



Negotiating Native-Speaker Norms, Accent Diversity, and English Ownership: First-Year IT Students' Attitudes Toward English Varieties in the EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

This study examines first-year Information Technology (IT) students' perceptions and attitudes toward English varieties in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, with particular attention to preferences for English varieties, perceptions of accent and pronunciation variation, and beliefs about English ownership and legitimacy. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected via an online questionnaire comprising 22 Likert-scale items and administered to first-year IT students at an Indonesian university. The findings indicate that students do not hold a single, fixed orientation toward English. While American and British English continue to be associated with academic authority, correctness, and institutional standards, students also demonstrate growing openness toward linguistic diversity, including positive attitudes toward local accents, tolerance for pronunciation variation, and recognition of English as a shared communicative resource. Students' views reflect an ongoing negotiation between established educational norms and the practical demands of global communication, particularly in digital and multilingual environments relevant to the IT field. Rather than a clear shift away from native-speaker norms, the results suggest the emergence of hybrid, context-sensitive orientations, in which different expectations for English are applied depending on communicative purposes. These findings highlight the importance of moving beyond rigid notions of linguistic correctness and support the integration of Global Englishes-informed perspectives in EFL pedagogy, especially in English for Specific Purposes contexts, to better align instruction with students' academic, professional, and communicative needs.

Introduction

English has become a global language used by people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, learners are no longer exposed to a single, uniform model of English. Instead, they encounter a wide range of English varieties through digital media, online platforms, and technology-based resources. This condition reflects the changing role of English, which now functions not only as a subject of study but also as a practical means of communication across borders.

For students in technology-related fields, particularly Information Technology (IT), English plays a central role in both academic and professional life. English is widely used in programming documentation, software development resources, online forums, and global professional networks. Through these digital spaces, IT students regularly interact with English produced by speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. As a result, they are increasingly exposed to diverse accents, pronunciation patterns, and communicative styles that differ from traditional native-speaker models.

Despite this growing exposure to linguistic diversity, many EFL learners continue to associate English primarily with Inner Circle countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. American and British English are often perceived as the most correct, prestigious, and legitimate forms of the language. Such perceptions are closely linked to educational practices that position native-speaker norms as the benchmark of language proficiency. [Holliday \(2015\)](#), describes this tendency as *native-speakerism*, an ideology that privileges native speakers and marginalizes other forms of English use. Within this framework, non-native English varieties are frequently viewed as deficient rather than as legitimate forms shaped by different sociolinguistic contexts.

The dominance of standard language ideology has been widely discussed in studies on global English use. Kachru (1992) conceptualizes World Englishes as consisting of Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle varieties, emphasizing that English develops in response to local linguistic and cultural needs. Although Kachru's model was proposed several decades ago, its relevance remains strong in contemporary discussions of English diversity. Building on this perspective, research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) shows that English is often used as a shared language among speakers who do not share a first language. From an ELF perspective, variation in pronunciation and language use is seen as natural and functional, as long as communication remains intelligible (Jenkins & Panero, 2025; Seidlhofer, 2015).

For IT students, engagement with multiple English varieties is not an abstract concept but a daily reality. They routinely access global digital content and participate in online communities where English is used flexibly by speakers from various linguistic backgrounds. However, exposure alone does not automatically lead to acceptance. Learners' perceptions of English varieties play a crucial role in shaping their confidence, motivation, and willingness to use English. Previous studies have shown that negative attitudes toward non-native English varieties may lead learners to undervalue their own English, experience communication anxiety, and place excessive emphasis on sounding like native speakers (Galloway & Rose, 2018). In contrast, more positive attitudes toward English diversity have been associated with increased communicative confidence and more realistic expectations of English use in global contexts.

At the institutional level, assessment practices and teaching materials often continue to emphasize Inner Circle norms, particularly in pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. Such practices may unintentionally reinforce narrow views of English proficiency and limit students' acceptance of linguistic variation. As a result, learners may experience tension between the English they encounter in real-world digital communication and the English that is valued in formal educational settings. This tension is especially relevant for IT students, whose future professional communication is likely to occur in international, multilingual environments.

