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# Evaluating the Impact of Video Examples of Successful L2 English Use

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**Abstract**

Despite the English language being spoken around the world in an array of varieties, a broad range of research has revealed that learners of the English language often idealise what Kachru termed inner-circle Englishes, particularly Standard American English and Standard British English. This has led to the emergence of the idea of 'Native-Speakerism', meaning that the native speaker is considered a model and ideal for English. Previous research suggests this can lead to L2 learners having negative perceptions of their own English. This study aimed to examine how using videos of real-life examples of English speakers from Kachru's outer and expanding circle countries communicating in English could change university students in Japan's perceptions of themselves as language learners, or even their perceptions of the English language itself. By analysing the opinions of a focus group who were exposed to these examples, and also using quantitative data to analyse the general populace's perceptions of the English language, the research suggests that Native-Speakerism is prevalent in Japanese universities, and that videos of successful L2 use are received very positively by learners of English.

世界には多様な種類の英語がありますが様々な研究によるとイギリス、アメリカ、オーストラリアなどの内円の英語種類が英語学習者に理想化されています。この現象からNative Speakerismという表現が生まれました。 これは英語のネイティブスピーカーが理想的なモデルとして考えられています。先行研究に基づいてNative Speakerismは英語学習者の悩みに関係している可能性があります。この研究の目的は、英語学習者が英語で話している内円の英語種類でない人が作成された動画を見た場合に、英語の認識が変わるかどうかを調査することでした。この動画を見たフォーカスグループに参加した大学生の意見、または200人以上の大学生に配布した英語認識に関するアンケートの結果をまとめると日本人の大学生の中でNative Speakerismが存在することが分かりました。さらに、内円の英語種類でない人が作成した動画が英語学習者に歓迎されたという結果も得られました。

Due to the expansion of the English language, English exists in countless varieties throughout the world. As well as Kachru's analysis of the three circles of English-speaking countries, other scholars have identified and given reasons for the spread of English. Phillipson (1992) argues that as well as "core English-speaking countries", "periphery-English countries" also exist, and that the spread of English has come about due to several factors, including "countries which require English as an international link language (Scandinavia, Japan), and countries on which English was imposed in colonial times". There is a growing consensus that English language teaching must reflect this reality with all its complexities, rather than presenting limited varieties as models, leading to the advance of pedagogical disciplines, such as ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) and World Englishes. However, English language learners themselves, in many cases, still do not consider their own variety of English as legitimate, and romanticize some varieties of English, for instance British or American.

The idea that native speakers are the ideal in terms of language learning is troublesome. With English the mother tongue of people living in different countries around the world, the idea that learners must aspire to native-speaker standards is at best unrealistic, as the very notion of the native speaker is continuously changing (Hampton, 2013). Despite there being wide recognition that English is global, the idealization of inner-circle varieties of English (Kachru, 1985) persists among students, and according to some research persists among students who have a clear idea of English being a global language. As educators, instructors of the English language need to find a way to reflect the reality of English being global to overcome the problems posed by Native Speakerism.

This study uses mixed methods to answer two questions. The first is whether idealisation of native speakers is prevalent among university students in Japan, and whether students would be open to more classroom content featuring L2 speakers. The second question, directly following on from the latter part of the first question, is whether students react positively to English speaking content featuring L2 speakers when exposed to it. The results are relevant to all practitioners interested in incorporating more global examples of English into their classrooms.

## Literature Review

Native speakerism is a topic that has received much attention globally over recent decades. Research has attempted to define and provide examples of native speakerism, a phenomenon described as "a persuasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that 'native speaker' teachers represent a 'western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006). However, when considering all speakers of English around the globe, native speakers of English are in the minority (Galloway and Rose, 2015). Emerging ideas and pedagogies, such as English as a Lingua Franca, World Englishes, Translanguaging, and EMI have emerged to attempt to represent this.

However, in many cases, more work is needed to be done to factor in differing levels of student proficiency, whether extra language support is needed in EMI, for example, and to what extent the use of L1 in the classroom can aid understanding (Galloway and Rose, 2019). This, therefore, needs to be represented in the classroom. Canagarajah (1999) suggests that the traditional Western dominance and focus of the ELT industry "raises questions about the relevance and appropriateness of the teaching material, curriculum, and pedagogies by the Anglo-American communities for periphery contexts." More recent research has gone further to call into question competence and performative educational models originating in the "Global North" and the intrinsic biases existing in traditional language pedagogy. There are growing calls for alternative methods of instruction to encourage the decolonization of English language teaching methodology worldwide (Canagarajah, 2023; Imperial, 2024).

