

## **Educating Pre-Service Teachers about World Englishes: Instructional Activities and Teachers' Perceptions**

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### **Abstract**

The growth of English worldwide has brought about myriad variations of the language, but many teachers in the United States are still relatively unfamiliar with these World Englishes (WE). Pre-service teachers must be made aware of the legitimacy of WE to become culturally responsive educators. We will describe six different activities designed to promote understanding of WE and English as an International Language (EIL) that pre-service teachers completed during one undergraduate course. The effectiveness of these activities was examined based on written reflections and pre- and post- intervention assessments. The data indicated that all activities were beneficial for raising participant's awareness, tolerance, and respect of WE, especially activity six. Results emphasize the importance of using experiential approaches for the promotion of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. EIL pedagogy and instructional activities used in this study provides practices that promote the awareness and competence of preservice teachers to use skills necessary to meet the needs of diverse users of English language in their future teaching. Such transformative approaches will foster multilingual appreciation in preservice teachers and provide them with the competences necessary to effectively meet the challenges of the changing demographics of schools.

**Keywords:** World Englishes, Pre-service Teachers, English as an International Language, Attitudes, Pedagogy

## **Introduction**

When one of our international students sends emails to his professors, he always begins by stating ‘Here is Chen’, despite the fact that an introduction is not called for in electronic correspondence between two individuals familiar with one another. However, what is unique about his self-introduction is not the fact that he does so, but the way he structures his sentence. To some, his ‘improper grammar’ may be seen as humorous or even off-putting, however it is an example of one variety of World Englishes (WE). In schools around the world today, a range of Englishes, such as that used by Chen, are spoken by students, making it necessary for educators to be aware of these varieties in order to be culturally responsive (Jenkins, 2006). While teacher preparation programs are beginning to integrate the concept of WE into their curricula, the manner in which they do so and the impact of this integration on pre-service teachers needs further research (Matsuda, 2009).

In this study, the researchers developed a unit about WE, based on the curriculum developed by Kubota (2001) and incorporated the instructional activities into an undergraduate pre-service education course at a university in Texas. The purpose of the unit was to challenge pre-service teachers’ knowledge about WE, and to heighten their sensitivity towards the cultural and linguistic diversity they will face in American public schools. Below, we will present a review of the literature on WE and awareness-raising activities, as well as discuss the implementation of the unit, its effectiveness in changing perceptions, and recommendations for teaching WE to pre-service teacher educators. The main purpose of the paper is to provide teachers and teacher educators with examples of effective instructional activities for improving the awareness and acceptance of WE varieties of English among educators. The activities will be presented with some qualitative and quantitative data gathered from an intervention with teacher educators at a U.S. university that support the effectiveness of the intervention activities.

## **Literature Review**

Before delving into the current study, it is first necessary to provide some background information about the topic. In the paragraphs below, an overview and conceptualization of WE will be presented. We will discuss the difference between Standard English, WE, and English ‘errors’, and present the pedagogical and social implications of WE across the globe. A review of the literature on pre-service teachers’ perceptions of WE will be presented, and we will highlight suggestions made by past researchers for increasing awareness of WE within teacher preparation programs.

### **An Overview and Conceptualization of World Englishes**

English is currently the dominant and/or official language in 60 out of the 185 nation-states in the United Nations; its use by millions of people means that there are more speakers of English as a second language (L2) than there are English as a first language (L1) (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). This widespread use has resulted in new varieties, often referred to as English as an international language (EIL), English as a global language, English as a world language, and World Englishes (WE). Variations in English challenge the concept of ‘native speaker’ and ideologies of what ‘proper English’ sounds like. Likewise, the spread of English across the globe means that L1 speakers are finding their speech more and more influenced by WE (Sharifian, 2009).

As the legitimacy of WE rises (Marlina, 2017), new varieties are often classified according to Kachru's (1986) 'circles' model. Kachru's model consists of three circles (i.e. inner, outer, and expanding), which represent the many varieties of English developing across the world, and the dynamics of the language in terms of its status, functions, and attitudes. Kachru conceptualizes the inner circle as being comprised of L1 speakers, and the outer circle consisting of major Anglophone countries such as India, the Philippines, Singapore, and South Africa. Countries in which English is taught as a foreign language, like China and Saudi Arabia, are located in the expanding circle. Kachru's schematic representation demonstrates how many of these English varieties are independent from each other, with their own linguistic and sociolinguistic norms aside from those considered acceptable in inner circle varieties (Kirkpatrick & McLellan, 2012).