Given the central role of English in Information Technology and the increasingly global nature of digital communication, it is important to examine how IT students perceive different English varieties, accents, and usage. Investigating their attitudes toward World Englishes, pronunciation variation, and English ownership can provide valuable insight into how English is understood and negotiated by future technology professionals. Such understanding is essential for informing EFL pedagogy and assessment practices that better reflect the realities of global English use and support learners' confidence and communicative effectiveness.

Method

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine Information Technology students' perceptions and attitudes toward World Englishes. This methodology was chosen because it enables systematic data collection through a standardised instrument and allows for the identification of students' attitudinal tendencies toward different varieties of English. The Research instrument was a questionnaire adapted from Fransisca & Subekti (2022) and designed to assess students' perceptions of World Englishes, particularly their attitudes toward different English varieties. The instrument was developed and refined by Fransiska and Subekti, drawing on prior studies, to ensure its relevance and suitability for EFL learners in Expanding Circle contexts, including Indonesia.

Furthermore, the questionnaire used by Fransisca & Subekti (2022) was adapted from two earlier instruments developed by Choi (2007) and Rousseau (2012). Of the 22 statements included in the questionnaire, the majority focus on variation in English accents as a central dimension of World Englishes. Although World Englishes also encompasses variation in grammar and vocabulary, accent was emphasised because it often serves as a primary indicator in judgments concerning the legitimacy and acceptance of particular English varieties. In addition, the original studies by Choi (2007) and Rousseau (2012) were conducted in South Korea, a country classified as part of the Expanding Circle, which shares sociolinguistic similarities with the Indonesian context. This parallel further supports the instrument's appropriateness for the present study.

The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms and distributed to 102 first-year students in the Information Technology Study Program. The online format was selected to facilitate efficient

distribution, enhance participant accessibility, and improve data-collection efficiency. Participation was voluntary, and all data collected were used exclusively for Research purposes.

Result and Discussion

This section delineates and analyzes the study's findings on first-year Information Technology students' attitudes toward English variants in the EFL context. The average score for all questionnaire items was 2.79 on a four-point scale, indicating modest acceptance of various English variants. This discovery indicates that although conventional native-speaker models still shape students' views of English, there is increasing receptivity to the use of English beyond Inner Circle standards. To enable systematic analysis, the data are categorized into three thematic areas: students' preferences for various English varieties, their perspectives on approved pronunciation and accents, and their ideas regarding the ownership of English. These themes offer a systematic framework for analyzing how students navigate established standards and worldwide applications of English in academic and professional settings.

Students' Preferences for Different English Varieties

Students' responses regarding English varieties reveal that their preferences are not uniformly aligned with a singular model of English. The data patterns indicate varying levels of acceptance across English varieties, as evidenced by mean scores, standard deviations, and response distributions across agreement levels. Some items exhibit stronger alignment with specific varieties, whereas others show more mixed or moderate tendencies. These variations underscore the intricacy of students' preferences rather than a distinct, cohesive orientation. The comprehensive statistical outcomes for each assertion are displayed in Table 1.

Item No.	Statement	Mean Scores	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	It is crucial that I use American, British, and Australian English.	2,50	0,91	10,78%	18,63%	47,06%	7,84%
7	If the use of English does not correspond to American or British English, it is incorrect.	2,50	0,91	10,78%	18,63%	47,06%	21,57%
8	The kind of English that is taught in schools must have either American or British standards	2,51	0,83	6,86%	23,53%	49,02%	27,45%
9	The school exercises should be written in British or American English.	2,48	0,78	1,96%	32,35%	43,14%	13,73%
11	I prefer to use British or American English, either in speaking or writing	2,44	0,83	6,86%	24,51%	48,04%	14,71%
17	I am more comfortable speaking English with non-native English speakers (e.g., Thais, Indonesians, Koreans).	2,85	0,87	19,61%	39,22%	33,33%	16,67%
19	The other variations of English from all over the world should be taught in schools	2,97	0,90	33,33%	42,16%	16,67%	6,86%
20	The exercises in schools can use non-standard English variations	2,68	0,84	24,51%	51,96%	15,69%	2,94%

The data in Table 1 show students' preferences for different English varieties, particularly their tendency to view American and British English as dominant standards and their perceptions of non-native and non-standard varieties. The mean scores, ranging from 2.44 to 2.97, indicate moderate agreement rather than strong support for any single variety. In addition, the standard deviations between 0.78 and 0.91 suggest noticeable differences in individual responses, reflecting diverse views among students. These patterns indicate that learners are currently in a transitional phase, balancing long-standing educational norms with a growing awareness of English as a global and diverse language (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Jenkins & Panero, 2025).

