



ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDONESIA

By

Selmina Rumawak

Universitas Internasional Papua

Email: selminarumawak@iup.ac.id

Article Info

Article history:

Received Nov 19, 2024

Revised Dec 06, 2024

Accepted Dec 22, 2024

Keywords:

English, English Language Teaching, World Englishes, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia and the significance of a proposed approach to the ELT, that is, World Englishes. Library research was conducted to answer principal questions regarding “which prestigious variety should be used, the local English teacher (non-native English teacher) and inner-circle teacher debate (native English teacher), and impact of English affecting local languages. The report concludes with recommendations on how to deal with the three issues”. The first recommendation is to incorporate World Englishes teaching method into ELT in educational institutions nationwide hence provide first-hand experience of varieties of Englishes used in other countries. Secondly, it was suggested that it is more efficient to have both native and non-native English Teachers to teach at a language institution. Lastly, as English travels worldwide it may affect heritage languages thus Jenkins (2015) proposes, students should be made aware of their native languages as their identities and function it together with English (Jenkins, 2015, p. 176). Ultimately, bilingualism is essential in order to employ English as the international language but not forgetting to maintaining local languages as students’ important cultural asset

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Selmina Rumawak

Universitas Internasional Papua

Email: selminarumawak@iup.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

World Englishes (WE) has become a constructive approach in English language teaching (ELT) recently, as a solution to promoting and raising awareness of diversity of Englishes worldwide, boosting students’ confidence in their English varieties. This allows local teachers to impart students’ local cultures as well as neighboring countries’ by employing both Endonormative or local and lingua franca models. Exonormative model or native speaker models, on the other hand, are the traditional model that should be retain to some extent due to its “prestige and legitimacy” (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 184), depending on students learning goals, particularly when they plan to study or live in the inner-circle countries: the UK and the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and have to take IELTS and TOEFL, or, work overseas and need to sit for TOEIC (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

In Indonesia, language institutions such as British Council, Indonesian Australian Language Foundation (IALF) and Educational Testing Service (ETS) cater for the English language testing, which one can find in places such as Jakarta, Bali, Bandung, Surabaya and Malang. Apart from the language institutions mentioned, a number of private schools offering classes entirely in English are widespread also in the cities mentioned above.

This report will outline three crucial discussion questions in ELT, the focus of the context is Indonesia. The report begins with an overview of the historical context of ELT in Indonesia, a little description of private schools shall also be given. The goals of the school follow and the main discussion questions are addressed pertaining to which prestigious variety should be used, the local English teacher (non-native English teacher) and inner-circle teacher debate (native English teacher), and impact of English affecting local languages. The report concludes with recommendations on how to deal with the three issues.

2. METHODS

This study employed library research methodology to answer three critical, debatable questions: (1) which prestigious variety should be used in teaching English? (2) who should teach English, local English teacher (non-native English teacher) or inner-circle teacher (native English teacher)? and (3) what is the impact of English affecting local languages? This approach was selected due to its suitability for exploring existing scholarly literature and theoretical frameworks related to World Englishes.

The research process involved several key stages: 1. Literature Search: A systematic literature review was conducted using a range of databases, including Google Scholar. Search terms included English language teaching (Indonesia), "World Englishes", "native vs non-native English teacher (in Indonesia)", "prestigious variety" and "impact of English affecting local languages (in Indonesia)". 2. Data Collection: Relevant articles, books, and other scholarly materials identified through the literature search were collected and reviewed. Subsequently, recommendations were proposed to the answer research questions.

This study provides a comprehensive overview of English Language Teaching in Indonesia, particularly proposing World Englishes as a constructive approach in English language teaching based on existing scholarly literatures. The findings and discussion contribute to a deeper understanding of the research questions and offer valuable recommendations for informing English teaching practices and guiding future research in alignment with incorporation of World Englishes approach in English language curriculum in Indonesia.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Overview of English Language Teaching in Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia (Kam & Wong, 2004). The country's official language is Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*), and it has 719 local languages (Simons & Fennig, 2017) with thousands of dialects spoken across the archipelago. The first languages most Indonesians acquired at home are the local languages; English was the first foreign language taught in Junior high schools (Nababan, 1982, as cited in Mistar, 2005).

