

Investigating Modern Islamic Boarding School Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions of World Englishes in an Indonesian Context

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the perceptions and instructional practices of Modern Islamic Boarding school English teachers in North Aceh and Lhokseumawe, Indonesia, concerning the concept of World Englishes (WE). Employing a qualitative research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The participants consisted of twelve English teachers representing different Modern Islamic boarding schools in North Aceh and Lhokseumawe. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative procedures.

The findings reveal that while teachers acknowledge the presence of diverse English varieties, their understanding of the theoretical foundations and pedagogical implications of World Englishes remains limited. The majority of teachers continue to prioritize inner-circle varieties, particularly American and British English, as the primary instructional models. This preference is influenced by factors such as curriculum constraints, limited exposure to global English varieties, and students' relatively low levels of English proficiency. As a result, the integration of World Englishes into classroom practice is still minimal.

The study recommends the implementation of focused professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' sociolinguistic awareness and pedagogical competence in addressing English variation. The gradual inclusion of non-native English varieties in teaching materials may contribute to more inclusive, authentic, and globally responsive English language instruction in Indonesia.

Keywords: *World Englishes; teachers' perceptions; English language teaching; pedagogical practice.*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi dan praktik pengajaran guru Bahasa Inggris pada pesantren modern di Aceh Utara, dan Lhokseumawe, Aceh, Indonesia, terkait konsep World Englishes (WE). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan analisis dokumen. Partisipan penelitian terdiri atas dua belas guru Bahasa Inggris berasal dari berbagai pesantren modern di Aceh Utara dan Lhokseumawe. Data yang diperoleh kemudian dianalisis secara kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun para guru menyadari keberadaan berbagai ragam bahasa Inggris, pemahaman mereka terhadap landasan teoretis dan implikasi pedagogis dari World Englishes masih terbatas. Sebagian besar guru masih memprioritaskan varietas *inner circle* khususnya bahasa Inggris Amerika dan Inggris Britania sebagai model utama dalam pengajaran. Preferensi ini dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor seperti keterbatasan kurikulum, minimnya paparan terhadap ragam bahasa Inggris global, serta tingkat kemahiran bahasa Inggris siswa yang relatif

rendah. Akibatnya, penerapan konsep World Englishes dalam praktik pembelajaran di kelas masih sangat terbatas. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan perlunya program pengembangan profesional terarah untuk meningkatkan kesadaran sociolinguistik dan kompetensi pedagogis guru dalam menghadapi variasi bahasa Inggris. Pengintegrasian secara bertahap ragam bahasa Inggris non-penutur asli ke dalam materi pembelajaran dapat mendorong praktik pengajaran bahasa Inggris lebih inklusif, autentik, dan berorientasi global di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: World Englishes; Persepsi guru; Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris; Praktik Pedagogi

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is positioned as a foreign language and is taught as a compulsory subject in schools. For many years, English language instruction has primarily followed native-speaker standards, especially American and British English, which are reflected in school curricula, textbooks, and exposure through mass media and digital platforms.

However, the rapid growth of globalization and international communication has transformed the role of English worldwide. English is no longer exclusively associated with native speakers; instead, it has become a global language that exists in multiple localized forms. The development of varieties such as Indian English, Singaporean English, and Chinese English illustrates how English has been adapted and used effectively by non-native speakers in diverse sociocultural settings. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as *World Englishes* (Kachru, 1985; Kirkpatrick, 2007).

According to Braj B. Kachru (1985), the spread of English can be explained through the Three Circles Model, consisting of the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. In this framework, English extends beyond countries where it is spoken as a native language and functions as a second or foreign language in many parts of the world. As a result, English has developed into an international means of communication characterized by diverse linguistic forms and cultural influences.

The concept of World Englishes recognizes that English is not a single uniform language but a pluralistic one shaped by local communities and contexts. Varieties such as Indian English, Singaporean English, and Chinese English demonstrate that successful intercultural communication can occur despite differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammatical structures. This perspective challenges the ideology of native-speakerism, which positions Inner Circle varieties, particularly American and British English, as the only legitimate standards of English use.

Farzad Sharifian and Ramin Sadeghpour (2020) emphasize that World Englishes play an important role in intercultural communication and English language teaching. Integrating World Englishes into classroom instruction can improve students' intercultural communicative competence and prepare them to communicate with both native and non-native speakers in global contexts. Similarly, Aya Matsuda (2003) acknowledges that incorporating World Englishes into classroom practice is challenging, yet she argues that such an approach can help learners develop a broader understanding of English as an international language.