With the increasing number of speakers of English from Outer and Expanding Circle countries, Graddol (2006) notes that approximately eighty percent of today's communication in English takes place between these speakers, and only between ten to twelve percent of communication takes place between speakers of English from Inner-Circle countries and Outer-Circle countries and/or Expanding Circle countries. As a result, the landscape of English language users is becoming increasingly complex.

### **Standard English, English Varieties, and English Errors**

Standard English is defined as the single variety of a language, with grammar and spelling that follows the rules presented in dictionaries and textbooks (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). While Standard English includes norms that are considered "correct", these may differ across native English-speaking countries (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). Typically, British and American Englishes dominate English language teaching (ELT) across the globe, but the prominence of WE calls for a revision of traditional English instruction. Many debates have surfaced about this issue, with those in favor of teaching Standard British or American English arguing for the necessity of maintaining a single, uniform version of English to facilitate international communication. On the other hand, supporters of WE assert that language naturally becomes acculturated and transformed in each context, producing varieties of English as legitimate as those considered "standard". For example, more idioms are developing in outer circle versions of English than within Standard English, where idioms were long ago conventionalized (Pitzl, 2016).

Before we can consider including WE within ELT, we need to examine the differences between second language acquisition (SLA) errors and WE varieties. Hamid, Zhu, and Baldauf (2014) addressed this, postulating that any divergence from native speaker norms are "errors" resulting from a learners' limited language competence. This view differs from that of WE, in which specific deviations from English are shared by a community, characterizing them as WE variations and not 'errors' (Hamid et al., 2014). WE also encompasses deviations from Standard English that are tolerable and do not interrupt the flow of communication (Wang, 2013). Proponents of WE instruction in ELT argue that the goal of English instruction should be communication amongst individuals, and not conformity to native standards.

## **Pedagogical and Social Implications of WE**

Regardless of what variation of English is used within ELT, future teachers must be cognizant of the diversity of English they may encounter in their own classrooms (Matsuda, 2017). Pre-service teachers in the United States tend to be Anglo-Americans from middle-class backgrounds (Castro, 2010), who may not have had sufficient exposure and awareness of other varieties of English. Alternately, the worldwide spread of English has led to an increasing amount of non-native speakers of English within U.S. classrooms, leaving many educators unprepared to tackle issues of linguistic diversity (e.g. Ahn, 2017; Ates, Eslami, & Wright, 2015).

The rise in WE leads to several pedagogical implications for teacher education programs: 1) teachers need guidance on how to negotiate miscommunications that result from linguistic differences; 2) the use of cultural materials from diverse sources must be emphasized in teacher training programs, particularly those that include speakers of English from a variety of backgrounds (Matsuda, 2017); and 3) teachers need early exposure to WE in order to be prepared to tackle challenges resulting from English varieties. Additionally, ELT curriculum needs to be reappraised to allow for the consideration of WE norms alongside traditional, monolingual norms (Canagarajah, 2014). Pedagogical changes can be accomplished through the incorporation of materials that include diverse varieties of WE, and activities that foster communication between individuals of different backgrounds (Matsuda, 2017).

The spread of WE also has many social consequences, central to which is the need to promote equity for all speakers of English (e.g. Beneke & Cheatham, 2016; Kubota, 2015; Rickford, 2016). Speakers of WE are beginning to develop their own local and global identities based on the kind of English they use, instead of adopting the identities of native speakers (Jenkins, 2009). As asserted by Singleton and Aronin (2007), “English has permeated the sense of identity of a large number of non-native speakers to the extent that it is now ‘owned’ by them” (p. 13). Therefore, WE have become a type of identity marker in social contexts, a phenomenon which cannot be ignored within English language teaching.

