

Changing the “Mindset” of Saudi MA Students: From Native-Speakerism to Global Englishes

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Abstract

English is an international language with diverse varieties around the world that are referred to as Global Englishes (GE). Numerous studies demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of integrating GE-informed materials in English Language Teaching (ELT) practices but in the context of the Gulf countries, particularly in Saudi Arabia, such studies are relatively rare. Furthermore, ELT in the Saudi setting is heavily predicated on native-speakerism, with few courses adopting materials informed by GE, which in any case are also limited. This study addresses this gap by exploring the impact of a course delivered on English as a World Language to Saudi postgraduate students using a critical pedagogical approach. The study assesses how such a course can contribute to students' awareness of their own English as well as GE in general. This qualitative research study investigated the perceptions of Saudi students taking the optional course as part of their Master's English degree at Jouf University in Saudi Arabia. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. The findings revealed positive attitudes towards incorporating GE into English learning and teaching and an improved understanding of linguistic diversity after taking the course. The pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed, and recommendations are given for integrating GE into current ELT practices. The study explores whether incorporating a critical pedagogical approach can not only enhance students' awareness of English varieties, but also improve their attitudes towards such diverse forms of English as well as their own English variety.

Keywords: critical pedagogical approach, Global Englishes, native-speakerism, qualitative approach, student perceptions, World Englishes

There is no doubt that the use of English has spread widely in the current globalized world and that knowledge of the language is perceived as an asset (Elyas, Alzahrani, & Widodo, 2021). Its status and value have made English the main means of communication at a global level and a primary language of instruction in numerous fields (Elyas & Picard, 2018). Consequently, the learning and teaching of this global and dominant language has become indispensable and invaluable. The status of English and its frequent use among speakers who speak other languages and come from different cultural backgrounds have contributed to the emergence of diverse varieties of English worldwide, referred to as World Englishes (WEs) or Global Englishes (GEs) (Boonsuk, Ambele, & McKinley, 2021). These diverse forms of English include different accents, vocabulary and grammar, and reflect different identities and cultures. The complexity and range of differences indicate that English is not only used beyond its linguistic and geographic boundaries but is creatively changed by its users (Jenkins, 2015). This also indicates that English is no longer attached to a particular culture or standard. In other words, English is no longer owned by groups of “native” speakers.

Despite the fact that non-native English speakers (NNESs) vastly outnumber native speakers, current ELT principles and practices are still closely focused on native-speaker ideologies (Fang & Ren, 2018). In response to this and to accommodate the current dynamics and diverse forms of the English language, the GE literature advocates the need for critically revisiting and reevaluating current ELT principles and practices that are predicated on native-speakerism¹ (Holliday, 2006), the belief that ELT should aim to teach the language produced by English native speakers (Rajprasit, 2021). A central argument is that current ELT principles and practices do not reflect the current linguistic landscape (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). Therefore, there has been a call for the provision of more practical ELT experiences, not only by incorporating GE but also by adopting GE-oriented pedagogies into current teaching practices. Furthermore, because awareness of GEs is lacking in current ELT practices (Fang & Ren, 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2018), awareness needs to be raised of the current diverse forms of English in order to develop more positive attitudes among learners of English towards its diverse varieties worldwide (Rajprasit, 2021). In this regard, there are increasing requests to further investigate learners’ attitudes towards GE concepts (for a review, see Rose, McKinley, & Galloway, 2021). This is the context for this study which attempts to fill the knowledge gap by investigating the impact of a GE course on Saudi university students. It assesses how such a course might shape students’ awareness of their own English and GEs in general and discusses several pedagogical implications that will be of interest to educators in both the Saudi Arabian and other environments.

The findings and insights gained in this study are of considerable importance to instructors and curriculum designers in Saudi Arabia as well as being useful for instructors and academics in other contexts. The recommendations formulated based on the research findings are geared towards taking steps in developing the content for postgraduate English department curricula and reviewing pedagogical issues in terms of WE/GE and teaching methods. While these changes largely depend on the will of individual universities, a strategic dissemination of the findings and formulated recommendations will help raise stakeholders’ awareness of aspects that may need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of students’ learning, and the effectiveness of teachers’ teaching practices in recruiting English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The inquiry generated in the study will also be useful in explaining GE instruction

¹ The term *native-speakerism* refers to a widespread ideology in ELT whereby native speaker English teachers are believed to be better teachers than any other teachers because native English teachers “represent a Western culture from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday, 2006, p.6).

and how it has been a useful approach to improve the linguistic proficiency of students, especially when they are in contact with international people who speak English as non-native English speakers. In the same vein, this study will be useful for English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) courses, which would benefit from a syllabus that focuses on raising students' awareness of English diversity and improving the visibility of linguistic and cultural aspects.