In Japan, there have been studies examining the impact of native speakerism on students. According to Bondoc (2020), a bias exists within official education policy towards inner-circle varieties of English. This leads to a perception that outer circle varieties and expanding circle varieties, of which Japan is included, are not perceived in the same way, and that they are even "inferior". Further research adds to this by outlining how students feel that learning English from a native English speaker presents an "authentic setting" (Yamada, 2018), implying that varieties beyond the Inner Circle are therefore not authentic. This is supported by other research, whereby in some cases students "view American English and Near RP, which are thought to be "standard" models in Japanese English classrooms, more positively than other varieties" (Miura, 2009). Egitim and Garcia (2021) found that stereotypes of what an English teacher should look like, namely Caucasian and from an American/European background, often fuel student perceptions of the language itself. The research found that this not only comes from classroom experience, but also from media portrayal of English speakers. There is a clear need for more extensive and representative exposure to English varieties.

In terms of existing classroom implementation of Global Englishes, there are efforts underway in both secondary and tertiary education in various countries to emphasize the international nature of the language. However, there is criticism that this often is in intention only, and practically there is still bias towards inner-circle varieties of English (Jenkins, 2020; Lindqvist, 2022). According to Harris (2012), "The teaching of listening in Japan, as with other aspects of the language, has tended to use American and to a lesser extent, British models as a base." In an effort to counter this, studies have used classroom contexts to gauge students' reactions to different varieties of English. Research has, for instance, used videos to expose users to a variety of Englishes, and results "indicated the students came to view (outer and expanding circle) varieties of English as more acceptable" (Tsai-Hung Chen, 2022), while also having a positive impact on how students view themselves as English speakers. When students are presented with the reality of Global Englishes, it not only demythologises inner-circle varieties of English, but also leads to changes in students' confidence levels when thinking of themselves as English language speakers.

To summarise, despite trends towards integration of Global Englishes and English as a lingua franca into courses and textbooks globally, there is still a lot of work to be done to fully represent the reality of the English language as it is used around the world in the classroom (Schildhauer et al. 2020). The lack of insight into English learner responses to exposure to L2 speaker listening content, especially through the medium of video, deserves exploration.

## Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative approach to examining two research questions. The first method analyses participants' reaction to L2 speaker video content. The choice of focus group methodology was deemed appropriate to get comprehensive responses. The focus group watched five short clips sourced from YouTube videos. These videos were either created by or featuring L2 English speakers speaking in English. The focus group then discussed comprehensibility, engagement, and interest compared to classroom content from their experience. The quantitative survey consisted of questions gauging student perceptions of English globally, themselves as English speakers, and openness to content sourced from outside inner-circle varieties. A survey method was chosen to get a wider scope of opinions.

### Participants

The research involved four EFL students for a focus group, and 291 EFL students who responded to a survey. All participants were enrolled in compulsory EFL classes at the same university in Japan. The focus group participants were recruited through a request distributed to the entire student body at the university. The survey was administered to 1st- and 2nd-year students in compulsory English classes at the same institution and was selected using convenience

sampling. The final sample of 291 respondents exceeded the required 284 for a population of 1,073 students enrolled in compulsory English courses at the time of the research. There was no criterion in terms of language proficiency for either the focus group or the survey. The only criterion was that they should be learners of English and have experience of classroom taught English lessons.

## Data Collection

Due to the mixed method nature of the study, there were two forms of data collection.

### Focus Group Discussion

The first part of the research was the focus group. who were shown a series of videos in English produced by L2 English speakers and were asked to take part in a discussion based on five discussion questions (Appendix A). As a countermeasure to potential groupthink, brief information on Global Englishes, content creator profiles, and the focus group questions were distributed before the focus group to prepare participants. The focus group was recorded and a transcript created so that the discussion could be analyzed according to Krueger's (1994) method of data analyzing. The focus group participants have been anonymized as Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, and Participant D. Some months after the focus group, as another counter measure to groupthink, Participant A, C, and D were asked to rewatch the videos again and discuss the questions in one-on-one interviews. Participant B unfortunately could not be contacted, which will be mentioned in the limitations.