## **Changing Perceptions of World Englishes**

To fully comprehend the pedagogical and social implications of WE, it is essential to explore what teachers perceive about the ownership of English, English users in the international context, and the status of WE for international communication. What teachers believe about each of these issues results from many factors, namely their own experiences with language learning and their professional training background (Barnard & Burns, 2012)? Some studies on teachers’ perceptions of WE have focused on practicing EFL educators (e.g., Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017; Wang, 2015), while others have examined pre-service teachers’ beliefs about language and cultural diversity (Castro, 2010; Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

Research on in-service teachers in China found that emerging varieties of Chinese English have yet to be accepted within the classroom. Likewise, Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2017) found that English language teachers from all three Kachruvian circles were hesitant to accept other varieties of English due to their strong beliefs about Standard English. Both studies suggest that teachers’ lack of acceptance for WE, highlighting the need for training on acceptance and appreciation of English varieties. This contention is supported by Matsuda (2017), who argued

for incorporating diverse varieties of English into teacher education programs, particularly those in culturally diverse milieus.

In their research on American pre-service teacher perceptions, Ates, Eslami, and Wright (2015) found that most of their study participants were not familiar with WE, including variations in accents, making training about WE absolutely essential. They recommended that pre-service teachers be exposed to the diverse English varieties and allowed to interact with speakers from a multitude of linguistic backgrounds, in order to increase their knowledge and recognition of English varieties and its users. Most language researchers now agree that it is critical for teacher preparation programs to include training on WE, especially considering that these educators will be at the forefront of future pedagogical changes. However, despite the fact that there is a thriving body of research related to understanding of English varieties and examining educator beliefs and perceptions of diverse Englishes (Ahn, 2014, 2017; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017), pre-service teachers remain unprepared to face the varieties of WE in their classroom.

### **World Englishes Curriculum for Teacher Training**

To promote a respect for WE, Brown (2012) calls for a break from the traditional dependency on native-speaker models, and suggested an introduction to varieties other than American and British English in ELT materials. Moreover, Matsuda (2012) argued that ELT materials should support and promote “awareness of and sensitivity toward differences - in forms, uses, and users - and learn to respect (or at least tolerate) those differences” (p. 170). As noted by Matsuda and Friedrich (2011), American and British English are considered “established” varieties, and thus are typically adopted for instruction within most international contexts. New ELT curriculum should provide learners with the knowledge of which WE variety they are learning (e.g. American or British English), and to explicitly understand how it may differ from what they will encounter with future interlocutors. Instructional activities and materials should promote respect for both local and global varieties of WE, and provide strategies for dealing with miscommunications between speakers of WE.

The challenges of incorporating WE into ELT are many. First, concepts of nativization and standardization must be explored in relation to prescriptivism and creativity in approaching the teaching of WE. Practitioners may face questions such as:

Who are my students’ target interlocutors? What are their English learning needs? What are their attitudes towards English, and what factors influence such attitudes? What grammatical, pragmatic and cultural norms should they learn? Who should teach them? How should I assess them? How can I ensure they are prepared to use the language as a lingua franca? (*Galloway & Rose, 2017, p. 4*).

ELT educators in contexts where standard language ideologies prevail will require a complete paradigm shift if they hope to become responsive to all varieties of WE.

Several WE interventions have been conducted, in an attempt to shift the perceptions of participants. In an early study by Kubota (2001), a targeted intervention about the global spread of English was implemented to determine U.S. high school students’ perceptions of WE, and their ability to interact with speakers of WE before and after. Through the use of mini-lectures, visual aids, classroom discussions, and participant reflections, Kubota found that perceptions

of the comprehensibility of WE altered, as well as beliefs about second language learning. Similarly, research on outer and expanding circle contexts have revealed that students initially held biased attitudes towards non-native English varieties, which shifted after participation in WE interventions (e.g., Baker, 2012; Galloway & Rose, 2014, 2017). Galloway and Rose (2014) examined the use of listening journals to expose students at one Japanese university to WE. They found that the journals were useful in exposing students to diverse Englishes, but were unable to facilitate the development of communication strategies or foster reflection about ELT practices. The authors suggested that future studies should focus more on language interactions, and less on the diverse varieties of WE (Rose & Galloway, 2014). Taken together, these studies reveal the impact of targeted interventions on student perceptions; however, more studies are needed to determine how teacher preparation programs can effectively develop skills for intercultural communication.

Byram and Feng (2006) suggest two key factors to promote awareness of WE: 1) the development of respect for cultural and linguistic differences and 2) dialogic sharing, which addresses the idea that learning about a language or culture is a dialogic process. Brown (2012) believes respect and mutual understanding will be developed once a break is made from the traditional native-speaker model, and argues that curriculum writers should no longer position native speakers as the sole models of English. Aside from this, a number of recommendations for changing teachers' perceptions of WE have been proposed (e.g. McKay, 2012; Galloway & Rose, 2015), but there is still a lack of empirically tested resources and activities for teacher educators and language teachers to raise awareness and promote successful communication. In this article, we will describe six activities designed to overcome stereotypes and promote awareness and recognition of different varieties of English. These activities can be used as a guide for how to incorporate WE instruction into pre-service teacher curriculum and coursework.