Table 1 also highlights the continued symbolic importance of American and British English, especially in formal educational contexts. Item 1, which emphasizes the importance of American, British, and Australian English, recorded a mean score of 2.50 (SD = 0.91), while Item 7, which considers non-American or non-British English as incorrect, showed the same mean value (M = 2.50, SD = 0.91). Similarly, Item 8, which states that English teaching in schools should follow American or British standards, obtained a mean score of 2.51 (SD =

0.83). Item 9, related to the use of these varieties in school exercises, had a mean of 2.48, with a slightly lower standard deviation ($SD = 0.78$). These findings suggest that students tend to show greater agreement when English norms are linked to formal instruction and assessment. From a theoretical perspective, this reflects the Influence of native-speakerism, which views Inner-Circle English varieties as more legitimate and authoritative in educational settings (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Holliday, 2015).

This tendency can also be explained through the lens of standard language ideology, which holds that certain language varieties are socially constructed as more "correct" and prestigious than others. When classroom practices and learning materials consistently prioritize so-called Standard English, students are more likely to develop the belief that these varieties represent the most acceptable and legitimate forms of English. In this sense, students' preference for American and British English in formal contexts reflects not only linguistic considerations but also institutional norms that shape how English is valued and evaluated in education.

However, students' personal language preferences appear to be more flexible than their views on institutional requirements. Item 11, which examines students' preference for British or American English in speaking or writing, had a mean score of 2.44 ($SD = 0.83$), slightly lower than the means for the school-related items. This difference suggests that although students recognize the importance of standard varieties in formal contexts, they do not necessarily adopt these norms as their only linguistic identity. The variation in responses further indicates that learners adjust their language choices depending on the situation and their communicative goals. This finding supports Kirkpatrick's (2022) view that English users in Expanding Circle contexts increasingly adopt a pragmatic approach, using English primarily as a means of communication rather than as a measure of native-like ability.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this pattern can be linked to the concept of linguistic capital, which holds that certain ways of speaking carry higher social value and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991; Park, 2011). In many educational contexts, native-like English continues to function as a marker of prestige and academic legitimacy. However, students' increasingly flexible preferences suggest a gradual shift in how English is positioned in everyday use. Rather than serving primarily as a symbol of elite identity, English is increasingly understood as a practical communicative resource, particularly in multilingual and intercultural settings (Jenkins & Panero, 2025; Seidlhofer, 2015). This shift also reflects learners' changing investment in English, where the pursuit of social recognition gives way to the need for legitimacy and effectiveness in real communication (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

A more positive attitude toward linguistic diversity is evident in items related to interaction with non-native speakers and exposure to global English varieties. Item 17 shows that students feel more comfortable speaking English with non-native speakers, with a mean score of 2.85 ($SD = 0.87$). This suggests that many learners find such interactions less stressful and more supportive. The strongest support appears in Item 19, which encourages the teaching of different English varieties from around the world ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.90$), indicating students' openness to World Englishes in education. Item 20, which allows the use of non-standard English varieties in school exercises, also received a generally positive response ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.84$), although the slightly lower mean shows that some students remain cautious about their use in formal academic contexts. These results are in line with Research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which emphasizes effective communication and mutual understanding rather than strict adherence to native-speaker norms (Jenkins & Panero, 2025; Seidlhofer, 2015).

This preference for interaction with fellow non-native speakers can be understood in terms of psychological comfort and perceived equality among interlocutors. When communicating with peers who share similar linguistic backgrounds, students may experience less anxiety and feel freer to express themselves without fear of being judged against native-speaker standards. Such conditions support a more inclusive view of English as a shared communicative resource rather than as a benchmark of linguistic superiority.

Despite this openness, the findings also reveal a clear tension between students' positive views of linguistic diversity and their concerns about its place in formal education. While students generally support learning about different English varieties, they tend to be more careful when these varieties challenge traditional ideas of correctness and assessment. This pattern reflects (Galloway & Rose, 2018) observation that learners often accept Global Englishes in theory but hesitate when it affects established evaluation systems.