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia had been historically shaped with three phases: prior to independence (1945), since gained independence (1945 - 1950) and development period (1950 to present). Let us begin with the first stage, in the beginning of 1600s, Indonesia was ruled by Dutch for quite a long period, that is, 350 years; ELT apparently began in early 1900s. At that period, ELT was pointed out as effective due to class size – small number of students attended the class, they were only children of wealthy people (Sadtono, 1997, as cited in Mistar, 2005). Following the Dutch era, Japanese took over Indonesia in the early 1942. The linguistic environment was totally divergent from the previous situation owing to the ban of utilizing Dutch and English (Thomas, 1968). During this stage, two new languages were being taught in schools, Japanese and Malay (now known as Indonesian); nonetheless, the teachings of Dutch and English were still done furtively (Groeneboer, 1998). In 17 August 1945, Indonesia gained its independence, since then, *Bahasa Indonesia* was declared as the national language (Ministry of Information, 1966, as cited in Mistar, 2005).

As far as foreign language is concerned, the Indonesian government opted for English; the language chosen aimed to communicate internationally (Huda, 1999, as cited in *ibid*). Despite the role of English as a foreign language, it was strongly asserted that the language "would never be either a social or a second official language in Indonesia" (Sadtono, 1997, as cited in Mistar, 2005, p. 171). English was the first foreign language imparted in secondary schools for a long duration, until it gained its approval in primary schools in 1994. It has been mentioned that there is a lack of English teachers, particularly in rural areas (Kam & Wong, 2004). In some parts of Indonesia, not only rural areas face that issue, some parts of urban do, speaking from my own experience but on a university level, when I was teaching English to business students in a private university in Jayapura in August 2014 to June 2015, there were only two English teachers (my former lecturer and I), teaching approximately 300 students.

Turning now to private schools, which has gained popularity in Indonesia, particularly in most areas of Jakarta, having had the prestige, these so called "international schools are increasingly sought after" (Global Business Indonesia Guide, 2017) by Indonesian elites because of the education provided in a foreign language, i.e., English. The role of English in Indonesia can be best describe in Coleman (2016) "English in Indonesia, then, is a symbol of aspiration, but it is also an instrument of social exclusion, closing off opportunities to those whose linguistic repertoire is limited to the local languages and/or Indonesia" (p. 67).

Learning goals

Learning goals of the school are as follows:

1. Know British and American English and can communicate using the two English varieties.
 2. Understand British and American cultures.
-

3. Be able to perceive academic writing conventions and public speaking in English and
4. Be able to master specific linguistics terms for English as specific purposes in each area of discipline.

Prestige Variety

A highly utilization of the prestigious varieties, Received Pronunciation (RP) and American English is an indicator of the varieties being employed in ELT, thus far. This is due to 'social' and 'linguistic prestige' they have. Pearce (2007, as cited in Nordquist, 2017a) defines the two terms as interrelated and "the language of powerful social groups usually carries linguistic prestige; and social prestige is often granted to speakers of prestige languages and varieties". Despite RP's role as a prestigious variety, it might not be that popular today, whereas American English (AE) is. The changes in preference and prestige are mainly result of "social and cultural change" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 15). This change is borne out clearly with the powerful wide spread of AE in the media and technology. However, as the fact of British and American colonization across the globe, the colonized countries have adopted English and localized it in their own contexts; consequently, emergent of local varieties of English exist.

An important issue for language policy makers, and indeed to all ELT teachers, is adopting a particular English variety in English language teaching. But the question is, 'which English variety?' Even in England itself, a number of English varieties exists such as Estuary English and Cockney. The regional dialects and accents vary from America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa to Singapore, India and Malaysia (Cook, 2001). Notwithstanding the previous debate on English variety that should be taught, I shall seek to discuss Received Pronunciation (RP) as a prestigious variety of British English, American English - follows as the powerful English variety and; ultimately, World Englishes varieties, a model of diversification of Englishes scattered worldwide. It would be suggested that both British and American varieties should be employed; nonetheless, awareness of World Englishes have to be promoted in ELT.

Received Pronunciation emerged in the 19th century in which it was used in private schools – is a variety of Southern English (Manns, 2017). It is referred to as "British Received Pronunciation (RP), BBC English, Queen's English, and posh accent" (Nordquist, 2017). Since the variety was "accepted in the politest circles of society" (Hughes et al., 2005, p. 3, as cited in Manns, 2017), they called it Received Pronunciation. Though RP is a prestigious variety – only an estimation of 3-4% of British speak it. (Macarthur, 1992). Additionally, RP is a standard accent and its representation is generally codified in English dictionaries and also it is a model for teaching English as a foreign language. As a result, RP is occasionally deemed as "an unchanging accent – a standard against which other accents can be measured" (Sangster, 2014). Regardless of RP's role as the standard accent, it has been subdued by American English.