## **Methods**

### **Setting and Participants**

The present study took place in a large land-grant university in the southwestern US. Researchers determined that the activities would be implemented in an ESL methods course required for education majors entitled 'Language Acquisition and Development', and that the activities would be completed both online and face- to- face. The students enrolled in this class were representative of the demographics of the university as a whole, meaning that 68.5% of university students were White, 15.2% were Hispanic, 4.5% were Asian, 3.4% were Black, 8.6% were international, and 2.5% were from other races and ethnicities. All students in the class were pursuing a degree in the field of education, with the goal of becoming K-12 teachers.

The study was approved by the university's IRB board. All students and teachers gave consent to participate in the study. A decision not to participate in the study did not result in a lowered grade for the course.

### **The Curriculum**

We sought to find models of successful curricula that could serve to enlighten future teachers on varieties of language, so we looked towards studies conducted by Kubota (2001), and

Eslami, Cassell, and Ates (2015) and Matsuda (2017). From these model curricula, the researchers developed a unit for pre-service teachers consisting of six lessons that could be easily incorporated into one of the required undergraduate education courses. The goal for each activity was not only to promote pre-service teacher awareness about WE and instill positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity, but to train teachers to approach curriculum and materials with a critical eye.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Qualitative data was included in the form of participant reflections, or journal entries that were completed in-class after each activity. Researchers coded journal data using the Grounded Theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and looked for emerging ideas related to the effectiveness of activities and challenges faced in the instructional activities and assignments.

## **Awareness-Raising Activities**

Six awareness-raising activities were conducted throughout the semester; four were face-to-face, while two were on-line assignments. International graduate students from the university were invited to be guest speakers for some of the activities. All participants completed written reflections after each activity.

## **Activity One**

To begin the WE unit, researchers played several two-minute audio clips of speakers from European and Asian descent. Afterwards, the pre-service teachers were placed in partner groups and directed to choose one speaker, and judge them based on how comprehensible their speech was, the quality of their speech (including perceptions about accent and educational level), the personal traits of the speaker, and their desire to communicate with the speaker. The partners were then asked to share their perceptions with one another. To close the activity, the instructor asked a variety of questions designed to elicit a discussion about non-native accents and the judgements that they provoke.

Overall, this activity sought to introduce the concept of WE to the pre-service teachers, and prompt them to think about how stereotypes based on accents are just as prevalent, and just as false, as those based on race or ethnicity. By only allowing the participants to hear (not see) the speakers, stereotypes and judgments related specifically to each 'non-native accent' were uncovered and discussed. This was a critical introductory activity because it allowed the pre-service teachers to recognize how they may stereotype others based on the way they sound. It also provided the instructor with a baseline understanding of the existing perceptions, and an opportunity to challenge some of the misconceptions during the question and answer session.

Pre-service teacher reflections indicated that they perceived activity one to be an effective introduction to the concept of WE. One remarked,

...I found out so much more about this critical issue. English belongs to anyone who speaks it. Who is to say that my English is better than your English...We need to understand that discrimination from these different styles of English is wrong and that there can be no line to separate them.

For this participant, similar to reflections from other participants, the first activity provided both an overview of the concept of WE, and also shed a light on accent discrimination. Such awareness is essential for teachers in our increasingly diverse schools (Lapayese, 2016).

The impact of this activity on pre-service teachers' perceptions of accents was also reflected within the pre- and post-test surveys. On the pre-survey, 79.09% of participants disagreed with the idea that changing an accent is easy, whereas post-survey results showed that 85.86% disagreed. This increase, combined with participant reflections, demonstrates that the pre-service teachers were becoming aware of the challenges faced by many language learners in terms of developing a "native" accent and the stereotypes and hidden biases we may have based on someone's non-native accent.

Conversely, pre-survey results showed that 38.31% of participants believed that non-native speakers should endeavor to make their speech more comprehensible for native speakers of English. In the post-survey, 47.37% agreed with this statement. This increase of almost 10% demonstrates that pre-service teachers may require more explicit instruction on accent bias than was provided through the intervention.