Similar results were reported by Fang & Ren (2018), who found that although students value linguistic diversity, they still feel constrained by exam-oriented environments that favour standard forms of English. These findings suggest that changes in students' attitudes require corresponding adjustments to curriculum design and assessment practices.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results highlight the importance of more systematically integrating World Englishes and Global Englishes perspectives into English language teaching. Rather than focusing only on American and British English, teachers can adopt an additive approach, in which standard varieties are taught alongside other global forms of English (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2010). This approach helps students develop the language skills needed for formal academic contexts while also preparing them for real-life communication in international and multicultural settings. By recognizing and valuing diversity in English use, educators may also help reduce students' anxiety and increase their confidence in using English in authentic situations.

Overall, the findings show that students' preferences for English varieties are shaped by the interaction between traditional educational beliefs and current communicative needs. The moderate support for standard native varieties, together with increasing openness to global and non-native forms of English, suggests that learners are developing hybrid language orientations that combine different models of English. This supports Sung's (2024) argument that contemporary users of English as a lingua franca often negotiate between institutional expectations and their own communicative needs, leading to flexible, context-sensitive language practices. In Expanding Circle contexts, these findings highlight the importance of moving beyond rigid notions of linguistic correctness toward a more nuanced understanding of how English is actually used by students in globalized academic and social settings.

Perceptions of Acceptable Accents and Pronunciation Variations

Items 3, 5, 6, 10, 14, 15, 21, and 22 capture students' perceptions of acceptable English accents and pronunciation. These items address learners' views on standard English varieties, their attitudes toward their own local accent, and their responses to pronunciation differences in spoken communication. The results are presented in Table 2. Taken together, the data provide a clear picture of how students interpret pronunciation norms and evaluate the acceptability of accents in their English use.

Item No.	Statement	Mean Scores	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	Only American, British, and Australian Englishes are the standard Englishes.	2,48	1,00	21,57%	29,41%	33,33%	5,88%
5	I am ashamed of the Indonesian accent that I have when I speak English	2,64	1,07	27,45%	22,55%	32,35%	23,53%
6	I always try to eliminate my Indonesian accent when I speak in English.	2,41	0,98	13,73%	26,47%	36,27%	11,76%
10	The correct pronunciation should match British or American usage.	2,81	0,94	14,71%	34,31%	34,31%	4,90%
14	I am proud of the local accent that I have	3,01	0,89	42,16%	39,22%	11,76%	6,86%
15	Other English speakers should be aware of my local accent.	2,79	0,75	19,61%	50,00%	27,45%	8,82%
21	Some mistakes in pronouncing English words are not a problem.	3,01	1,08	32,35%	24,51%	27,45%	15,69%
22	It is important for me to understand and respect the various English accents from around the world.	3,02	0,89	53,92%	28,43%	11,76%	5,88%

The results of the study indicate that students' perceptions of English accents and pronunciation variations are characterized by a dual orientation: a tendency to maintain native-speaker norms and an increased tolerance for pronunciation variation. This pattern aligns with studies of Global Englishes, which suggest that learners in Expanding Circle contexts often negotiate between institutional demands and the

realities of global communication, rather than fully adopting a particular pronunciation model (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2022).

Item 3, which concerns the view that only American, British, and Australian English are considered standard, had a mean score of 2.48 (SD = 1.00). This moderate mean indicates that students do not fully agree with the exclusivity of Inner Circle varieties, yet they still tend to associate pronunciation standards with native-speaker norms. A similar pattern is seen in Item 10, which states that correct pronunciation should follow British or American usage, with a higher mean score of 2.81 (SD = 0.94). These two findings reflect the strong influence of native-speakerism, an ideology that positions native-speaker accents as more legitimate and authoritative in educational contexts (Holliday, 2015). Recent research also shows that such beliefs are often reinforced by assessment practices and teaching materials that remain oriented toward native-speaker standards (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020).

Students' attitudes toward their own local accents reveal a more complex picture. Item 5 recorded a mean score of 2.64 (SD = 1.07) regarding feelings of embarrassment about having an Indonesian accent when speaking English, indicating a diversity of responses. The high variation in responses indicates that some students remain insecure about their accents, whereas others do not. This is reinforced by Item 6, which highlights efforts to eliminate an Indonesian accent, with a mean score of 2.41 (SD = 0.98). These findings suggest that, although pressure to imitate native-speaker pronunciation remains, it is not experienced equally by all students. This pattern aligns with identity-based approaches in applied linguistics, which emphasize that learners' pronunciation choices are determined not only by linguistic goals but also by the need to maintain legitimacy and self-esteem as language users (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Sung, 2024).

