential of a GE approach and the usefulness of certain activities for participants' developing attitudes, for instance raising critical awareness of accents, emphasis on effectiveness rather than accuracy, critical view of the learner–user dichotomy, and the role of presenting authentic communication in English. The students reported that they were informed of the fluid and multifaceted use of English in which the Anglophone model could no longer serve as the only yardstick to measure their learning. They realized that content was more important than linguistic correctness (Cogo 2015). Thus, incorporating GE into ELT can help students gain a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the hybrid nature of English and acknowledge the legitimacy of their own English.

Second, given the positive feedback of incorporating GE in ELT, it is necessary for teachers to develop a GE-oriented approach and in turn

raise learners' awareness of the diversity of English and accommodation skills when using English. The GE approach advocates the sociolinguistic reality of real-life English used for intercultural communication (Baker 2015; Seidlhofer 2011). This requires the incorporation of GE and GELT in teacher training and teacher professional development programmes, as proposed in Sifakis (2017). Practitioners, teachers and students should go beyond the learning of language *per se*, but adopt a critical approach to explore the importance of reflection and praxis in classroom practice (Norton and Toohey 2004; Sifakis 2017). The present and previous research findings in similar contexts have documented that many students have struggled with the 'perfectionist' model of an idealized 'native speaker' as the only benchmark, thus leading to a sense of self-deficiency and a lack of confidence in English learning. Therefore, the present study calls for a shift in pedagogical focus to ask teachers to reconsider the notion of linguistic correctness in traditional ELT practices, to take into account the demands in their local ecosystem, as discussed in Sifakis (2017), which entail class size, allocated instruction time, the needs of local classrooms, and the requirements and expectations of institutions, as well as attitudes towards GE.

Third, more curriculums emphasizing GE in ELT should be designed, especially at tertiary level (e.g. Galloway and Rose 2018). For instance, GE-oriented pedagogy in ELT requires both teachers and students to critically evaluate what they have seen and learned from the textbook for their contexts. The ELT industry has shown more interest in GE; however, these developments have been scarce in relation to material development (Cogo 2015). Global and local textbooks are still very much native-oriented to reinforce the values and practices of the 'new capitalism' (Gray 2010), but conservative in representations of GE. Teachers should be aware of this discrepancy and include some potentially effective ways to raise learners' awareness of GE. For example, the successful pedagogical innovation from the GE approach asking students to select and present an English variety (Galloway and Rose 2018) can be incorporated in future ELT practice. In addition, teachers are encouraged to adopt various activities such as creating a pedagogical space for ELF (Kohn 2015) and including ELF usage in the local community (Baker 2015) to raise learners' intercultural awareness and develop their agency in learning and using English. The potential of online learning is also worth investigating, as reported in Kohn (2015).

Conclusion

The paper explored the influence of a course on English as a World Language in Chinese university students' awareness of their English and GE. There are, nevertheless, some limitations that need to be addressed. First, this study only investigated one round of student interviews and reflective journals at the end of the course. That is, the study can only reveal students' reported attitudinal changes. Further research may want to adopt a pre- and post-test design at the beginning and the end of the course, to provide more detailed insights of the attitudinal changes. Second, due to the small sample size and the specific nature of the course, the findings reported in the study cannot be generalized. More studies are needed to include other sources of data to shed light on the factors

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influencing the changes in students' attitudes for a better understanding of adopting GE into ELT practice in different contexts.

In conclusion, in today's globalized and multilingual world, ELT practitioners need to be aware of different needs and goals of students who will use English in different settings. Teachers should equip students with updated knowledge of English and its current status to cater to their future English use with people from various lingua-cultural backgrounds. The course reported in the study presented students with a broad picture of English and prepared them for future interaction in English by re-addressing the use of English worldwide and providing them with a global vision of English. The critical pedagogical approach incorporated in the GE-oriented course could enhance students' awareness of the diversity of real-life English use and cultivate a GE-oriented approach in ELT.

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Appendix 1: Weekly schedule of the course

Week	Content
1	Course Introduction
2	The Spread of English: The Historical, Social and Political Context
3	British and American English
4	Canadian, Australian and New Zealand English
5	English in Postcolonial Communities: New Englishes
6	Standard English Debate
7	ELF: An Introduction
8	Language Ideologies and Attitudes of ELF
9	Mid-term Seminar
10	English Language Policy, Planning and Teaching in China (**1**)
11	English Language Policy, Planning and Teaching in China (**2**)
12	Language Rights and Discrimination
13	Review, Preparation of the Final Presentation
14	English and Globalization
15	The Future of English
16	Final Presentation; Submission of Portfolio

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview prompts

1. Talk about your English learning experience, motivation for learning English, etc.
2. What do you think of your own English (pronunciation learning, attitudes towards own English before/after taking the course, etc.)?
3. What is your understanding of Global Englishes (current/future use of English, possibility of incorporating GE in ELT, etc.)?
4. Which aspects of the course do you like? Any suggestions for the course?

Appendix 3: Guidelines of reflective journals

1. Motivation for choosing the course.
2. General impressions of the course during/after the semester.
3. Share one or two aspects that you have learned from the course.
4. Write what you like and how you think that the course should be improved.
5. Are there any changes regarding your attitudes towards English, and English teaching and learning after taking the course?