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, the aim of this paper is to examine the impact on EFL student perceptions of participating in a World Englishes/GE course and to assess the possibility of integrating the GE concept into English classes in the Saudi context. Thus, it addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Saudi MA students at Jouf University towards their own English after taking part in the course World Englishes/GE?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi MA students at Jouf University towards the concept of World Englishes/GE after taking part in the course?

Literature Review

Global Englishes in the World

With the growth of globalization, the English language has become the common language among people who speak other languages (Fang, 2016; Wang & Fang, 2020). The international spread of English usage has also led to the diversification of the English language and to the development of new paradigms highlighting the different varieties of English, as well as challenging the superiority of native speaker (NS) and standard English. These paradigms include “World Englishes” (WEs) (Kachru, 2011), “English as an International Language” (EIL) (Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2018; Sharifian, 2009, 2013) and “English as a Lingua Franca” (ELF) (Jenkins, 2015).

The term *lingua franca* refers to a common second language used in fields such as science, technology and international business. When people in different parts of the world make contact with each other, they will usually choose a language that everyone knows – at least to some extent. In this sense, English is spoken and written as a *lingua franca* more than any other language (Crystal, 2012). The traditional NS norms in English Language Teaching (ELT) have been developed from different English varieties and ELF (Cogo, 2012). ELF can be defined as the use of English language as a common language and as a medium of communication among individuals of different native languages (Seidlhofer, 2011, p.7). By contrast, Global Englishes (GE) is a broader term that reconsiders English language in all its forms and varieties and also includes English as a *lingua franca* (Jenkins, 2015), indicating the spread and the frequent use of English in different settings and contexts. It is also used as an umbrella term to cover research in the fields of World Englishes, translanguaging and plurilingualism, ELF, and EIL (Galloway & Numajiri, 2019).

Some studies have been conducted to explore the influence of teaching WE and EIL to students. For example, a study of Fang and Ren (2018), conducted in China, investigated the influence of a WE course on English language students' views towards their own English. The study also aimed to explore attitudes towards GE more generally after students had taken the course. The data not only revealed that students' awareness of English varieties had improved after taking the WE course, but also their confidence in their own English was enriched. The results also

showed that students were able to critically reflect on such different varieties and forms of English and that they gained an awareness of flexibility for non-standard English, with the most important issue being the use of English in an intelligible way.

Rajprasit's study (2021) aimed to raise WE awareness among a group of 75 Thai university first-year students registered on a general English course by using innovative WE-oriented language learning activities. The study suggests that adding these activities to the English course increased students' awareness of English as a global language and highlighted the "diverse cultures and identities often encountered during inter-cultural exchanges" (Rajprasit, 2021, p.7). In addition, the written reflections provided by these students indicated that they gained a clearer understanding and stronger awareness of the different varieties and forms of English and became more open-minded to such diversity.

Teixeira and Pozzi (2014) investigated the influences of teaching a course on WEs to a group of seven international students with different L1 backgrounds. In their study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected by using pre- and post- accent-recognition quizzes, a questionnaire, students' reflective writing, recordings of group discussions, an exit questionnaire and course evaluations. The results showed that students became more aware of the different varieties and forms of English language and, more importantly, were able to rethink the local and global English language use.

The GE movement also encompasses ELT pedagogy. Based on post-method pedagogy, Fang (2016) presented a new paradigm for intercultural communication teaching pronunciation which asked teachers to reject the native-oriented approach that is upheld as the standard in several ELT contexts. In this post-method era, Kumaravadivelu (2005) , describes how "the post-method condition is a sustainable state of affairs that compels us to fundamentally restructure our view of language teaching and teacher education" (p.173). This perspective not only emphasizes the central importance of considering the content of what is taught to students but also the situation in which the learning process occurs. Specifically, how English is used in the local setting and the sociocultural conditions in which the learners shape their personal identities needs to be central (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). While Kumaravadivelu's (2003) approach does not use the term GE explicitly, the study is related in terms of how it locates ELT within an analytical viewpoint that encounters the teaching paradigm that underpins EFL's traditional pedagogy.