Conversely, a more positive attitude toward local accents was evident in Item 14, which received a mean score of 3.01 (SD = 0.89), indicating that many students felt proud of their local accents. This finding was supported by Item 15, with a mean score of 2.79 (SD = 0.75), indicating relative agreement that other English speakers should be aware of their interlocutors' accent backgrounds. Both results suggest that pronunciation is no longer viewed solely as a matter of phonological accuracy but also as part of the speaker's identity and social position. Recent sociolinguistic studies confirm that accents serve as markers of speaker legitimacy, and positive attitudes toward local accents reflect a shift from deficit views toward non-native pronunciation (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Sung, 2024).

Tolerance for pronunciation variation is also reflected in Items 21 and 22. Item 21, which states that some pronunciation errors are not a problem, recorded a mean score of 3.01 (SD = 1.08). Meanwhile, Item 22, which emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the various English accents worldwide, received the highest mean score of 3.02 (SD = 0.89). Both findings align closely with the principles of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which emphasize comprehensibility and effective communication over adherence to native-speaker norms (Jenkins & Panero, 2024; Seidlhofer, 2015). From an ELF perspective, pronunciation variation is not seen as a deficiency, but rather as a natural feature of multilingual interaction.

Overall, these findings suggest an ongoing ideological negotiation in students' perceptions of English pronunciation. On the one hand, native-speaker standards continue to shape conceptions of "correct pronunciation" in formal and institutional contexts. On the other hand, students are also developing more flexible attitudes toward accent diversity in everyday communication practices. This dual orientation reflects what Galloway & Rose (2018) call the gap between entrenched institutional norms and increasingly pluralistic global communication practices. Rather than moving linearly toward one particular pole, students appear to be developing a hybrid orientation, in which various norms coexist and are selectively activated depending on communicative context and perceived legitimacy. While native-speaker accents remain ideologically privileged in academic and institutional settings, intelligibility and communicative effectiveness emerge as more salient criteria in informal and transnational interactions. This pattern reflects the pragmatic orientation of many EFL learners in Expanding Circle contexts, who seek to balance institutional expectations with the practical demands of real-world communication (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Such ideological negotiation suggests that students are not merely passive recipients of dominant language ideologies but are actively reconciling competing norms in their own meaning-making processes. Their attitudes indicate an emerging awareness that effective communication in English does not necessarily require strict conformity to Inner-Circle pronunciation models, even if such models continue to function as symbolic capital in formal educational domains (Darvin & Norton, 2015). In this sense, students' perceptions

reflect a transitional stage between entrenched native-speakerism and a more pluralistic understanding of English pronunciation norms in a globalized world.

Perceptions of English Ownership and Legitimacy

Items 2, 4, 12, 13, 16, and 18 in this section address students' perceptions of who owns English and who has the right to use and shape the language. These items focus on students' views about the origin of English, authority over its development, the legitimacy of local varieties, and the idea that English can be used differently by speakers from diverse backgrounds. The results of these items are presented in Table 3.

Item No.	Statement	Mean Scores	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2	Basically, English is from America or Britain	2,16	0,95	12,75%	22,55%	41,18%	23,53%
4	Only the United States or Britain reserves the right to decide how the English language evolves.	2,94	1,01	35,29%	33,33%	19,61%	11,76%
12	The local variation (Indonesian) of English should be legitimate and equal to American	2,93	0,83	28,43%	45,10%	21,57%	4,90%
13	There should be more teachers who know the other varieties of English (Excluding American/ British English).	2,90	0,86	27,45%	39,22%	28,43%	4,90%
16	English can be used differently from the English native speakers' (British/American) usage.	3,00	0,91	31,37%	36,27%	25,49%	6,86%
18	English belongs to anyone who uses it.	3,09	0,94	41,18%	36,27%	13,73%	8,82%

The results presented in Table Z show that students' perceptions of English ownership reflect a mixed yet meaningful orientation toward both traditional authority and emerging inclusivity. While English is still associated with its historical origins in Inner-Circle countries, students simultaneously express a strong sense of belonging to the language as its users. This combination suggests that learners are not positioned at one end of the ideological spectrum, but are instead negotiating between inherited beliefs about English and their own experiences as non-native users.

