

# Do Students Really Need to Learn about Global Englishes? A Critical Needs Analysis

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## Abstract

Global Englishes has been implemented in the classrooms; however, it is observed that these studies imposed Global Englishes on the students without asking a fundamental question whether they really need to learn about Global Englishes. Utilizing a critical needs analysis, this study explored the students' needs in terms of necessities, lacks, and wants to learn about Global Englishes and to investigate how social position and unequal power are manifested in their needs. To achieve these purposes, ethnography strategy and interviews were employed to collect the data with twenty students. Five entrepreneurs were also interviewed to explore their expectations from future employees. The data revealed that the students reported struggling to communicate with diverse English users, had limited ability to use communication strategies, perceived insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and possessed accent bias against non-native English speakers. Social position and unequal power were also evident in the responses. These needs reflected necessities to urgently help the students learn about Global Englishes since they lacked understanding of sociolinguistic reality of English users outside the classrooms. Pedagogical implications were discussed.

**Key words:** Global Englishes, critical needs analysis, social power, unequal power

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## 1. Introduction

The global spread of English has challenged the taken-for-granted assumption about the English language and how it should be taught (Matsuda, 2019; McKay, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). It is widely acknowledged that English is now a true global language since it spreads throughout the world (Ishikawa, 2017; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Previously, students learned English to communicate with Native English speakers (NES). However, the fact that the number of English users has increased exponentially where Non-native English speakers (NNES) outnumbered NES makes it unpredictable to determine the target interlocutors (Jenkins, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2015). The interlocutors can be NES or NNES. The interaction between these diverse English users is becoming more complex since they bring with them their localized Englishes and multilingual repertoires into communication (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2019). The current sociolinguistic reality of English users requires English teachers to prepare learners differently. Therefore, Galloway and Rose (2015) consolidated related research fields of World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL), and translanguaging into Global Englishes, an umbrella term to call for the change in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Prior researchers have called for the needs to design learning tasks, activities, or courses to raise learners' awareness about Global Englishes (Fang & Ren, 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2014, 2018; Lu & Buripakdi, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2017; Sung, 2015; Tardy, Reed, Slinkard, & LaMance, 2021). It is observed that these courses were imposed on the students, rather than asking whether they really need to learn about Global Englishes. Since Global Englishes addresses diverse needs of the students (Rose & Galloway, 2019), it is important to investigate whether the students really need to learn about Global Englishes. This research attempts to contribute to this line of inquiry. post until a replacement is found. If such disturbance has caused a large number of tasks become unattended and overdue, the company is then vulnerable to overtime cost, shrunk capacity and productivity, extra queuing time, lost business income, etc. In order to prevent these deteriorative effects, optimising the number of workers can be helpful. As a fundamental branch of knowledge in manufacturing business, workforce management will never fall behind the times. Therefore, it is worth an attempt to incorporate a novel methodology, such as HMS, into the state of the art of workforce sizing.

## 2. Theoretical Underpinnings

### 2.1 Global Englishes

Global Englishes is an inclusive research paradigm, which explores the global spread of English and its impact on ELT (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Drawing on the pedagogical implications from WE, Global Englishes highlighted the pluricentricity of English, where English is nativized in English as a Second Language territories, resulted in new Englishes emergence from blending with local English use (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020). For the field of ELF, Global Englishes acknowledges the complexity of interaction between NNES, where they bring

their plurilingualism and all language repertoires to engage in communication (Rose & Galloway, 2019). From this perspective, the target interlocutors become unpredictable since there are various English users in the real world. Taken together, Global Englishes is an ELT paradigm to prepare learners to communicate with diverse English users.