## **Activity Two**

The next activity was an online assignment about accent usage in popular children's movies. Many animated movies discriminate against foreign accents by routinely assigning them to the villainous characters (Lippi-Green, 1997). As the participants were future elementary and secondary teachers who would likely encounter many opportunities to view such films with their students, this was an incredibly relevant and important area to explore. Likewise, pre-service teachers in America are typically from middle class, White families (Castro, 2010). It is safe to assume that many have grown up watching Disney movies, however it is unlikely that most pre-service teachers ever realized how these movies were embedding certain stereotypes in their minds. Thus, this task asked pre-service teachers to view examples of 'bad' or villainous characters with foreign accents to ignite their thinking about the subject, and to guide their analysis. Participants were required to choose a character from a Disney movie (or other animated film) with an accent and write one 300-500 word paragraph about why that accent was chosen for that particular character, what function it served, and what stereotypes are commonly associated with that accent.

Through a critical evaluation and reflection upon how animated films perpetuate negative images of WE, this activity sought to inspire pre-service teachers to analyze all movies, books, and teaching materials before using them with their future students. We hoped that this activity will add to other activities to develop classrooms where critical perspectives are used to unpack linguistic and cultural biases, and where English varieties are celebrated and appreciated.

This activity was met with some resistance and hesitation by many of the participants. For example, some of the pre-service teachers chose to analyze the character of Sebastian from *The Little Mermaid*, who was a servant to the underwater king. One participant felt that Sebastian's Caribbean accent was a purposeful ploy to position people from the Caribbean in roles of servitude, much like in the days of slavery. Another, however, felt that Disney simply wanted to represent the different coastal regions of the world, and that Sebastian was only given this accent to advocate for the Caribbean. This activity, it seems, was useful for getting pre-service



teachers to critically evaluate the way that accents are used within pop culture to perpetuate stereotypes, and for challenging them to think in a new way about the inherent biases in the media and entertainment industry.

### **Activity Three**

The next activity focused on native versus non-native speakers, and English ownership. Indian English is becoming increasingly more common around the world, with approximately one-hundred million speakers (Eslami et al. 2015). These individuals are extremely satisfied with the way it sounds, much like the way speakers of American English believe that they are speaking the language correctly. Thus, the objective of this activity was to make pre-service teachers aware that different varieties of English are widely used, and that they are just as legitimate in structure and form as American or British English.

For this activity, the pre-service teachers viewed YouTube clips of different speakers of Indian English. Then, the instructor presented a PowerPoint about the History of Indian English to provide participants with background information about the topic. Afterwards, two one-minute excerpts from the movie *Outsourced*, which tells the story of American jobs being moved overseas, were played. The instructor posed the following three questions for participants to reflect upon while viewing: *What is outsourcing? Why is it used? To which countries are jobs outsourced the most? Why?* One film clip showed outsourced Indian workers dealing with an irate American customer, while the other showed the same Indian worker modifying her accent to sound more American. These excerpts provided an important pathway into a whole-class discussion about native and non-native speakers, specifically examining the concept of English ownership, what it means to be a speaker of an indigenous variety of English, and the prejudices towards these varieties of English.

Participants indicated that the third activity was successful for challenging their misconceptions about accents. In the beginning of the intervention, nine percent of the pre-service teachers felt that all varieties of English should be valued as highly as American or British English. At the end, 23% believed this. This shift in ideologies is highlighted by one participant's comment,

I never knew that it was so different, yet still so intelligible. It made me more aware of all the Englishes of the world; that even though they are different that doesn't make them any less important.

While the findings from the journal reflections indicated a noticeable amount of change in ideology, and more acceptance of other varieties of English, the survey results indicated that the majority of pre-service teachers still do not value other English varieties as highly as British or American. The 14% increase indicates that the inclusion of activities such as this in the pre-service teacher curriculum is a beneficial introductory activity for raising awareness, recognition, and respect.

### **Activity Four**

For the fourth activity, international graduate students from the College of Education were invited into the classroom to expose the pre-service teachers to different varieties of English, and also to inform them about the status and varieties of English in their respective countries.

Afterwards, the pre-service teachers were asked to share their opinions, ideas, and questions about the topic. This activity was purposefully designed to shed light on the major issues surrounding WE, including their low status in many countries (Hiraga, 2015), and the social and cultural issues related to English usage around the world.