Item 2, which concerns the idea that English originated in America or Britain, yields a relatively low mean score of 2.16 (SD = 0.95). Although this indicates that many students no longer strongly endorse the notion that English is exclusively tied to these countries, the item still reveals that the historical association of English with Inner-Circle nations remains present in students' awareness. This finding resonates with earlier research in other Expanding Circle contexts, which shows that learners often acknowledge the origins of English while gradually distancing themselves from the idea that origin determines ownership (K. Choi, 2007; N. Choi et al., 2021). In the Indonesian context, this pattern may be shaped not so much by daily interaction with native speakers, but by the limited opportunities to use English in authentic social communication, which can lead students to perceive English as something learned about rather than lived through use.

However, students' responses to Items 4, 12, 13, 16, and 18 exhibit a contrasting, more inclusive orientation. Item 4, which addresses authority over how English evolves, shows a mean of 2.94 (SD = 1.01), indicating divided views on whether such authority should remain with Inner-Circle countries. At the same time, strong agreement is found in Item 12 (M = 2.93, SD = 0.83), which supports the legitimacy of Indonesian English, and in Item 13 (M = 2.90, SD = 0.86), which calls for greater awareness of diverse English varieties among teachers. These results suggest that, while traditional power structures in English are still recognized, students increasingly challenge the idea that legitimacy must come solely from native-speaker authority.

This shift becomes even clearer in Items 16 and 18. Item 16, which states that English can be used differently from native-speaker norms, records a mean of 3.00 (SD = 0.91), while Item 18, asserting that English belongs to anyone who uses it, reaches the highest mean score of 3.09 (SD = 0.94). Together, these findings indicate a strong sense of user-based ownership, in which legitimacy is grounded in participation rather than origin. This orientation aligns closely with the view that English today functions less as a national language and more as a shared communicative resource shaped by its global community of users (Jenkins & Panero, 2025; Seidlhofer, 2015).

The apparent contrast between acknowledging the historical origins of English and affirming shared ownership reflects a broader pattern of ideological ambivalence often observed among learners in Expanding Circle contexts. Students may recognize that English developed in Inner-Circle societies, yet still believe that native speakers no longer hold exclusive rights to its use. Similar tendencies have been reported in previous studies, where learners expressed respect for native norms while simultaneously asserting their right to use English in their own ways (Choi, 2007; Galloway & Rose, 2018). In this sense, ownership is no longer understood as a matter of birthplace, but as a matter of communicative practice.

One possible explanation for this shift lies in students' increasing exposure to English through digital media and global communication platforms. Encounters with speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds using English confidently may reshape learners' perceptions of who can legitimately claim the language. Rather than seeing English as belonging to a particular group, students come to view it as a tool used by people worldwide for various purposes. This exposure contributes to what recent scholars describe as a growing awareness of English as a global language, in which legitimacy is defined by use rather than nativeness (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2022).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, these findings can also be interpreted through the concept of linguistic capital. Traditionally, native-speaker English has carried higher symbolic value and prestige, especially in academic and professional settings. However, the strong support for statements emphasizing shared ownership suggests that students are beginning to distinguish between the symbolic prestige of native-like English and the practical value of English for everyday communication. In doing so, English is gradually being repositioned from a marker of elite identity to a functional resource for participation in global interaction. This shift reflects learners' changing investments in English, moving away from the pursuit of status toward the pursuit of communicative legitimacy (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Sung, 2024).

Overall, the results indicate that students' perceptions of English ownership and legitimacy are characterized by a transitional and hybrid orientation (stance). While traditional beliefs about authority and origin remain influential, there is clear evidence of an emerging understanding that English belongs to all who use it. This evolving perspective reflects the complex position of English in Expanding Circle contexts, where learners must navigate institutional expectations rooted in native-speaker norms while also constructing their identities as confident and legitimate users of a global language.