Since its development, whether Global Englishes should be implemented in the classrooms received tremendous interests among ELT researchers. Prior research in various contexts has developed Global Englishes courses (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Fang & Ren, 2018; Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Lu & Buripakdi, 2020; Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019; Sung, 2015; Tardy et al., 2021). Together, these Global Englishes courses yielded positive outcomes. For example, in Thailand, Boonsuk et al. (2021) developed an elective Global Englishes course for Thai university students to raise their awareness of English varieties and pointed out that the course increased learners' tolerance of English diversity and valued their own English, as not having communicative barriers. In the United States, Tardy et al. (2021) integrated Global Englishes in a fundamental composition course for international students and reported feedback of the course as it helped the learners to be open to linguistic diversity.

Even though positive outcomes were reported extensively, it was clear that these Global Englishes courses were imposed on learners. Their needs to learn about Global Englishes or whether Global Englishes is relevant to their real life remain overlooked in the existing literature. The fact that Global Englishes is a broad term covering a multitude of concepts (WE, ELF, EIL, and translanguaging), it is important to investigate what the students really need when they use English in real life. Therefore, before implementing Global Englishes courses, research into learners' perspectives and needs to use English in real life is useful for the design of English courses to meet the students' communicative demands outside of the classrooms.

## *2.2 Critical Needs Analysis*

From the Global Englishes perspective, the goal of learning English should be preparing learners to use English with culturally and linguistically diverse English users and to encourage the students to take up the ownership of English (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Exploring students' needs is a fundamental step for curriculum development in English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for Special Purposes (ESP) (Brown, 2016). In the analysis of linguistic needs and language skills for EFL curriculum in Thailand using a survey, focus group, and interview, Ulla and Winitkun (2017) found that the students wanted to improve speaking skills for their future careers and wanted to interact with English users to prepare them to go abroad. These needs were not clearly emphasized in the curriculum (Ulla & Winitkun, 2017). In Ethiopia, Belachew (2020) used a survey and interviews to explore what English skills general managers and human resources managers in textile engineering companies considered important in performing the tasks. They pointed out that many formal discussions and contacts were conducted in English, while local languages were used among employees (Belachew, 2020).

This study was informed by Nation and Macalister's approach on language curriculum design (2010), complemented with Benesch's critical needs analysis approach (1996). According to Nation and Macalister (2010), need analysis "examines what the learners know already and what they need to know" (p. 24). In their classic of learners' needs categorization, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) differentiated needs in terms of necessities, lacks, and wants. In terms of necessities, student's needs can be explored from the demands of the target tasks required students to perform in situations of use. For example, from the Global Englishes perspective, whether the students demand to use English with diverse English users in real life is considered necessities. Another aspect of student's need is an examination of their current ability to determine what they lack. To what extent can the students engage in communicative contexts with diverse English users? Finally, student's needs can be explored from their wants since "they have their own views about what they think is useful for them" (Nation, 2010, p. 29). Even though the tripartite need analysis approach is useful for designing English for Academic Purposes (e.g., Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011), it ignores the issues of unequal power and social positions from various parties involved. These two issues are important in the field of Global Englishes since communication between English users nowadays are often involved negotiation of power, users' social status (NES vs NNES), and the discussion of standard language ideology manifested in ELT.

As a result, this study was also informed by the critical need analysis approach, characterized by Benesch (1996). First, an exploration of student's needs from the critical perspective should not be accepted as normative, rather the analysis should acknowledge "existing forms, including power relations, while searching for possible areas of change" (Benesch, 1996, p. 732). Second, the critical need analysis aims to deconstruct the hierarchy of institutions imposed on the students and seeks the area where greater equality could be achieved. Last, the outcomes are expected to bring transformative changes to curriculum development. The critical need analysis is appropriate to explore student's needs to learn about Global Englishes because it questions the hierarchical power of English, where institutions such as university or workplace might impose on the students. It also offers multiple interpretations of what the students need to learn English in real life. Based on the conceptual framework of the critical need analysis, the following research questions were used to guide the pursuit of

knowledge:

What needs (necessities, wants, and lacks) did the students expect to master after they entered the real world of English use outside of the classroom?

To what extent are unequal power and social positions manifested in the students' needs?