During this activity, the international graduate students and pre-service teachers formed small groups to interact, exchange ideas, reply to prompts, and share their general feelings about the topics discussed by the guest speakers (international students). Each pre-service teacher wrote a reflection paper on their new understandings related to WE, the status of English in different countries, and the possible implications of this knowledge on their future teaching careers.

Activity four enabled the pre-service teachers to reflect on how they would address the different varieties of English present in their own classrooms. As one preservice teacher commented,

I really appreciated all of the presentations. Our presenter was so kind and sociable. I loved coming to class on research days and feel I learned so much more about cultures and the world through the presentations.

This activity allowed the participants to interact with international graduate students in a way that they would not normally. As stated by most of the participants in their journal, through these interactions, the pre-service teachers were able to learn more about the world and to gain insight into other cultures.

Curiously, pre-survey data showed that only 9.09% of participants believed speakers of WE to be less “fluent” and “capable” of English than themselves, whereas post-test 18.52% agreed with this. Thus, while the participants seemed to enjoy interacting with the graduate students, they still demonstrated biases about the linguistic capabilities of WE speakers. It is possible that the pre-service teachers experienced communication challenges during their conversations with the international graduate students, which impacted perceptions about their English competence.

### **Activity Five**

For the fifth activity, the instructor presented spoken and written examples of miscommunications between speakers of WE. The main objective was to direct participants’ attention to situations where different aspects of the English language (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.) caused misunderstandings between interlocutors (Pitzl, 2005). This activity gave pre-service teachers the opportunity to explore and formulate a host of ways to handle any miscommunications that may arise between themselves and their future students, families, or co-workers.

To begin, participants were shown samples of both written and spoken miscommunications. For example, one video from YouTube showed a Chinese high school teacher and his American co-worker engaged in a discussion about dumplings, where the participants confused the words ‘feeling’ and ‘filling’. Following the viewings, the pre-service teachers were prompted to discuss how similar miscommunications may occur in their classrooms, and to brainstorm strategies for fostering intelligible communication between speakers of all varieties of English.

Learning about these miscommunications allowed the pre-service teachers to reflect upon the strategies (e.g., context, confirmation check, tolerance for ambiguity) they could use to be able to handle such issues in their own classroom. Most journal responses indicated that the participants believed it to be an effective preparatory activity to guide their communication with students in their own classroom. Pre-surveys showed that 10.53% of participants strongly desired to educate themselves on WE to avoid miscommunications with their future students, whereas 16.93% did afterwards. Unfortunately, 3.17% of pre-service teachers still disagreed that learning about WE was their responsibility, and the rest either agreed or were loosely conflicted. It is possible that this activity would have been more effective if participants had been shown videos involving young speakers of WE and their teachers, so that the participants would have felt that it was more directly related to their own classrooms.

### **Activity Six**

When learning about WE, it is necessary to remind individuals that a wide range of Englishes also exist in the U.S., and that these accents are often discriminated against just as heavily as international varieties (Lippi-Green, 1997). Therefore, for the sixth activity the pre-service teachers watched a documentary called *American Tongues* to ignite their thinking about accent variation in the U.S. and the concept of Standard English. While watching the video, the participants were stimulated to think about their predispositions to view certain English accents positively or negatively. Afterwards, the pre-service teachers were provided with writing prompts to assess their familiarity with the various dialects of American English, and their level of understanding about the stereotypes attached to local accents. These reflections included questions about their personal judgments of particular accents, their preference for certain accents, and their perceptions of accent intelligibility. The purpose was for the pre-service teachers to confront their own accent-related prejudices, and discuss the ways that such stereotypes may be detrimental to students' learning.

Overall, this activity sought to build an understanding of accent-related prejudice in English varieties used in America, with the goal of highlighting how, even in America, there is not just one standard way of speaking English. The written reflections illustrated that the pre-service teachers found activity six to be the most relevant. One of the participants wrote,

I found the *American Tongues* documentary to be the most effective because it showed that there are numerous varieties of accents in America. It also showed that people tend to judge others based on their accent, which helped to show our natural biased opinion towards our own accent.