Despite these developments, the integration of World Englishes into English language teaching in Indonesia remains limited. Many teachers continue to rely heavily on native-speaker

norms, while the curriculum and standardized assessments still prioritize Inner Circle varieties, especially American and British English (Permana & Rahma, 2024). Previous studies, such as Juwariyah (2022), reveal that although teachers may recognize English as a global language, classroom implementation is often constrained by limited training opportunities, insufficient institutional support, and a lack of authentic teaching materials.

Furthermore, most existing studies on World Englishes in Indonesia have focused on university students, pre-service teachers, or lecturers in higher education settings (e.g., Zacharias, 2003; Çepni & Çepni, 2024; Suminar & Gunawan, 2024; Hartono, 2025; Fadillah & Gunawan, 2025). Consequently, there is still a limited understanding of how secondary school teachers, particularly those in non-metropolitan areas, perceive and apply the concept of World Englishes in their classrooms. Heath Rose et al. (2021) also note that research on World Englishes and Global Englishes has predominantly concentrated on higher education, while studies at the junior and senior high school levels remain relatively scarce.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the understanding and classroom practices of Modern Islamic Boarding school English teachers in Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe. Specifically, the study seeks to answer three main questions: (1) What is the extent of teachers' understanding of World Englishes? (2) How do teachers perceive the pedagogical relevance of non-native varieties of English? and (3) In what ways do teachers implement the concept of World Englishes in classroom instruction?

Exploring these issues is important because Modern Islamic Boarding school teachers significantly influence students' language attitudes during a critical stage of language learning. By introducing students to the diversity of English varieties, teachers can encourage more positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity, reduce learners' anxiety regarding non-standard forms of English, and prepare them more effectively for communication in international contexts.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on English language education in Expanding Circle countries, where English is learned as a foreign language. In particular, it highlights the realities of English teaching in semi-urban Indonesian schools, where access to teaching resources and professional development opportunities may still be limited, despite increasing demands for global communication competence. Understanding teachers' perspectives in this context may provide useful insights for curriculum development and teacher training programs aimed at promoting sociolinguistic awareness and more inclusive English language pedagogy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore English teachers' understanding and classroom implementation of World Englishes. A qualitative approach was considered suitable because it allows researchers to examine participants' experiences, perceptions, and beliefs within their natural educational settings. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry emphasizes detailed descriptions and interpretation of data rather than statistical measurement or numerical analysis (Creswell, 2013; Rianto, 2020).

The study specifically employed a case study approach, which is useful for investigating a phenomenon in depth within its real-life context. According to John W. Creswell (2013), qualitative case studies enable researchers to gain comprehensive insights into social and educational issues through close interaction with participants and contextual analysis. Similarly, Hollie Coombs (2022) explains that case studies provide opportunities to explore complex issues thoroughly and holistically within specific contexts.

The research was conducted in Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe, an area selected due to the presence of active English-learning communities and the availability of senior high school English teachers. Twelve English teachers from several Modern Islamic boarding schools participated in the study. The participants were selected purposively based on their teaching experience, involvement in English language pedagogy, and willingness to contribute professional perspectives to the research. All participants had more than ten years of teaching experience and ranged in age from 35 to 50 years old, consisting of both male and female teachers.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, analysis of teaching documents and lesson materials, and an extensive review of relevant literature. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to express their opinions and experiences more freely while still focusing on the objectives of the study. In addition, document analysis provided supporting evidence regarding how World Englishes were reflected in classroom materials and instructional practices.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1994), which consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The analysis process involved coding interview transcripts, organizing data into thematic categories, and applying triangulation techniques to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings. The overall research procedure included conducting a literature review, collecting field data, transcribing interviews, coding and analyzing data, and synthesizing the findings to answer the research questions.

Through this methodological framework, the study was able to provide a deeper understanding of how English teachers in Lhokseumawe and Aceh Utara perceive the concept of World Englishes and how they integrate it into their classroom practices and pedagogical decisions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Understanding on the World Englishes Concept

The findings of this study indicate that most teachers possessed only a partial understanding of the concept of World Englishes (WE). Although many participants acknowledged that English is spoken differently in various parts of the world, only a small number were able to explain the theoretical foundations of World Englishes as conceptualized by scholars such as Braj B. Kachru. In general, teachers recognized the existence of multiple English varieties; however, several participants continued to regard American and British English as the only legitimate standards for teaching and learning English.