Conclusion

This study examined students' perceptions of English through three interrelated dimensions: preferences for English varieties, views on acceptable accents and pronunciation variations, and beliefs about English ownership and legitimacy. Based on data collected from Information Technology students, the findings indicate that learners do not hold a single, fixed view of English. Instead, their perceptions reflect an ongoing process of adjustment shaped by established educational norms and the practical demands of communication in an increasingly globalized environment.

Across the three dimensions, students continue to associate American and British English with academic authority and institutional standards, particularly in formal educational contexts. This tendency is evident in their preference for Inner-Circle varieties and their inclination to link "correct" English with native-speaker norms. Such views suggest that native-speakerism and standard language ideologies remain influential in shaping how English is valued and evaluated in education. For Information Technology students, this orientation may be further reinforced by frequent exposure to English-language technical materials, professional documentation, and global digital platforms, where standardized forms of English are often treated as the default.

At the same time, the findings reveal a growing openness toward linguistic diversity. Students generally express positive attitudes toward local accents, show tolerance for pronunciation variation, and demonstrate respect for multiple English varieties used around the world. English is increasingly perceived not only as a marker of academic prestige but also as a practical tool for communication. This perspective is particularly relevant for Information Technology students, whose academic studies and future professional roles are closely connected to international collaboration, online interaction, and problem-solving in multilingual settings, where intelligibility and effectiveness tend to outweigh concerns about accent conformity.

Students' views on English ownership and legitimacy further support this pattern. While many participants still acknowledge the historical origins of English in Inner-Circle countries, a large proportion agree that English belongs to anyone who uses it. In this sense, legitimacy is increasingly associated with participation and actual language use rather than nativeness. This suggests that students are beginning to position themselves as legitimate English users, despite English not being their first language. Such perspectives reflect broader sociolinguistic developments in which English functions as a shared global resource rather than the property of a particular group.

Rather than pointing to a simple shift from traditional norms to fully pluralistic views, the findings suggest that students adjust their expectations for English depending on the context. In academic and assessment-related situations, standard norms continue to matter, while in everyday communication and global interaction, clarity and effectiveness are prioritized. This ability to move between different expectations highlights the complex role of English in Expanding Circle contexts and shows that learners actively negotiate meaning, identity, and legitimacy in their language use.

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, participants were limited to students in the Information Technology program, which may limit the applicability of the findings to learners from other academic disciplines. Second, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, capturing students' stated perceptions rather than their actual language practices in real communicative settings. Third, a purely quantitative design limits deeper exploration of students' personal experiences and the motivations underlying their responses. In addition, the study was conducted within a single institutional context, and local curricular practices may have influenced students' views. Future research could address these limitations by involving students from different fields of study, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or classroom observations, and conducting comparative studies across institutions.

Despite these limitations, the study offers several important contributions. Empirically, it adds to the growing body of research on English in Expanding Circle contexts by showing how students engage simultaneously with traditional native-speaker norms and more global perspectives on English. Contextually, it provides insight into the perceptions of Information Technology students, a group that remains underrepresented in attitudinal research despite their extensive engagement with English in digital and international domains. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings support the inclusion of Global Englishes-informed approaches in English language teaching, particularly within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts, to better align instruction with students' communicative needs and future professional realities.

Rather than framing English education as a choice between "standard" and "non-standard" models, the findings point to the importance of helping learners navigate the different roles English plays across contexts. For Information Technology students, English serves not only as an academic subject but also as a working language for accessing knowledge, collaborating internationally, and participating in global digital communities. Recognizing this reality allows educators to design instruction that supports accuracy where needed, while also encouraging confidence and flexibility in authentic communication. In this way, the study contributes to a more grounded and realistic understanding of English use in contemporary global contexts and offers insights for developing English language education that is academically sound, socially responsive, and relevant to students' disciplinary and professional trajectories.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that English language teaching, particularly for Information Technology students, should better reflect the communicative contexts in which English is actually used. While standard forms of English remain important for academic purposes, teaching practices may benefit from also acknowledging variation in accents and English use in global communication. Providing students with exposure to different English varieties and encouraging intelligible communication can help build confidence without undermining academic standards.

For future research, it is recommended that similar studies involve students from different academic disciplines to allow broader comparisons of perceptions of English. Employing qualitative methods such as interviews or classroom observations could also provide deeper insight into how students' beliefs are shaped by their learning experiences and how these beliefs influence their actual language use. Such approaches

would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of English use in diverse educational and professional contexts.

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