### **3. The Present Study**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

This study is part of a larger research project aimed to develop a Global Englishes course for undergraduate students at a university in the central part of Thailand. Prior to developing the course, we decided to explore students' needs to learn about Global Englishes. This study employed the critical needs analysis, characterized by Benesch (1996), by exploring a wide range of multiple viewpoints from students and entrepreneurs. Critical need analysis assumes that students' needs are ideological laden. In this study, we adopted ethnographic strategy to explore students' needs to learn about Global Englishes. The first author entered the field where his students worked at the branch companies of the university to observe how they interacted with English users, interviewed about the interlocutors they had contacted, and listened to their problems about using English. The needs analysis was also explored from the entrepreneurs' perspectives about their expectations of future employees. Utilizing ethnographic strategy, we were able to elicit first-hand experiences data, which could be used to answer the question whether the students really need to learn about Global Englishes.

#### *3.2 Context and Participants*

This study was conducted with undergraduate students where the university divides the academic year into four semesters with block courses. The students learn at the university three months then they enter the field to work for three months at the branch company. The students are divided into Block A and Block B. In the first semester (semester 1.1), the Block-A students learn at the university and the Block-B students work at the branch companies (convenient stores). After three months, they take turn. In this study, the need analysis was conducted with the 20 students who work in the first semester (semester 1.1). In addition, five entrepreneurs who supervised the students were included to explore their expectations about prospective employees. The entrepreneurs are those who worked as branch manager at the convenient stores. They are assigned to work in the stores by Head Office of Company. The entrepreneurs have various duties, and they must manage many problems in their stores. Moreover, they must evaluate working attendance of the staff and the students. Consequently, the entrepreneurs have known what the staff and the students' problems such as English language skills when the staff and the students offered them service.

#### *3.3 Data Collection*

The data were collected in 2018, where the COVID-19 pandemic had not taken place. Upon receiving the permission to collect the data from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the first author contacted the entrepreneurs to request the permission to collect the data from the students under their supervision. First, the interviews were semi-structured, designed to explore the students' experiences using English at work and their attitudes toward English users they encountered during their internship. Examples of the questions are: Have you communicated with foreigners at work? What are their nationalities? What was it like when you communicate with those people? When you have problems with communication, what did you do? What skills do you learn after the interaction? The interviews were recorded, and notes were taken to supplement the data. After the interviews, the first author also observed how the students used English in real contexts. The observation was non-participant, in which to the first author silently observed while the students performed their tasks at work. In total, the observation took 15 hours. Apart from exploring the students' needs, the present study was also interested in the entrepreneurs' perspectives about English use at work and their expectations for future employees. Five entrepreneurs were interviewed, approximately 45 minutes per person. The interviews were audio recorded, and notes were taken to supplement the data.

#### *3.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness*

The data set includes 20 interview transcripts and 15 hours of ethnographic field notes. Before analyzing the data, the quality of the data was maximized to increase the trustworthiness. First, the interviews were transcribed professionally and later checked for accuracy by the first author. Second, the field notes were expanded fully by the first author to capture the details of observation and checked for vivid description by the second author before performing the data analysis. To analyze the data, the coding method was conducted by the first author (Saldāna, 2009). The coding method included three steps: 1) open coding, 2) axial coding, and 3) selective coding. The open coding aimed to label segments of the data that indicated meanings. The goal of this step was to be open as much as possible. The second step, axial coding, grouped the codes in the first step into categories by using patterns of meanings. In the last step, the selective coding combined the categories into themes to

answer the research questions. During each step, the first author wrote analytic memos to release hunches and used these memos to supplement the analysis. After this analysis, themes emerged reflecting the needs, necessities, lacks, and wants for learning in English in real life.

#### 4. Findings

Analysis of the interviews and observation revealed the students' needs and problems when they interacted with English users at work. Four main themes were found: 1) struggling to communicate with diverse English users, 2) limited ability to use communication strategies, 3) insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and 4) accent bias against NNES.