The interview results also revealed considerable variation in teachers' awareness of the term *World Englishes* among Modern Islamic Boarding school teachers in Lhokseumawe and Aceh Utara. Some participants stated that they had previously encountered the term, although their understanding remained limited, while others admitted that they had never heard of it before participating in the study.

One teacher explained that she was aware of differences among English varieties, particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary, but lacked a deeper understanding of the concept:

"I know that there are other varieties of English besides American English. But I do not really understand the detailed differences. For example, I know about Indian English and Chinese English, apart from American and British English." (Interview, Teacher 1, 2 January 09, 2026)

Similarly, another participant stated that she became familiar with the term *World Englishes* only after reading the research invitation letter, although she had previously recognized the existence of non-native English varieties:

"I just heard the term World Englishes when I read the research assignment letter, and then I searched for it on the internet. But I already knew that there are other varieties of English besides American or British English, such as Indian English." (Interview, Teacher 3, 4 January 19, 2026)

These findings suggest that World Englishes remains a relatively unfamiliar concept among many Islamic Boarding school English teachers. Even teachers who had heard of the term generally demonstrated only a superficial understanding, as the sociolinguistic and pedagogical dimensions of World Englishes had not yet become part of their professional knowledge base.

This finding aligns with the work of Aya Matsuda (2012), who argues that although many English teachers recognize the existence of diverse English varieties, relatively few possess a comprehensive theoretical or pedagogical understanding of the World Englishes paradigm. Consequently, teachers often experience difficulties integrating the concept effectively into classroom practice.

The study, therefore, indicates that awareness alone is insufficient unless it is accompanied by deeper theoretical engagement and professional training that connect World Englishes to practical classroom pedagogy.

Another factor contributing to teachers' limited familiarity with World Englishes is the continued dominance of American and British English in school curricula and instructional materials. Because these Inner Circle varieties remain the primary models taught in Indonesian schools, many teachers perceive other English varieties as unnecessary or irrelevant to classroom instruction. As a result, exposure to linguistic diversity remains minimal, and teachers tend to emphasize accuracy and conformity to native-speaker norms.

This condition reflects what Andy Kirkpatrick (2014) describes as the persistence of native-speaker ideology within many Asian educational systems. Kirkpatrick explains that although different forms of English are widely used across Asia, only a limited number of educators and policymakers possess a sufficient theoretical and pedagogical understanding of the World Englishes framework. Consequently, educational institutions continue to prioritize Inner Circle English norms as the dominant standard.

Teachers who were familiar with the term *World Englishes* often interpreted it merely as differences in accent, pronunciation, or vocabulary. Their understanding tended to focus on observable linguistic variation rather than the broader theoretical perspective of World Englishes. In academic discourse, World Englishes refers not only to language variation but also to the recognition that English has become a global language shaped by diverse cultural, social, and local identity contexts. However, the teachers interviewed in this study generally remained influenced by traditional perspectives that position American and British English as the only authoritative standards.

The limited understanding identified in this study may also stem from insufficient opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development activities related to applied linguistics and

sociolinguistics, as well as restricted access to updated academic resources. One participant emphasized this issue by stating:

"I usually focus only on the curriculum. We teach according to what is required by the curriculum. As for theories like World Englishes, we rarely receive any specific information or training about them. So, my knowledge is limited to what is written in the textbook. I really look forward trainings on World Englishes." (Interview, Teacher 5,6 January 18, 2026)

The gap in teachers' understanding identified in this research has important implications for classroom learning. When teachers have limited knowledge of World Englishes—or are entirely unfamiliar with the concept—students may lose opportunities to understand the linguistic diversity of English in global communication contexts. In today's interconnected world, awareness of English diversity is essential for preparing learners to engage in intercultural and international communication effectively.

For this reason, strengthening teachers' professional competence through workshops, seminars, and access to relevant academic resources is highly necessary. Teachers need to understand that World Englishes is not simply about accent variation, but rather a global sociolinguistic phenomenon that requires appropriate pedagogical responses. By developing this perspective, teachers may be better equipped to design more inclusive English language instruction, such as incorporating listening and reading materials that feature both native and non-native English speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Perception of Teachers towards World Englishes

The interview findings revealed that English teachers in Modern Islamic boarding schools in Lhokseumawe and North Aceh were generally aware that English is spoken in many different forms beyond American and British English. The participants acknowledged the existence of various English accents and dialects, including Indian English, Singaporean English, and Chinese English. This awareness indicates that teachers recognize English as a global language that has developed differently across cultural and regional contexts.