### Survey

The second part of the research was the survey (Appendix B). To address the first question, a survey was distributed to the wider student body. It comprised 15 questions on a 5-point Likert scale, measuring opinions from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree). Combined, the intention was to give both a broad and detailed representation of English learners' attitudes towards Global English and L2 speaker content.

## Results

### Focus Group Discussion

Generally, the focus group participants reacted very positively to the videos that they were shown. All members expressed how at least one of the videos was particularly appealing. The word "interesting" was repeated frequently by all participants throughout the discussion.

The first major theme that arose was participants' experiences as English learners in relation to the content makers. Participant A commented on how the main point of interest for them was how the L2 speakers in the videos spoke English as if they did not care about distinctions between native and non-native speakers, and that the most interesting clip was of some students in India speaking with pride about their own variety of English. This was confirmed in the follow up interview, in which Participant A expressed admiration for the speakers' "confidence". In the focus group, Participant A mentioned feeling hesitant when speaking English with native speakers, as they have seen native speakers "criticize" speakers from non-inner-circle countries. Other participants agreed with this, and Participant C used the word "hesitate" when describing an experience of talking to "foreigners" in an English-speaking café. The participants all expressed this awareness of the distinctions made between the different Englishes, and that they appreciated the L2 speakers in the videos showing confidence in their own English. Two participants said that they, like those in the videos, would like to speak English and "not care" about their accent.

Multiple participants expressed their admiration towards the video content makers as language learners. Participants B and D both spoke about a video which featured a language learner talking about working hard towards language proficiency. Participant B mentioned being "impressed" by the creator, while Participant D mentioned that the creator's English was "so beautiful". The other participants agreed, and the implication was that these kinds of videos feature potential role models for students. This was an interesting take away that should be explored further.

The second major theme that arose was the idea that students would prefer this kind of content in their classrooms to the type of content they have experience of in classrooms learning English. Three members explicitly expressed dissatisfaction with what they termed "traditional" English education in Japan. Participant A mentioned how formal education is not representative of English, saying that "junior high school student(s) in Japan only know about the British and American" varieties of English. Other members agreed, with Participant B expressing concern that despite there being "a lot of type(s) of English, this is not represented, and that learners need this kind of background and history". Multiple participants also expressed how traditional textbook content and teaching methods were not engaging. However, in a follow-up interview, Participant D stressed the importance of textbooks and said that the video content should be used in tandem with more traditional classroom resources.

A sub theme of the pedagogical discussion was the possible effect on classrooms of the interview style which featured in two of the videos. Participant D mentioned that through the street interview style, students can learn "the

natural voice" of English. Other participants echoed this sentiment, with Participant A repeating the word "natural" in relation to the videos' language content. Participant B repeated the idea, saying that educators should show "actual English speaker" content in class, rather than what Participant A referred to as "a script" in traditional learning. Multiple participants mentioned that the content in the videos mirrored the style of content they like to watch in their free time, and that this could be translated into classroom activities. Therefore, examples of L2 speakers interviewing each other could provide a springboard to classroom fluency activities.

## Survey Results

A survey was designed to collect data from the general student body. A method of convenience sampling was used for ease, and all respondents were or had been studying compulsory English courses at the same university as the participants in the focus group. These students did not have the benefit of exposure to the L2 content that the focus group received but were surveyed on their perceptions of the English language, and their views on content sourced from different varieties of English.

The fifteen questions in the survey went through thematic phases. Firstly, they sought to examine respondents' perceptions on ownership of English and their perceptions of themselves as English learners. The results showed that the overwhelming majority of students see English as coming from inner-circle varieties (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Student Responses to: "English is a language from countries such as the UK, America and Australia"*
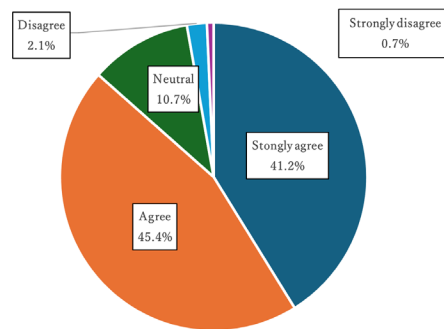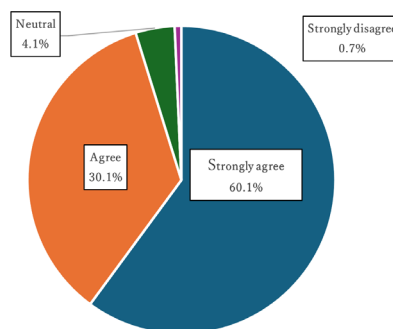