Galloway and Rose's study (2018) explores a Global Englishes approach – Global English Language Teaching (GELT) – that influences learners' attitudes to English and ELT. The participant students were invited to present and choose an English variety. The study's findings showed that students had more optimistic attitudes towards English varieties as a result of their participation. The intervention not only raised awareness of the phonological differences in each variety, but also helped them to explore "the linguistic history of a nation" and to comprehend the process that enabled "the variety of English spoken there" (Galloway & Rose, 2018, p.10). According to the GELT approach, learners' L1 and cultures are considered as a resource instead of a source of interference. In keeping with a critical pedagogy approach, the norms of English are more flexible and ownership of English is questioned (Fang & Ren, 2018). Therefore, GELT is viewed as "a more appropriate approach, in line with the current emphasis on multilingualism, in contrast to traditional ELT practices which continue to be overwhelmingly monolingual" (Fang & Ren, 2018, p.386). Similarly, Sifakis (2017) offers an ELF awareness frame for integrating ELF research in teacher education and ELT pedagogy. This frame promotes an understanding of ELF among learners, stakeholders and teachers, and

also enhances awareness of learning and of instructional practice. This approach accentuates the “dynamic, recurrent interplay of *negotiations* involving purpose, syllabus, method, and evaluation within a milieu of attitudes and expectations of everyone involved” (Sifakis, 2017, p.9).

Despite the studies referenced above, assessment practices in ELT continue to reflect traditional performances and do not yet appear to reveal GE-informed practices. In EFL contexts, particularly in the Gulf countries, EFL education is still very influenced by native-speakerism as are the students (Alruwaili, 2021). Therefore, this study explores the attitudes of Saudi MA students at Jouf University towards a GE course, with the intention of equipping students with an awareness of the diverse forms of English and an adequate understanding of the current linguistic landscape of the English language.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

An in-depth qualitative inquiry was conducted with 18 MA students (Table 1), aged 20–23, at Jouf University in the north of Saudi Arabia. There are approximately 100 postgraduate students in this university. In order to study in the English department, students are required to pass a certain level of English throughout their study, such as general English which places emphasis on four English skills. Study participants included students who had completed an intermediate English level, obtained a high grade, and finished their second academic year. All of these participants passed a placement test which was conducted by the college with a band 5 score, as some of them wanted to study abroad, for which they needed the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 4.5–5. They chose this GE course as an elective course, regarding it as essential for their further studies. The course was taught in the second semester in year 2 of the MA course with 21 students enrolled in total from the 2021–2022 academic year.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristic of Students

Item	Students	Frequency
Gender	Male	8
	Female	10
Origin	Local students	18
	International students (i.e., Italian, Spanish, etc.)	0
Level of English	Intermediate level	18

Research Procedures

In this research, two qualitative methods were utilized for data gathering: semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. Data were collected over approximately two months, from early May 2022 until the end of June 2022. The process of data collection is illustrated in Table 2, followed by a further explanation of how these instruments were utilized.

Table 2*Stages of Data Collection Methods and How They Were Conducted*

Stage	Data collection method	How was this method conducted?
First	Semi-structured interview	-interviews of between 30 to 40 minutes with 18 students. Thirteen interviews were included in the final thematic analysis.
Second	Reflective journals	-the same group of 18 students write reflective journals as one of the requirements of the course portfolio. Ten journals were collected for review.

Since the focus of the research was to develop the quality of the course and to comprehend students' initial perceptions and any changing attitudes in relation to GE, students were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews at the end of the course. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the qualitative researcher should “treat interviews as a flexible tool, which are partly planned and partly spontaneous” (p.95). Designing an interview guide, a “series of questions that will guide [the researcher] ‘conversation’ with the participants, is considered key to the successful use of the interview in qualitative research” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.81). Therefore, a question guide was designed ahead of time (see Appendix A). The interview questions were developed by the researchers and based on their findings from the literature review. Then, the researchers piloted these questions using a separate group. After the questions were successfully piloted, they were sent to several professors in applied linguistics in the English department at Jouf University to conduct a final check of the appropriateness of the questions and their validity.

Based on the professional experience of the researchers undertaking this study, it was understood that the timing of the interviews was important. For example, students' perceptions throughout the semester might have been influenced by the studying conditions that the participants faced. The researchers understood that scheduling interviews mid-way through the semester might have led to data that reflected the participants' first impressions of the course and might have been less reliable than collecting data towards the end of the semester. Therefore, the interviews were conducted at the end of the second semester. During the interviews (n=13), students were invited to share what they had learned from the course.