Nevertheless, this understanding remained largely theoretical and was rarely reflected in classroom instruction. Most teachers viewed non-native varieties of English as additional personal knowledge rather than as teaching content that should be introduced to students. This situation may be influenced by limited access to teaching materials that represent diverse English accents,

as well as curriculum demands that continue to prioritize standard native-speaker models.

Teachers' perceptions of non-native English accents also tended to be relatively conservative. Although they acknowledged the existence of different English varieties, they seldom incorporated them explicitly into classroom activities. Listening exercises, pronunciation models, and speaking materials were still predominantly based on American and British English.

These findings are consistent with the perspective of Jennifer Jenkins (2009), who emphasizes in the theory of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) that recognition of accent diversity is essential in international communication. However, the present study found that teachers remained hesitant to introduce non-native English accents directly in the classroom. Several factors contributed to this hesitation, including limited availability of instructional resources featuring diverse accents, concerns about students' listening comprehension, and the continued dominance of American and British English within the national curriculum.

As a result, although teachers recognized the reality of accent diversity, their attitudes toward its pedagogical application remained passive. Most participants preferred to focus on helping students master what they considered "standard English" rather than exposing learners to multiple English varieties. On the one hand, this approach reflects teachers' pragmatic efforts to meet curriculum expectations and examination standards. On the other hand, it potentially restricts students' opportunities to develop awareness of authentic global communication practices.

The interviews also indicated that many students were unfamiliar with English varieties beyond American and British English. However, several teachers reported that highly motivated students demonstrated greater exposure to global English diversity through independent learning activities. Teacher participants T1, T2, and T5 explained that some students regularly encountered non-native English accents through digital platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, films, and online communication. Through these media, students became familiar with accents such as Indian English and Chinese English. This suggests that students who actively engage with global digital content are generally more open to linguistic diversity in English.

One teacher explained:

"It is our students who are more frequently exposed to different varieties of English through social media, movies, and online interactions, and they are often the ones who ask teachers about the

differences they notice. At that point, we take the opportunity to introduce the concept of English as a global language, explaining that English is not spoken in just one uniform way but exists in multiple forms." (Interview, Teacher 7,8 January 20, 2026)

This phenomenon demonstrates a noticeable gap between teachers' awareness and students' experiences. While teachers recognize the existence of diverse English accents, such diversity is rarely integrated into formal classroom instruction. Consequently, students' exposure to non-native English varieties depends largely on their personal initiative and access to digital media outside the school environment. As a result, students' understanding of English diversity develops unevenly.

The findings therefore, highlight the importance of professional development programs that encourage teachers to integrate linguistic diversity into English language teaching. Enhancing teachers' understanding and pedagogical competence regarding World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca may help broaden students' perspectives and better prepare them for intercultural communication in an increasingly globalized world. The inclusion of non-native English accents in classroom instruction could begin gradually through the use of simple authentic listening materials, online videos, or reading texts produced by non-native English speakers. Such practices may help students recognize that English is not a single uniform language, but a multilingual and multicultural means of global communication.

The implementation of World Englishes concept in Learning

Based on the in-depth interviews conducted with English teachers in Modern Islamic boarding schools in Lhokseumawe and North Aceh, the findings indicate that English language instruction remains strongly oriented toward two dominant varieties of English, namely American English and British English. These varieties continue to function as the principal standards in classroom teaching and influence nearly all instructional components, including textbooks, pronunciation models, conversational examples, and listening materials.

This tendency was confirmed by Informant 1 (Teacher 1, 2), who explained that classroom materials consistently prioritize American English, with only limited exposure to British English. According to the participant, this orientation is largely shaped by curriculum expectations, national examinations, and official teaching materials, which predominantly adopt Inner Circle English norms. The teacher emphasized that this preference does not necessarily reflect personal

beliefs, but rather the broader educational system in Indonesia, which still provides little space for the inclusion of diverse English varieties associated with World Englishes.

“So far, we only teach American or British English in class because that’s how the curriculum is designed.” (Interview Teacher 1, 2, January 9, 2026)

In addition to curriculum-related constraints, students’ English proficiency was also identified as a major challenge in implementing World Englishes in classroom instruction. Informants T3 and T4 explained that many students continue to struggle with fundamental aspects of English learning, including grammar, vocabulary acquisition, and listening comprehension. Under these circumstances, teachers believe that strengthening students’ basic language competence should be prioritized before introducing them to different English accents and varieties from other linguistic contexts.