"American English (AE) was the first major variety of the language that developed outside of Britain (Nordquist, 2016). Bailey (2011) pointed it out as "the foundation for an ideological American English" (p.10). The variety has gained its prestige and employed as "the most influential and powerful variety of English in the world today" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 55). Ibid (2007) outlines three reasons catering the popularity of American English worldwide: America is the powerful nation in the world, its political influence in American popular culture, and usage of AE in technology. As a powerful nation, an influence lies within that power, resulting in the extensively usage of AE in the film and music industries. The final point is dissemination of AE through technology, for instance, Microsoft's owner is Bill Gates, an American; the default of language selection in Microsoft word is American English, albeit other options are there. This is strong evidence of the prevalence of American English.

World Englishes (WE) is a concept introduced by Kachru which consists of three circles of phases representing inner-circle, outer circle and expanding circle countries. Countries like America and England belongs to the present circle, the second circle accommodates the British colonised countries, such as Kenya, India and Singapore, whom, English is their second language. The third circle refers to nations, employing English as a foreign language, they are Indonesia, China and Saudi Arabia, for instance (Kachru, 1992, as cited in Jenkins, 2015). English is spoken by many people from the outer and expanding circles than the inner circle, as shown in Jenkins (2015), it is predicted that both ENL and ESL speakers numbered around 360 million, whereas EFL speakers outnumbered both categories with an estimation of 1 billion speakers. Today, majority of English speakers are from the outer and expanding circle countries, speaking diverse Englishes worldwide, some with the standard/native English, others with indigenized Englishes or English pidgins and creoles. These Englishes come with their own varieties mostly affected by their local languages.

As Cook (2001) argues that "so far as language teaching is concerned, there is no single ideal native speaker for all students to imitate" (p.177). In spite of that, the existing prestigious varieties mentioned above, RP and American English, respectively, should be utilized due to the model they present; yet, it is suggested to raise awareness of World Englishes in ELT because even in an inner-circle academic context overseas, students would come in contact with other international students, who may speak a vast of diverse varieties of Englishes.

Local Verse Inner-Circle Teacher

It remains debatable whether inner-circle or local teachers are the best to teach English. Many schools in the expanding circle countries prefer native teachers, as in the case of Indonesia. This is due to the notion that “native speakers are the best teachers of the language” (Chanagarajah, 1999, p. 126). Since inner-circle teachers carry that prestige with them, schools seek them and paid three to four times higher than local teachers, as per an experience of an Australian, teaching English in Bandung, Indonesia, in 2011 – was paid 1000 USD monthly (Grant, 2011). *Are native English teachers worth the cost?* It would be argued that native teachers worth the cost; however, it is suggested that team teaching (native English teacher and Indonesian local teacher) can be tried for an effective English learning, because they complement each other, in some ways.

Who is a native speaker? Two definitions express it, MacArthur (1992) defines native speaker as “a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood (p.682). Another explanation is “the first language a human being learns to speak is his *native language*; he is a native speaker of this language” (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 43, as cited in Nordquist, 2019). English is the native language of the inner-circle countries, referring to the British, American, Australian, New Zealander and Canadian. But, how about those Asians, Black British or American who are born and raised in English speaking countries and can only speak English, similarly, those in the outer circle countries. Are they not regarded as native speakers? (Medgyes, 1992).

In Indonesia, at least, if you are Caucasian (*bule*), you would be asked to teach English, regardless your educational background. A number of ELT job advertisements on the internet seek “qualified native English teachers” “native English speakers, expatriates” or “full/part time English teacher (NATIVE) not Indonesian citizens (Setiawan, 2012). This might be perceived as a discrimination against Indonesian local teachers. One could ask, why is native English teacher most opted everywhere? It is due to the “model of language that the native can present” (Cook, 2001, p. 175); *ibid* (2001) pointed out the advantage inner-circle countries have is ‘*language proficiency*’; they can directly answer any questions asked by students and they have the so called ‘*prestigious accents*’, say American or British. Butler (2007) found that Korean school children prefer American-accented English teachers than their own local Korean-accented English teachers. Despite being a preferred model, native English teachers are ‘*rare resource*’, Chinese English students say (Cook, 2001). Inner-circle English teachers may also have drawbacks which only local teachers might fill that gap.