Interviewing was relatively informal and took place face-to-face in a room on the campus of Jouf University. A digital recorder was used to capture the interviews in their entirety and notes were taken to illuminate any potential ambiguity in the transcript. A copy of the interview questions was provided to each interviewee at least two days before the interview date. This gave the interviewees an overall idea about the nature of these questions and the time to think about their responses, contributing towards the “richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness and honesty that [are] some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p.278). Questions related to their understanding of the concept of GE; their experiences and motivation in learning English; their perceptions of their own English before and after taking the course; and their suggestions for improving the course. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews and were followed up by more questions and prompts. Since all of the participants were proficient in English, the English language was used in the interviews. Regarding ethical considerations and minimizing the influence of the researchers on the research, the students were told that all their perceptions and views shared in the interviews would not influence their results in the course. Reflective journals were also

used as a data source. Ten reflective journals were collected, which had been prepared by the same groups of students as a requirement of their course portfolio (see Appendix B for the instructions for the reflective journal). These reflective journals were originally written in English.

For ethical considerations, the researchers acquired ethical authorization from the University of Jorf's Faculty Research Ethical Committee. Three teachers who taught the participants were known to the researchers of this study. With the teachers' assistance, the researchers contacted the participants via email, whereby the researchers illustrated the main focus of the study, specifically, that there were no inconveniences and the students could refuse to answer any question or withdraw any time they want. Participants were informed about the aims of the research and its outcomes and the researchers obtained informed consent before conducting the research. The participants were reassured again that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time up until the data had been analyzed and written up (Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, they were informed that their names would not be revealed anywhere and their recorded voices and any collected data from their lessons would be kept completely confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms were adopted for all participants prior to transcribing the interviews.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing the interview recordings, each recording was listened to twice in order to gain an overall understanding and also to be fully immersed in each interview. With regards to the actual analysis, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) was used to analyze and identify emerging themes within the qualitative data. Qualitative data sets (interviews and reflective journal responses) were analyzed separately, and the data coded and analyzed inductively to develop thematic frameworks before cross comparisons were produced. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants of the study, each participant was assigned a code that was associated with the corresponding reflective journal response as well as the interview transcript.

Qualitative analysis was conducted using MAXQDA software because it is one of the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) digital programs that allows the importing of non-English text (see Appendix C). Therefore, all data sources, such as the transcriptions of audio recordings of interviews and reflective journal responses, were imported into MAXQDA. This software helped in the management of all the data sources as they were kept in one place, making the triangulation of the two sources much easier. In addition, as Creswell (2016) highlights, digital analysis programs, in the process of creating codes and constructing themes, are more effective than coding manually because it helps when coding data by reading line by line and in a more systematic manner. Therefore, using MAXQDA provided an opportunity for a third reading, which yielded another look at the sample of the manually applied codes and those in the previous reading and the ability to contrast these codes with those produced from the third reading in order to ascertain if they could be enhanced and expressed more exactly.

Discussion and Findings

Perceptions of Students towards Their Own English after Course on WE/GE

The analysis found a tendency among students to be fairly negative towards their own English language skills and their EFL experience before taking the course. For instance, one student

(S) shared in the interview (Inter) that her experience of learning English was very negative, especially when she talked with a native speaker (NS). She reported “In fact, I rarely use English to start a conversation because I am very confused when I speak with native speakers of English because they cannot understand my accent and at the same time, I cannot understand the other’s accents” (Inter.S8). Another student said “I hated to learn English from the teachers who are from the Philippines and Egypt because of their accents” (Inter.S5). Two students (Inter.S3 and Inter.S10) also complained about their non-Saudi teachers for making English harder due to their unintelligible pronunciation. For example, one stated that “it was difficult to understand my teacher’s accents because she was from Egypt and was pronouncing ‘something’ like ‘somesing’”(Inter.S10). Another participant openly declared “my English is poor” (Inter.S6).

Mimicking other people’s accents either in an unconscious or conscious way was also seen as a strategy before taking the course. Eight students revealed that they always tried to mimic their teachers’ accents or specific native accents from social media or movies. For instance, a participant commented that she preferred to listen and learn English from native English speakers because they “speak English fluently” (Inter.S4). The majority of students (7) generally thought they were clearly encouraged to mimic American, British or Australian English accents.