Another Informant (Teacher 7,8) further argued that introducing World Englishes prematurely might create additional difficulties for students who are still attempting to master foundational English skills. From the teachers’ perspective, motivating students to develop confidence and interest in learning English is currently more urgent than exposing them to the broader complexity of global English diversity. This perspective is reflected in the following statement:

“Our students’ English skills are still weak. Let alone learning about other varieties of English, they are still struggling with the basics. So, for now, we focus on motivating them to enjoy learning English—we haven’t yet introduced the concept of World Englishes.” (Interview Teacher 9,10, January 17, 2026)

This response demonstrates that teachers tend to adapt their instructional priorities to the immediate needs and capabilities of their students. Although teachers are generally aware of the existence of World Englishes, they often perceive its practical implementation as less relevant to their present classroom realities. Consequently, a noticeable gap exists between teachers’ awareness of English diversity and their actual pedagogical practices, which remain predominantly limited to American and British English models.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted through Braj B. Kachru’s (1985) Three Circles Model of English. The results suggest that English language teaching in senior high schools in Lhokseumawe still focuses primarily on Inner Circle English varieties, while Englishes from the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle remain largely absent from classroom instruction.

This condition reflects a pedagogical limitation in representing the sociolinguistic reality of English as a global language. In international communication, English is frequently used among non-native speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds rather than exclusively among speakers from Inner Circle countries. Jennifer Jenkins (2009) argues that variations in accent and linguistic style within English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) should not be viewed as deficiencies or obstacles, but rather as natural characteristics of global communication that should be acknowledged in language teaching practices.

Nevertheless, the interview data indicate that several teachers still considered the introduction of World Englishes to be insufficiently urgent in their current educational context. Their reasoning was primarily practical in nature: students still require support in mastering basic English competencies, teachers remain constrained by curriculum standards, and instructional resources representing diverse English varieties are still limited. While this perspective reflects a realistic attempt to prioritize immediate classroom needs, it simultaneously reveals a lack of readiness to prepare students for the multilingual and multicultural realities of contemporary global communication.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate how English teachers in Modern Islamic boarding schools in Lhokseumawe and North Aceh perceive, understand, and implement the concept of World Englishes in their classroom practices. The findings demonstrate that although most teachers are aware that English is used in diverse forms across different countries and cultural settings, their understanding of the theoretical and pedagogical dimensions of World Englishes remains relatively limited. In practice, teachers still rely heavily on Inner Circle English varieties, particularly American and British English, as the primary standards of linguistic correctness and proficiency. This orientation is strongly influenced by national curriculum policies, standardized examinations, and the continued dominance of teaching materials based on native-speaker norms.

The study further revealed that the integration of World Englishes into classroom instruction has not yet been fully implemented. Although teachers recognize the existence of linguistic diversity in English, such awareness has not been translated into concrete pedagogical practices. Several

factors contribute to this situation, including limited instructional resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and students' relatively low levels of English proficiency. Consequently, students receive minimal exposure to non-native varieties of English, which may limit the development of their intercultural communicative competence and their readiness to engage in global communication contexts.

These findings support the arguments of Braj B. Kachru (1985), who emphasizes that English has evolved into an international language with multiple legitimate varieties shaped by different sociocultural contexts. Similarly, Jennifer Jenkins (2009) argues that English language teaching should acknowledge the realities of global communication, where interactions increasingly occur among non-native speakers rather than exclusively with native speakers from Inner Circle countries. In addition, Aya Matsuda (2012) highlights the importance of incorporating World Englishes into language education in order to prepare learners for authentic intercultural communication.

To address these challenges, English language education in Indonesia needs to adopt a more inclusive and globally oriented perspective that reflects the contemporary role of English as an international language. Teacher professional development programs, workshops, and curriculum reforms should encourage educators to integrate examples of diverse English varieties into classroom instruction. Exposure to authentic materials featuring both native and non-native speakers of English may help students become more familiar with the linguistic diversity that characterizes global communication today.

By promoting greater awareness of World Englishes in educational settings, teachers can help students develop more positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity and improve their ability to communicate effectively in multicultural contexts. Ultimately, recognizing English as a dynamic and globally shared language may better equip students to participate confidently in international communication and intercultural interaction.

The conclusion should not merely summarize the main topics covered or restate the research problem, but it should be a synthesis of key points and, if applicable, a recommendation of new areas for future research.

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