A number of points may describe who a local English teacher (LET) is. Firstly, a local English teacher is someone who speaks English as a second or foreign language; teaches English as a foreign language; have the similar lingua franca as students; and the students learn English in a monolingual environment (Medgyes, 1992). For instance, an Indonesian local English teacher, speaking EFL, teaches it, sharing the common *Bahasa Indonesia* to students. Local English teachers outnumber their counterparts, inner-circle teachers, 80% of ELT are local (Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 2005; and Graddol, 2006, as cited in Setiawan, 2012). Having had the title as ‘local English teachers’, they are better model in regards with several benefits they possess, as Medgyes (1992) describes: LET are “imitable models of the successful learner of English” (p. 346) – students can emulate their teachers; LET also help with “teaching learning strategies more effectively” (p. 346) because they have been through the process of English learning and may provide the best ways to learn English. The other benefit is LET are more informative of English due to the learning experience they have, resulting in aiding students “anticipate language difficulties” (p. 347). Furthermore, LET certainly can attend to students’ needs and issues in the learning process – empathetic owing to “sharing the learners’ mother-tongue” (p. 347). So far, local English teachers may benefit in many ways, as above, nonetheless, the lack of so-called prestige and linguistic competence exist which only inner-circle teachers may fulfill.

English a Threat to Local Languages

The spread of English as the global language brings about both positive and negative effects. Though English is the default choice for an international communication, it also has affected local languages, and to some extent, resulting in language loss. Societies have put the blame on English dissemination; however, this may due to an individual choice, whereby people choose to learn and speak English, as McKay (2002) describes the complex process, not only “imposition by colonial powers or inner-circle countries” have an impact on local languages but also because people “actively promote the language and those who consciously choose to learn it” (p. 24).

An important issue for language policy makers, and indeed parents, because parents are the ones sending their children to ‘private schools’, where English is the main communication throughout in Jakarta, especially. It would be argued that English is being considered as affecting local languages in Indonesia, particularly private schools, despite benefits it offers, maintenance of local languages alongside English is crucial for students’ identity and acceptance in the society.

Phillipson (1992) coins the term ‘linguistics imperialism’ referring to “the dominance asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English

and other languages" (47). When English disseminates worldwide, it brings with itself power, Coleman (2016) symbolizes it as a large 'naga' a dragon, having the power to threaten intermediate and small nagas, which are *bahasa* Indonesia and local languages. "In Jakarta, English is everywhere" (Coleman, 2016, p.64). One could encounter English almost in every aspect of life in the capital city of Indonesia. Coleman (2016) insightfully narrates usage of English in a number of places as in children's school, day cares and nurseries like 'Lovely Sunshine' and 'Sunrise International', who educates pupils in English. Additionally, one can access vast information or entertainment via Indonesian's TV One and Global TV, listening to trend topics using English terms such as 'update' and 'clean and clear' meaning 'not corrupt'; Indonesia's fifth president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was an instance of prominent people who partook in the TV programs and use the English terms.

Given the access of private schools tutoring in English and the spread of English in Jakarta, wealthy people choose private schools because they want the best for their children and the other reason is, state schools often taught English poorly. The children in the private schools learn English and may only speak English. Onishi (2010) exemplifies Mrs. Sugiarto and Ms. Jovanka's case. Mrs. Sugiarto and her husband both studied in Australia and America, they live in Jakarta and speak English to their children, and the children attend private schools in which the main instruction is 'English'. Consequently, they cannot speak *bahasa* Indonesia though they are Indonesian. Another example is Ms. Jovanka's story, her son underwent the similar experience as above, so she planned to enroll her child in a state primary school; yet, her friends and families tell her to let her son goes to private school. She prefers her son to learn in an English only medium; however, her son is an Indonesian, lives in Indonesia, it will be an issue in communication and socialization with Indonesians if the child cannot communicate in the national language.

The two examples describe the situation of Indonesian parents, whose children, attend private schools, learning lessons in English; they benefit in many ways that English offers as Kachru (1986, as cited in McKay, 2002) expresses "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science and travel". It is clear that there exists power and the positive points in English; nevertheless, Indonesian's national language is affected by English – the worst is, children do not even know their native languages, as a result of parents speaking only in English, and children attending private schools. It is suggested that local languages should be used alongside English, promote the native languages so children grow up as bilinguals; they can speak both English and at least the national language.

5. CONCLUSION

This report clearly outlines the debates inherent in each issue as a vital concern in English language teaching. ELT policy makers and practitioners should critically evaluate the current curriculum and if possible, redesign the theoretical groundings of the curriculum. Inner-circle Englishes are appropriate for academic contexts and testing systems, but not for certain communication purposes that only nativised Englishes or English pidgins and creoles may serve that aim. Furthermore, both native and local English teachers may be contemplated as two sides of a coin and both of them complement each other due to having their own benefits and drawbacks that shall be helpful and effective when they are integrated. Ultimately, bilingualism is essential in order to employ English as the international language but not forgetting to maintaining local languages as students' important cultural asset.