##### 4.1 *Struggling to Communicate with Diverse English Users*

Based on the interview data, all students (n = 20) reported that they had an opportunity to communicate with NES and NNES at some points of their work at the convenient stores. The nationalities they mentioned in the interviews were English, American, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Cambodian, or Vietnamese. Out of these nations, one student's response captured the majority of the responses (n = 17), "I mostly communicate with non-native speakers of English rather than native speakers of English" (Student 12). During these interactions, it was clear that the students had opportunities to listen to various accented Englishes. These responses are considered necessities for the students to communicate with diverse English users.

However, the students (n = 16) reported in the interviews that they were not prepared to use English with these diverse English users, especially with NNES. This response indicated their lack of ability to engage in conversation with diverse English users. For example, when some NNES pronounced English words influenced by their mother tongues, the students (n = 16) reported that they had difficulties comprehending those accents. Moreover, the students (n = 5) felt that NNES spoke quickly, and they mixed local words into English, so they misunderstood the message. The data from observation also revealed that the students were not able to communicate with some English users at workplace. There were instances that the foreigners left the stores without getting what they wanted.

From the students' perspectives, the cause for the struggles were attributed to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Based on this response, it was clear that social position existed. The students felt that their social position (having limited vocabulary knowledge) was inferior to the foreigners, so they encountered the challenges of using English with them. For example, upon asking what it was like when they communicated with the customers at the convenient stores, some students narrated:

When the foreigners such as Indian and Filipino people speak to me, I don't understand what they said. I can't speak to them. I cannot express my idea. It is difficult to find words. When I wanted to speak English to them, I don't know how to say it. I think they know more than me. So, I don't want to make a mistake (Student, 5).

I have problem with listening skills. I don't understand I talked to the customers at the stores. I don't know enough vocabulary to speak to them. I am afraid that I will not make myself understood (Student, 18).

Consistently, all entrepreneurs (n = 5) reported in the interview that their staff had to contact with foreigners from many regions of the world, so they said that prospective staff should have awareness about who they were using English with. This response indicated necessities from the real-world use of English. However, the entrepreneurs (n = 5) reported that their current employees always had problems of communicating with NNES even though the goal of using English at work is only for simple communicative purposes. For example, upon asking common problems the staff and the students encountered while using English at work, one entrepreneur responded:

Most staff lack listening and speaking skills. They also lack comprehension when native and non-native speakers of English communicate. When they communicate with foreigners, they staff could not interpret what the foreigners spoke. So, the staff had to spend much more time for service. Also, when the students provide service to non-native speakers, they don't understand them. The students always leave them. They don't say foreigners to wait. Moreover, I saw that the students cannot listen to non-native speakers' accent (Entrepreneur 1).

It was clear that the struggles to communicate with English users at work affect their task performance, which may create negative impact to the company. The response above is not anecdotal. The other four entrepreneurs also reported similarly pointing out their staff and the students' limited ability to communicate with diverse English users. The diverse English users in this context refer to both NES and NNES.

##### 4.2 *Limited Ability to Use Communication Strategies*

When the students reported the struggles to comprehend the customers at the convenient stores, the first author further asked how they handled the situation. It was found that most of the students (n = 14) made little attempt to engage in the conversation, and it seemed that they had limited ability to use communication strategies to



carry on conversation. For example, in an observation at a convenient store, a foreigner asked a student whether the store had a popsicle. The student appeared to be confused. The foreigner kept asking about popsicle, but the students kept silent. Then the foreigner left the store. After that, the first author asked what happened, the student reported that he did not understand what the foreigner wanted. Upon questioning how often the incident takes place, the student narrated, “Not quite often, but when it happened, I mostly stayed silent. I was frozen when I did not understand what the foreigners said” (Student, 9). This response indicated the lack of ability to carry on conversation when communication is broken down.