*Note. n = 291.*

A very small number of respondents see English as a language that is global in origin. One potential reason for this is that media representation of English speakers often presents them as Western and/or Caucasian (Egitim and Garcia, 2021). The survey later seems to show that students' views of the language are shaped by historical perceptions, and that this changes when considering the English language in its current state (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Student Responses to: "English is a global language and belongs to anyone who speaks it"*



*Note. n = 291.*

Most interestingly was the response to the wording of the question, implying that there is/should be a sense of belonging to English regardless of variety, background or nationality.

Questions that followed this focused more on respondents' perceptions of themselves within this context. Despite recognizing that English belongs to anyone who speaks it, 67% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that when I speak English with "native speakers" of English, I feel confident. Also, 88.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that if I visit a country where English is the main language, or used regularly in daily life, I will worry about my own English level. Both responses show that there still

is some barrier there on a personal level, and this could reveal that students view their own English in relation to competence and performance levels (Canagarajah, 2023).

The final group of questions focused on respondents' views on content used for learning English in the context of Global Englishes, which has direct implications for the focus group study. Results show that the majority of respondents still rely on content from inner-circle varieties of English when they want to study English (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Student Responses to: "When I want to watch an English video (e.g. drama, YouTube) to study English, I choose content from countries such as the UK, America and Australia"*
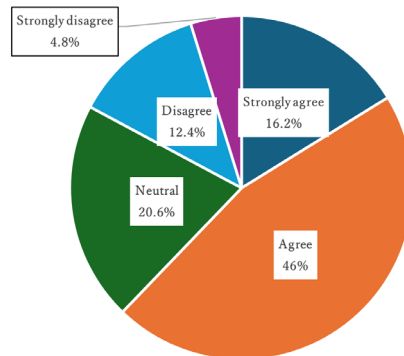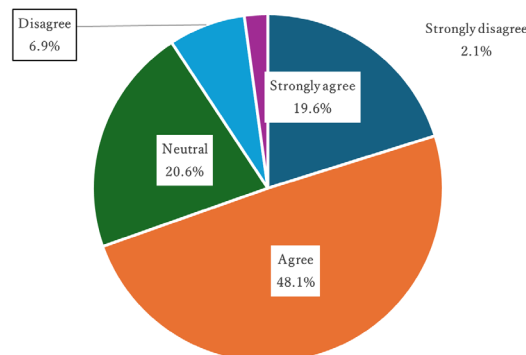


*Note. n = 291.*

A similar result was shown when respondents were asked about what content they choose for leisure watching as well. There could be many reasons for this, such as market domination of English-speaking media content by certain countries (mainly the U.S.A). However, results do show that the majority of respondents expressed a desire to have a broader pool of content from which to study English (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Student responses to: "I would like to watch more English videos (e.g. drama, YouTube) that are NOT from countries like the UK, America and Australia for study"*



*Note. n = 291.*

For clarity, a final choice of "I already do" was added to this to which 2.7% (*n* = 8) of respondents answered. There may be several reasons why they don't seek outer and emerging circle varieties of English content already, but it can be reasonably assumed that lack of exposure and/or access could be one of the reasons behind this.

## Discussion

The results of the research do seem to show a few unifying themes between the qualitative research and the quantitative research. Firstly, in response to the idea of native speakerism both the focus group and the survey respondents showed signs that they see a separation between themselves and speakers from inner-circle varieties of English even though there seems to be a general awareness of English being global, having many varieties and a wide range of different speakers.

In terms of using Global English content for learning English, the survey respondents showed a desire to see more Global English content, although they seem to have a lack of exposure and/or access to L2 speaker content. It might be inferred that the use of non-inner-circle content in English language education, be it in the classroom or not, is not widespread. The focus group participants mirrored this desire, and there was enthusiasm for the use of globally focused content in education, both in terms of representing the reality of English, as well as serving as inspiration for themselves as English language learners.