6. RECOMMENDATION

There are three recommendations for the questions addressed:

1. Since British and American varieties are prestigious and are still widely used, particularly for the means of those tests assessing students' language proficiency, tests like IELTS and TOEFL as well as TOEIC (Kirkpatrick, 2007), it is recommended that both varieties should be employed for an effective learning goals of students, who want to study abroad, in the inner-circle countries; nonetheless, awareness of WE have to be promoted in ELT. The reason why WE should be promoted, is due to the role of English today for communication, and that English is being employed more within outer and expanding circle countries, and local nativised Englishes as well as English pidgins and creoles also exists; therefore, as Kirkpatrick (2007) argues that inner-circle Englishes will not be effective in daily communication in the outer circles milieus instead the indigenized Englishes and English pidgins and creoles, respectively, are appropriate in the language contexts mentioned.
2. Native teachers worth the cost due to the ideal English they present; nevertheless, they may lack some knowledge of students' culture, learning strategies and empathy that arguably, only local teachers can cater. Hence, team teaching (native English teacher and Indonesian local teacher) can be tried for an effective English learning, because they complement each other, in some ways. The example of JET outlined previously is a successful ELT approach employed in Japan.

3. English is affecting not only Bahasa Indonesia but also local languages in Indonesia. Thus, as Jenkins (2015) proposes, students should be made aware of their native languages as their identities and function it together with English. She also maintains that bilingualism plays a crucial role in preservation of native languages, hence efforts should be made to prompt students to be “practitioners of English-knowing bilingualism” (Jenkins, 2015, p. 176).

REFERENCES

- [1] Bailey, R. W. (2011). *Speaking American English: A History of English in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Butler, Y. (2007). How Are Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers Perceived by Young Learners? *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), 731-755. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/stable/40264404>
- [3] Canagarajah, S. C. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [4] Coleman, H. (2016). The English Language as *Naga* in Indonesia. In Bunce, et al (Eds), *Why English: Confronting the Hydra* (pp. 59-71). Great Britain: Channel View Publications.
- [5] Cook, V. (2001). *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. 3rd edn. London: Arnold.
- [6] Global business Indonesia guide. (2017). *Private Education in Indonesia – International Schools on the Rise*. Retrieved from http://www.gbgingonesia.com/en/education/article/2014/private_education_in_indonesia_international_schools_on_the_rise.php
- [7] Grant. (2011). *Teaching English in Indonesia*. Retrieved from <http://www.eslbase.com/countries/indonesia>
- [8] Groeneboer, K. (1998). *Gateway to the west: The Dutch language in colonial Indonesia 1600–1950* (M. Scholz, Trans.). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- [9] Jenkins, J. (2015). *Global Englishes. A resource Book for Students*. 3rd edn. London: Routledge.
- [10] Kam, H. W & Wong, R.Y.L. (2004). *English language teaching in East Asia today: changing policies and practices*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.
- [11] Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes – Implications for International communication and English Language Teaching*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- [12] MacArthur, T. (ed.). (1992). *The Oxford companion to the English language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [13] McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [14] Manns, H. (2017). The birth of English and Variation in the UK [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://moodle.vle.monash.edu/course/view.php?id=36164§ion=2>
- [15] Medgyes, P. (1992). Native or non-native: who’s worth more? *Journal of English Language Teaching* 46 (4), 340-9
- [16] Mistar, J. (2005). Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in Indonesia. In George, B (Ed.), *Teaching English to the World: History, Curriculum, and Practice* (168-188). New York: Taylor and Francis.
- [17] Nordquist, R. (2016). *American English*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/linguistic-prestige-1691533>.
- [18] Nordquist, R. (2017a). *Linguistic Prestige*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/american-english-ame-1688982>
- [19] Nordquist, R. (2017b). *Received Pronunciation*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/received-pronunciation-rp-1692026>
- [20] Nordquist, R. (2019). *Definitions and Examples of Native Languages*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/native-language-11-term-1691336>
- [21] Onishi, N. (2010, July 25). As English Spreads, Indonesian Fear for Their Language. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/26/world/asia/26indo.html>
- [22] Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [23] Sangster, C. RP and BBC English. 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/yourvoice/rpandbbc.shtml>
- [24] Setiawan, A.W. (2012). *The Professional Identity of Indonesian English Teachers*. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/ardian1978/the-professional-identity-of-indonesian-english-teachers>
- [25] Simons, G. F & Fennig, C.D. (Eds). (2017). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, (20th edn)*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Retrieved from <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
- [26] Thomas, R. M. (1968). Indonesia: The English-language curriculum. In R. M. Thomas, L. B. Sands, & D. L. Brubaker (Eds.), *Strategies for curriculum change: Cases from 13 nations* (pp. 279–322). Scranton, Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company.