Based on the participants’ responses, their experience of taking the GE course was very positive. When expressing positive perceptions about their experience of the course, students used adjectives such as “perfect”, “amazing”, “highly motivated”, “interesting” and “wonderful”. For example, one participant stated that “in fact, my experience in taking this course was very effective and motivated me because I have learned a lot in this course such as how the English language spread, the reasons behind the spread of English language (e.g., political, economic, personal, historical, intellectual, and entertainment reasons), the meaning of creole and pidgin language” (Inter.S9). According to two students, this course helped them to recognize “why people speak differently in different social contexts” (Inter.S11) and appreciate “the varieties of English around the world and the differences in the English language itself that are used in various contexts across the world” (Inter.S2). In a similar way, some students stated in their reflective journals (Jour) that their experiences were very motivating:

I was so excited in understanding the different Englishes in the world and how English can be changed or modified in the way that people can understand easily. This course offers a great amount of knowledge and information about the processes of developing English in different contexts so that people who are not native speakers can understand and achieve a successful process of communication. I chose this course also to deepen my knowledge about the different Englishes all over the world and understand the true nature of that universal language. I was interested in learning different forms of English beside the standard form that we have been learning from our primary stage. (Jour.S12)

The course was as I expected, full of very interesting information and facts about how the English language developed and how it changed to fulfil the needs of communication of people. (Jour.S10)

This course was one of the courses that I enjoyed studying as I was learning desirable information and knowledge about the English language which I am interested in so much. (Jour.S7)

Regarding student perceptions after taking the course, the majority of participants demonstrated more awareness about the multiplicity of Englishes and expressed that they were less embarrassed about their local English as a result of participating in the course. For instance, S1 expressed his view by saying that “I don’t feel shame if I speak with my home accent” (Inter.S1). Another student commented “it is very essential to not judge whether someone speaks standardly but the most important thing is how you speak and articulate clearly during communication” (Inter.S8). Similarly, another participant remarked that “from this moment I considered myself as an English user who can express myself without feeling afraid of making any grammar mistakes in speaking or writing” (Inter.S5). Similarly, another student stated that after the course, “I recognize that all English varieties are acceptable even though they are different in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, phonology, morphology, syntax. English speakers can communicate with each other around the world even though there are occasional gaps in understanding” (Inter.S4). Other students stated that they were aware after the course that there is no single accurate English accent, but the important thing is the pronunciation of words and that the use of language is correct (Inter.S2 and Inter.S9). One student articulated in the interview that this course taught her about “all forms of English language and its different varieties that exist which are used by different people and are similar when it comes to the linguistic features and functions” (Inter.S6). Another student added that he learned from this course that “all English teachers whether they were native or non-native teachers can be effective in teaching English, and each of them has his/her strengths and weaknesses” (Inter.S11).

In their reflective journals, many students indicated that this course had been very useful for them and expanded their knowledge. For example:

The course has given us a very different perspective and also understanding of English in terms of teaching and learning and we also have different views of English as non-native speakers and learners. The course was so useful in expanding our knowledge in that field. We also became more aware of English and its nature and how it can be modified in different contexts and the development of it with different people. (Jour.S14)

After finishing the course, I do feel that I have more powerful information about the nature of English that makes me more confident about my knowledge and strategies of dealing with this language as a teacher or even as a learner. (Jour.S12)
The course informed us about the history of the English language and how English developed and changed and in particular how it can be modified according to the participants and contexts and also how to be a good teacher and how to be a good learner. (Jour.S2)

I found the course full of information that helped me to better understand the different forms of English that are used by individuals who come from different cultural backgrounds and more importantly this course helped me to understand how English developed and is used in different contexts and settings. (Jour.S7)

The above quotes from the students' reflective journals demonstrate that the course changed their perception about their own English and that using variations of English was no longer seen as a source of embarrassment. They were able to recognize that the important thing was "shared lucidness" and to be less judgmental about local accent and use. It is important to emphasize that the GE approach does not disregard the need for precision; rather, it promotes the idea of shared lucidness via discussion as a significance for verbal exchange.

For instance, a participant wrote in his journal: "before the course.... I thought I have to talk in English like a native speaker.... But after the course I am aware it does not matter...I only need to demonstrate myself in an understandable and obvious way" (Jour.S15). Another student wrote in her journal about her experience after the course that "non-native speakers of English can achieve a successful process of communication in an unconscious or conscious way" (Jour.S13).