In addition, the entrepreneurs (n = 5) reported in the interview that communication strategies were important for successful communication at work. Their staff had to use extensive communication strategies to complete the tasks at work. When using the term “communication strategies,” the entrepreneurs simply mean whatever ways to make themselves understood or to carry on successful communication. Communication strategies were often referred to strategies in the speaking context, rather than in the written context. However, it seemed that the staff also had troubles with using communication strategies. For example, they did not know how to ask further questions or ask for clarification when they did not understand.

The staff lack communicative strategy to carry on the conversation with foreigners. When you provide service to the customers, you must do whatever it takes to help them. They don't really try to comprehend the foreigners (Entrepreneur 2)

By analyzing the data from the critical needs analysis perspective, unequal power and social positions were not evident when the students reported having limited ability to use communication strategies. It was about their own ability in which they thought they lack when communicating with diverse English users.

#### *4.3 Insufficient Vocabulary and Grammar Knowledge*

Through the critical needs analysis, the data revealed another challenge in which the students reported having difficulty was their insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge when communicating with NES and NNES. To begin with, the students (n = 16) reported in the interview that they had insufficient vocabulary knowledge while engaging in conversation with the customers. This view was consistent with an entrepreneur's response, “I saw that the students seem to understand what they foreigners say, but they couldn't express their ideas. They only used word by word with the customers” (Entrepreneur, 3). In an observation at a convenient store, the first author noticed an interaction between an American customer and a student asking about food or snacks “Does this frozen food have coriander? I do not like it.” The student seemed not to understand what “coriander” was, so the question was not really answered. The lack of vocabulary appeared in many observational incidents, such as the students did not understand the differences between “slice pork” and “chop pork.”

Apart from limited vocabulary knowledge, some students (n = 6) reported in the interview that they did not have enough grammar knowledge when communicating with diverse English users. When the students mentioned grammar knowledge, it was not really about their knowledge, but it was about confidence of their grammar ability. These six students were afraid that they would be judged by the interlocutors, especially when communicating with NES. The lack of grammar knowledge clearly reflects unequal power, where NES was positioned as superior to the students. They students perceived NES as having more grammar knowledge, so they were afraid of making grammar mistakes. When asking what they learned after the interaction with the foreigners, one student responded:

When I have a chance to communicate with foreigners, especially with native speakers, I learn that I don't dare to speak to them because I am afraid to make grammar mistake. I think I don't have enough knowledge of grammar and how to make sentences. I am afraid that I speak wrong grammar, and the foreigners will not understand. I think my knowledge of grammar is weak (Student 1).

The interview of the entrepreneurs also revealed that their employees lack vocabulary used in real lives in various contexts. One entrepreneur reported in the interview, “The staff only communicate to foreigners by using words by words. This means the staff cannot communicate by making sentence and they always use present tense even though they referred what the foreigner bought a product yesterday” (Entrepreneur 2).

#### *4.4 Accent Bias against NNES*

Apart from having insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge, this study also found that most students (n = 13) thought that NNES accents are barriers to successful communication. They reported that it was because of the non-standard accent that made them uncomprehend what the customers said. Also, the students (n = 13) reported a strong preference to NES accents. Some key phrases used to describe NES accents were “original,” “better,” and “real English.” They thought that the NES accents were better understood compared to NNES accents.

When I use English, I understand American people or English people more than non-native speakers such as Indian, Japanese, and African because native speakers' accent is original English (Student 2).

I think native speakers' accent is better than non-native speakers because native speakers such as English

and American people use original English. They sound like real English than other people (Student 14).

Additionally, from the entrepreneurs' perspectives, all of them (n = 5) reported in the interview that their staff also had accent bias against NES. Some of them did not even try to communicate with NNES as illustrated below.

The staff said to me that they always ignore, and they escape the customers who are Indians or Africans (Entrepreneur 2).