Through this documentary, the pre-service teachers came to acknowledge that the numerous varieties of American English are exactly what makes the English language so rich. Participants felt that the validity of their individual accents and dialects was affirmed, and were also challenged to confront their own hidden stereotypes related to certain ways of speaking. Many were surprised to learn about how prevalent accent-related judgments are, and especially how these judgments often lead to assumptions about character, intelligence, or even discrimination. From this, the participants were able to see how inappropriate such judgments are, especially for teachers working with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Interestingly, prior to watching this documentary most of the participants indicated that they were unaware of exactly how diverse the linguistic landscape of America is. Many were familiar with the Southern, New Jersey, or New York dialects, however believed that all other regions subscribed to Standard English. The fact that pre-service teachers found this documentary to be the most effective could be related to the ability to feel and connect with the linguistic diversity that is closer to one's experiences.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Overall, we found that each activity provided a forum for pre-service teachers to challenge their understanding of the status of English around the world, become familiar with the different varieties of WE, and gain cultural awareness. Through Activity One, the pre-service teachers were introduced to the idea that linguistic discrimination is just as relevant and damaging as racial or cultural discrimination. For teachers in the U.S., this is an incredibly salient issue, considering the large amount of immigrants that are in American schools (Leacox & Jackson, 2014). These students often experience linguistic discrimination at school or in the workforce, however a change to Standard English may also result in negative social consequences (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Likewise, movies have a tremendous impact on the socialization of children, and even though parents go to great lengths to hide their children from nudity or other 'bad influences', children are still constantly inundated with harmful stereotypes, simply through how characters are presented in popular cartoons (Lippi-Green, 1997). All teachers need to be aware of how to counteract linguistic discrimination, promote acceptance of all English varieties within the classroom, and counteract stereotypes perpetuated by the media.

Activities Three and Four introduced participants to the idea that a native speaker of English and his/her status as a native speaker is a contested issue. Instead, the pre-service teachers were able to recognize that standard, "newscaster" English is more or less a myth, and that English is constantly evolving (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Conversely, when participants were asked to identify miscommunications in Activity Five, they were provided with time to consider how to deal with such occurrences in their own classroom, introducing them to the idea of intercultural communication and use of communication strategies to foster understanding, and the idea that both the speaker and the listener share responsibility for successful communication (Kubota, 2001). The culminating activity was number six, in which the pre-service teachers realized that a Standard English does not really exist, even within the American context. This activity allowed participants to challenge their own ideologies about "proper" English, and to realize that English cannot be simplistically categorized into "standard" or "non-standard" (Kubota, 2001).

In this intervention, the combination of real-life examples and reflective activities not only exposed the pre-service teachers to indigenous varieties of English, but also allowed them to explore their underlying assumptions about non-native speakers, thus eliminating some of the current biased perceptions of WE (Gomez, 1993). That being said, the perceptions of participants were not completely altered through engagement in this intervention. The pre-service teachers still struggled with the idea of communication being the responsibility of both native and non-native speakers. Future research should consider providing participants with more opportunities to speak with WE users, and with more instruction on strategies for intercultural communication. Similarly, the pre-service teachers hesitated to accept that they may need to learn more about WE to engage in successful communication with their students;

it would behoove future researchers to incorporate activities in which pre-service teachers specifically focused on communicating with school-aged WE speakers. We suggest that some of the activities involving adult speakers of WE should be replaced with children or adolescents, so that the participants could make an explicit connection between theory and practice.

Overall, the WE activities were both challenging and rewarding for pre-service teachers. While the intervention did not completely change perceptions, it was a necessary step towards exploring a topic that pre-service teachers may otherwise be ignorant of (Ates, Eslami, & Wright, 2015). Other teacher education programs can implement similar activities to familiarize future teachers with English diversity, to increase their cultural awareness, and confront their own preconceived notions about the English language. Likewise, ESL methodology courses would benefit from a curriculum focused on raising students' awareness of English diversity, and emphasizing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic awareness. Through a combination of intercultural discussions, hands-on activities, and systematic reflections, teacher preparation programs can develop true respect and recognition of diversity, two qualities that are essential for teaching in the schools of today (Sifakis, 2007).

Future research could explore issues such as how curriculum, multicultural education, and foreign language-learning classes impact pre-service teachers' attitudes towards cultural and linguistic diversity within ESL methodology courses. Additionally, research could benefit from explicit WE interventions involving young children, to determine how such interventions impact teacher-student communication.

## About the Authors

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