The students' reflective journals also demonstrated more critical awareness of English. For example, a student stated that:

the course has changed my views on how English is taught and learned. Before taking the course, I thought that English is taught to students all around the world in order to reach a native speaker model and to become like them. However, I realized that there are other varieties of English which are already used for communication and are approved by a lot of linguists and communities. These varieties are acceptable and can be developed into a lingua franca model to be applied in English as Second Language and English as a Foreign Language to create a mutual understanding among people from different cultures. (Jour.S16)

Another participant (S10) articulated in the interview that her attitude had changed. Before participating in the course, she had feelings of inferiority because she could not speak English in a fluent way. Her teacher had previously told her that her "Saudi English accent should be changed, and it is better to imitate an English native accent such as an American accent...but she could not reach that level and [that] made learning the language a real challenge for her". Strangely, her teacher assessed her performance as weak and gave her a low grade in terms of participation and in the final exam. She completed her story saying: "At that moment, I could not speak standard English for that reason I felt very confused". In her reflective journal, she stated that after the course, she changed her view and "felt more relieved about practicing the so-called standard accent" (Jour.S10).

Perceptions of Students towards Concept of World and Global English after Course

Participants' perspectives regarding the title of the course generated some interesting findings. For example, one student (S4) stated in the interview that "I did not know what 'World Englishes' means, and I expected that it would talk about English as a world-famous language, and not about the linguistic varieties that we studied". Another student explained that she "felt very uncomfortable because I thought it to be a difficult one". Another student reported in his interview that

when I first read the course's title "World Englishes", I wondered why it was written in the plural form. When I started the course, I realized that the title was intended to refer to different varieties of English. These are the varieties spoken by native speakers as well as non-native speakers of English. (Inter.S12)

Generally, students' awareness of GE was raised and the integration of GE in ELT was considered essential. Despite deep-rooted language ideologies, the students learned how to challenge these ideas and examine English beyond that perspective. For instance, one student expressed that "I gained a new understanding of GE, I corrected my perspectives about English, and it has several varieties" (Inter, S6). The students also showed in their reflective journals how participation in the course had led to them thinking about different aspects of GE, such as cultural and linguistic diversity. In the same vein, one student highlighted in his reflective journal how he had come to understand the importance of being "a good teacher and even a good learner; it is very useful to know the nature of English and how to use it for several aims" (Jour.S9).

After being introduced to the concept of GE, the students also became more tolerant and flexible about other English accents. For instance, one student reported that "now, I can accept other individuals when they use English because my linguistic awareness was improved after my knowledge of GE" (Inter.S6). Another student stated that his knowledge of GE has developed his awareness of varieties of English originating from other countries, such as New Zealand English, South African English and Indian English.

The students' reflective journals revealed a generally positive attitude towards GE and the course overall, and an enhanced comprehension of English had an influence on their mindsets, behaviours and identities. Four students developed a more critical position towards EFL through participating in the course. They stated that native-speakerism has "caused several problems in ELT and there's a need to reevaluate and think again about it" (Jour.S2). In addition, they stated the belief that it is essential to argue several language thoughts from a GE perspective (Jour.S6). To sum up, a deeper understanding of English and more awareness of GE enabled the students to challenge some of their own beliefs about English as well as be more critical of traditional ELT approaches.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study show that the students developed more positive attitudes as a result of the course, not only towards GE in general but also their own English. The findings also show that the students gained a deeper appreciation of English varieties and felt more confident about their local English form. After taking the course, the students not only became more tolerant of English diversity but also gained a broader understanding of other English varieties. Furthermore, the findings show that after being introduced to the concept of GE, the students developed greater awareness and positive attitudes towards English diversity and varieties. A more important finding is that the students recognized the value of their own English variety, felt less embarrassed about their own English, thus changing their perceptions about concepts that are deeply rooted in traditional ELT approaches. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Fang and Ren (2018), Rajprasit (2021), Teixeira and Pozzi (2014), and Galloway and Rose (2018). Smith and Jones (2001) suggested that students became more aware of the several differences in the English language. The course also assisted the students in raising their WE/GE awareness of English as a global language and became more open-minded towards their diversities.

Although the current study was conducted in the Saudi context, the findings and implications can also be relevant for other ELT communities, specifically for a Bachelor's degree programme with a large class size. The direct benefit of this study is the feedback, with just one of the many end products being the students' attitudinal change in their understanding of

WE/GE and their English learning. Overall, the findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice.