## Implications

The results of both the qualitative and quantitative research suggest that there is a desire from learners of English to have more exposure to different varieties of English. This exposure not only represents the reality of their target language but also provides students with clear models of what they themselves could be as English speakers in a global context. The second reason for educators to start using this content in the classroom is that although students are aware of the global nature of English and do seem to want to know more about this reality through watching videos from expanding and outer circle English speaking countries, they lack direction. Educators are in the perfect position to provide this. Future research would benefit from exploring the extent to which varieties of English could be included in the classroom as learning material, and the effects on students' self-confidence.

## Limitations

Given the small size of the focus group, there was potential for groupthink. Although counter measures were taken against this, which were outlined previously in the methodology, future research would benefit from more participants, and a more diverse group of participants. As there were few participants, shown specially selected videos, the views expressed may not be reflective of all English learners globally or even in Japan. As mentioned before, one participant could not be contacted for a follow-up interview, and this process of follow-up interviews would be extremely helpful in any future research on the subject using a focus group methodology.

In terms of the quantitative study results, the method of convenience sampling at one university may limit the findings to the survey to its specific context. Also, the questions may have been too broad and could have done with more detailed follow-up. Although many of the results seem to suggest strong majorities for certain opinions, the reasons behind the responses at times are not clear. The answers would have been better supported by a follow-up as to why this is the case. These disparities deserve their own research.

## Conclusion

Despite the global nature of English, the language is often represented to learners as limited to inner-circle varieties, and this can result in idealizing the native speaker. There has been consensus for decades now that the native speaker of English needs to be demythologized (Kachru, 1987), and that a more accurate representation of global English should be represented in the classroom.

Results from both the qualitative and quantitative research show that learners of English are aware of the global scale of the language and express a desire to be exposed to more content from countries outside of the Inner Circle. This could boost students' confidence and sense of belonging when it comes to English. By seeing people who have gone through a similar learning process and who are interacting in English in a real setting, it could help overcome the alienation that some learners feel with the language.

The implications of the results of this research suggest that educators, course and curriculum developers need to more seriously think about the inclusion of authentic, varied English language content, and how it could be used and utilized in English language education.

In conclusion, given the global nature of English, language education needs to provide students with exposure to as many varieties of English as possible. The question now is how to effectively do this, how to utilize authentic, varied content from an educational standpoint and in terms of students' views of themselves as English speakers. Future research should focus on identifying the most appropriate content and determining how it can be used in an educational sense to provide learners with a well-rounded and effective learning experience.

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# Appendix A

Focus Group Assessment Instruments

Discussion Questions

1. How interesting were the videos on a scale from 1 (meaning not so interesting) to 5 (very interesting)? Why?

2. How easy to understand were the videos on a scale from 1 (meaning difficult) to 5 (easy)? Why?

3. What do you think about the way they learn and use English? Is it different to yourself?

4. Do you think these videos are more or less helpful than traditional audio you have heard in textbooks at university or in school?

5. As an English learner, would you like to see more content like this in your language classes at university? Could it replace textbook audio? Would there be any problems with it?

# Appendix B

Questionnaire Assessment Instruments

Likert Scale Items

1=Strongly agree        2=Agree        3=Neutral        4=Disagree        5=Strongly disagree

Questions for Survey

1. English is a language from countries such as the UK, America and Australia.
2. People from my home country are good English speakers.
3. English is a global language and belongs to anyone who speaks it.
4. Some varieties of English are more correct than others.
5. Some varieties of English sound nicer than others.
6. I think that the variety of English from my home country is a correct variety of English.
7. When I speak English with "native speakers" of English, I feel confident.
8. When I speak English with "non-native speakers" of English, I feel confident.
9. When I speak in English, I don't think about being "native" or "non-native".
10. If I visit a country where English is the main language, or used regularly in daily life, I will worry about my own English level.
11. If I study English for many years, I will become a proficient user of English.
12. When I want to watch an English video (e.g. drama, YouTube) to study English, I choose content from countries such as the UK, America and Australia.
13. When I want to watch an English video (e.g. drama, YouTube) for pleasure, I choose content from countries such as the UK, America and Australia.
14. I would like to watch more English videos (e.g. drama, YouTube) that are NOT from countries like the UK, America and Australia for study.
15. I would like to watch more English videos (e.g. drama, YouTube) that are NOT from countries like the UK, America and Australia for pleasure.