

"I WENT TO SINGAPORE AND I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THEIR ENGLISH": A PORTRAIT OF FIVE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL TEACHERS ON GLOBAL ENGLISHES

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Abstract

Myriads of previous endeavours on constructing English language learning identity have been directed worldwide. The study predominantly focuses on constructing teacher identity in English language learning in general. It does not explicitly discuss the massive development of the English language (Global English). Therefore, to fill the lacuna, the current study will focus on five International Islamic boarding school teachers, concerning the globalization of English. The current study will be an engaging narrative to explore and investigate, considering that the recruitment of five international Islamic boarding school teachers in Malang will pose a dilemma and provide a true reflection of the ongoing global debate regarding the globalization of English (GE). In-depth interviews and observations were administered to collect the data. The data would then be analysed under Braun's & Clarke's thematic analysis (2006). The data were then identified to produce a data transcript. After transcribing the data, the researcher frequently read the transcript to highlight the interview data and create the identifying themes. Finally, the researchers concluded the interview data. Moreover, the study generated three analysis themes (orientation, adjustment, and identity construction). In the orientation, the subjects believed that the teacher should tolerate the students' errors in practicing the language to avoid deterring students from studying the language. Moreover, after experiencing the development of English, Nana, Hana, Miya, Layla, and Mila (pseudonyms) suggested that they would still accentuate the teaching of Standard English, with a high tolerance to retain students' high motivation. Finally, in the theme of identity construction, they believed that the students should skew their preferences towards standard English to sound more sophisticated in a formal context.

Keywords— Global English; International Islamic Boarding School; native like performance; L1; Narrative Inquiry

Introduction

The endeavour of teachers' identity construction in the last few decades has been globally investigated in America (Mansouri, 2021), Arab (Almayez, 2022), China (Pan et al., 2021), Hong Kong (Ho, 2023), Thailand (Zhang, 2021), Turkiye (Senel, 2021), and Indonesia (Yunus & Ubaidillah, 2021). Flourishing discussion of the field was based on Norton's (2013) ideology. The previous studies focused on teachers' identity construction in general, neglecting the creativity of the practical Englishes (Global English) exploited by the language speakers (Fikri et al., 2025). Thus, the current study directs its discussion to the international Islamic boarding school's identity construction in the global Englishes Era to fill the lacuna. The current study will be an engaging narrative to raise and investigate, considering that the recruitment of five international Islamic boarding school teachers in Malang will be a dilemma and an accurate picture of the debate, since the internationalization that is being encouraged by the school and

the Merdeka curriculum that the government is implementing. This ideology may disintegrate the senile notion that studying English should adhere to the Inner Circle standard (Seidholfer, 1999). However, nowadays, the tenet assumes that students are not passive recipients in their learning process (Khalili, 2025).

Students have learned English grammar and vocabulary in their learning, prioritizing social experiences, and forming their social identity. Thus, non-standard English (Global Englishes) speakers may construct their own identity and avoid demotivation, imitating a native-like accent and expanding the burden of second- or third-language English speakers (Joyce, 2025). Furthermore, the heterogeneity of English speakers has exceeded that of native English speakers (Galloway & Rose, 2014). The outer and expanding circle has extensively influenced the emergence of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural fluidity, reinforced by the fact that native English speakers are no longer a reference for the language (Fikri et al., 2024; Medgyes, 2001; Syakur et al., 2024). Global English speakers have transcended the conventional boundaries of English as a mother tongue and have proceeded into a lingua franca (Crystal, 2014). Thus, teachers should instill the Global English ideology to empower the students' local identity. Global English has provided a significant upgrade to the development of English learning, identity, and literature, encompassing: the use of vocabulary, language accent, pronunciation, and grammar (Norton, 2013; Jindapitak et al., 2022). Global English is a highly substantial field to study, considering its global acceptance of the notion (Jeharsae et al., 2024). The acculturation occurs due to different accents between the second (L2), third (L3), and the first language (L1) (Suntornsawet, 2022). Moreover, Indonesians have different accents according to their demographic area, prompting the study into the field of identity construction. The current study portrays teachers' perceptions of Global English related to the dilemma of traditional beliefs (British and American) and the background of the research objects (five international Islamic boarding school teachers).