One pedagogical implication of this study is that current ELT practices should incorporate and adopt GE-oriented syllabuses into the current teaching model. In other words, when designing ELT curricula and policies, it is recommended that policymakers and curriculum designers should minimize the use of native-oriented monolingual English approaches and, instead, actively ensure the integration of GE-informed materials. Adopting GE-informed materials in ELT will help language learners develop not only a better understanding of linguistic diversity but also a greater awareness of the hybrid nature of English, which in turn will help learners acknowledge the legitimacy of their own English. A possible suggestion for these materials and content is to provide learners with GE-oriented learning activities and materials in courses aimed at developing listening-speaking skills that are based on learners' needs and are relevant to their interests and goals. For instance, curriculum designers and English language instructors can provide their learners with listening logs and activities aimed at helping them explore different English varieties. In turn, exposing learners to different English varieties will help them gain a deeper understanding of the language spoken by speakers of various linguacultural backgrounds and select the English variety that sounds most relevant to them. Furthermore, exposing learners to diverse Englishes can challenge traditional ELT practices and learners' attitudes to native-speakerism. Such exposure will help learners appreciate real-life English in their local environment and the English used in their current communicative encounters, which have become increasingly international and multicultural in nature.

Another key recommendation is that GE-informed materials should be locally and individually designed by taking into consideration factors such as learners' goals and needs, instructors' backgrounds, learners' local attitudes and perceptions towards English learning, and their expectations. Local language instructors and curriculum designers should be engaged in designing such materials because they are more able to reflect and adapt materials that suit the local context. They are in the best position to incorporate local and familiar cultural contents that can actively engage learners in the learning process.

At the same time, such GE-informed materials cannot be achieved without incorporating and adding GE concepts in teachers' training and teachers' professional development programmes. Therefore, language instructors and teachers should be trained to design GE-informed materials so that they can adopt them in their teaching practices. Doing so will help not only language instructors and teachers incorporate GE concepts in their teaching practices and raise their awareness but will also enable learners to gain an updated knowledge and understanding of the current status of English in a relevant and meaningful way.

In this vein, the establishment of courses on Global English Language Teaching (GELT) (see e.g., Galloway and Rose, 2018) would help teachers and students to rethink their views towards correct pronunciation and replace the somewhat outmoded view of culture residing in a particular country within a particular group of people. In addition, this course would help to enhance students' and teachers' understanding and recognition of the varieties of English and to challenge the traditional ELT approach.

Conclusion

This paper explored the perceptions of EFL students participating in a WE/GE course and assessed the possibility of integrating the GE concept into the English classes in the Saudi

context. With regards to changing the “mindset” of Saudi MA students, a positive outcome was observed: participants felt more confident about their own English learning, and embraced the concept of World English, which enabled them to recognize the value of their own English variety. There are, nevertheless, some limitations that need to be addressed, although it should be stressed that these do not necessarily negatively impact the results. Rather, they are presented as suggestions for future research. Firstly, the study participants were from a single university. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies include participants from different geographical settings by recruiting students from different universities. In addition, because the focus of the study was to comprehend students’ initial perceptions and any changing attitudes in relation to GE, it would be more interesting if the study had adapted a pretest-posttest design. Therefore, future studies could employ a pretest-posttest research approach in their experimental design, potentially generating more detailed insights into the change of attitudes in relation to GEs. Finally, as the study relies on data from semi-structured interviews with students, future studies could examine the teaching of World Englishes/GE in similar contexts from teacher perspectives or concentrate on particular activities within the course, using mixed methods.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview

1. Can you tell me about your experience of learning English to date?
2. Could you please share your opinion about what you think of your own English in (pronunciation learning, attitudes towards own English before/after taking the course, etc.)?
3. In your experience from studying the course, can you explain what does GE/WE mean (how we can incorporate WE/GE in ELT, what are the current and future uses of English?)
4. In your view, what are the parts of the course that you like? Can you give any suggestions for improving the course?

Thank you very much for taking your time to give me this interview.

Appendix B

Guidelines for reflective journals

1. What is your motivation for choosing the course?
2. What are your views about the course WE/GE during and after the semester?
3. Can you tell me what you are learning from the course WE/GE?
4. In your view, what are the parts of the course that you like? Can you give any suggestions for improving?
5. Do you change your perceptions towards learning and teaching English after taking the course?

Appendix C: Screenshot of MAXQDA Software