I have known that the staff look down non-native speakers' accents when they heard non-native speakers say English. Some staff even said that "I don't want speak with them because non-native speakers have bad tongue (Entrepreneur 3).

It should be noted that the accent bias revealed in this study manifested unequal power and social position between NES and NNES. From these responses, NNES were positioned by the students and the staff as inferior to NES. This perception reflects the lack of understanding in the sociolinguistic reality of English users and the necessities to quench this perception when teaching the students about English use in real life.

## 5. Discussion

This study was framed by one grand question, posed in the title "Do students really needs to learn about Global Englishes?" To answer the question, the critical need analysis by Benesch, (1996) was used to collect the students' needs. Ethnographic strategy and the interviews with 20 students and the interviews with five entrepreneurs were used to document students' needs and to analyse whether unequal power and social positions were manifested in the students' needs. It was revealed that the students reported struggling to communicate with diverse English users, having limited ability to use communication strategies, possessing insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and holding accent bias against NNES. Some of these responses reflect necessities, lacks, unequal power, and social position, in which implementing Global Englishes might help quench these problems.

Exploring needs analysis is beneficials before imposing a new English course since it explores what the students already know, what they lack, what they want, and the necessities (Nation & Macalister, 2010). The findings clearly indicated that the students lack ability to communicate with diverse English users, communication strategies, vocabulary knowledge, and grammar knowledge. The necessity aspect was also revealed when the students reported their struggles to communicate with diverse English users and accent bias against NNES. However, the want aspect was not evident in the needs analysis. Moreover, the critical needs analysis was useful to understand the students' needs from a different perspective. These needs were not entirely about lacks or necessities, but they were also about social position and unequal power. For example, the lack of grammar knowledge and communication with diverse English users were also about how students positioned themselves in relation to English users. The accent bias against NNES was about unequal power that NNES were positioned inferior to NES. As a result, when designing an English course, it is important to consider social position and unequal power that the students might bring with them into the classrooms (Benesch, 1996).

The interpretation of the findings should be conducted with cautions due to the nature of qualitative research. First, the findings were context sensitive. The data were derived from the students who worked at the convenient stores where they had chances to use English with the customers. Second, the data were only self-reported, thus the findings should not be treated as a reflection of the students' real behaviours. Future research can use the students' needs revealed in this study to design Global Englishes activities, integrated the activities into existing English curriculum, and explored the outcomes of Global Englishes integration.

## 6. Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogical implication from the needs analysis is clear. Since the students reported that they were struggling to communicate with diverse English users, it is important to implement Global Englishes to prepare the students for sociolinguistic use outside of the classroom (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Fang & Ren, 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2018). The implementation of Global Englishes has been reported as having favorable outcomes, such as the students attitudes toward English was changed (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Fang & Ren, 2018) and attitudes toward their own English was also changed (Boonsuk et al., 2021). However, implementing Global Englishes as a new English course to raise awareness and to develop positive attitudes toward English might not be adequate to prepare the students since they reported the lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge and communication strategies to carry on conversation with diverse English users. From this perspective, Global Englishes might be integrated in the existing English curricula, rather than developing a new Global Englishes course. One example of such integration is the work by Sung (2015), who developed Global Englishes activities and integrated in an English course in Hog Kong. It was found that the students reported overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Global Englishes, developed deeper understanding of English use outside the classrooms, and increased awareness of English varieties (Sung, 2015).

## 7. Conclusion

It is time to answer the question posed in the title, “Do students really need to learn about Global Englishes?” The data clearly directed to the answer that Global Englishes should be introduced to the students since it might help solve the problems that the students encountered while using English in real life. The findings in this study provided a pedagogical implication of how to implement Global Englishes in the classrooms. For this specific group of the students, it was clear that the integration approach might be more appropriate than developing a new Global Englishes course since the students still needed to learn about vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies to carry on the conversation with diverse English users. We would like to call for the need to implement Global Englishes in the classrooms. More research should be conducted to explore the best way to implement Global Englishes.

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