Although the movement to accentuate English globalization is massive, the traditional myth that English must adhere to British and American standards is still extremely powerful. However, the debate regarding applying Global Englishes and Standard English cannot be ignored (Ubaidillah et al., 2023). Therefore, the current study aims to neutralize the idea of the monolithic superiority of English over other English variations (Rose et al., 2021). The traditional notion will always provide a classification that, no matter how fluent and competent an English speaker is, if the outer and expanding speakers do not use the so-called standard English, they will forever be marginalized by this traditional ideology, triggering identity conflicts for non-native English speakers. The loss of confidence among non-native speakers to learn English due to differences in accents and variations of English will be inevitable, leading to demotivation and a lack of participation (Yunus et al., 2023).

In a nutshell, the current study can increase the motivation and enthusiasm of students at elementary, middle, and high school levels so they can confidently and comfortably practice their English skills without being skeptically intervened by their 2nd or 3rd Language (Fikri et al., 2024). The study corresponds to the current Indonesian curriculum (Merdeka Belajar). Educators are required to instill Pancasila and local values in their learning, avoiding foreign culture from eroding the local values, and provoking the researchers to emphasize identity construction to strengthen teachers' and students' pride for local identity and Pancasila values (Sudarwati et al., 2022). Teachers' and students' awareness of their local identity will boost students' motivation to learn English (Davies, 2023). Hence, the current study focuses on two research questions:

1. How do teachers construct their identities in the era of Global English?
2. To what extent do Global English teachers influence their identity in teaching the EFL classroom?

The Belief and Practice

The traditional tenet on authorizing certain English varieties becomes dichotomous with its practice. Myriad evidence of standard English did not become the liberty in many cases, such as Malaysian English, Singlish, Chinese English, Tamil English, etc. (Vollman and Soon, 2024).



The classical tenet can not be an umbrella to cover the mushrooming spread of Global English. The emphasis, nowadays, values the acceptance of diversity, equity, and inclusion rather than privileging only certain language varieties, because Global English tolerates all the language speakers' communicative resources (Chau et al., 2022). The existence of Global English sheds light on the novice English learners in diminishing their anxiety when practicing the language.

However, a dilemma emerges in terms of formal education. The stakeholders believe that the students should skew their preferences toward Standard English. EFL teachers are concerned about the language development and prefer the students to learn Standard English (Aslan & Altinkaya, 2024). Funada (2025) also depicted that indulgent shards of evidence were exposed to the modern tenet. Japanese EFL students favored the classical tenet, indicating that the classical dogma was still pertinent in many cases (Fikri et al., 2025). The negative attitude toward Global English displays students' prejudice that the variety of English was only deviant and unstandardized (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Galloway, 2017). Therefore, many students may presume that Native-like performance is necessary, leading to demotivation due to its impractical acquisition (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2024).

In conclusion, complicating issues regarding Global English were still inevitable (Boonsuk et al., 2021). The complexity of its practice and beliefs opens up considerable issues to raise. Standard English may become a two-sided coin for the students. Standard English may make the speakers sound lavish, but it may demotivate them to study when they find it difficult to imitate (Fikri et al., 2025; Joyce, 2025). It may be a handicap for the students to study English since they share different mother tongues (Llurna & Mocanu, 2024). Hereby, accentuating Global English to EFL students is pivotal to ease their language acquisition and enhance their motivation in studying the language.

Research Method

The current endeavour employs a qualitative method, focusing on EFL teachers' perspectives, opinions, and experiences in Global English (Cresswell, 2003). In-depth interviews and observations were also plotted to collect the data. The study also recruited five International Islamic boarding school teachers in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, piloting a purposive sampling method (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Zhang & Jiang, 2023). In addition, the study kept their subject identity confidential to meet the research ethics (Sudarwati et al., 2022). The names of five research subjects will be pseudonyms (Nana, Hana, Miya, Layla, and Mila). Consent regarding data collection and publication was obtained from the five subjects. The data were then analysed under Braun's & Clarke's thematic analysis (2006). Furthermore, the analysis was portrayed to obtain deeper information regarding the teachers' identity construction in the Global English era (Widodo et al., 2020). The data were then identified to produce a data transcript. After transcribing the data, the researcher frequently read the transcript to highlight the interview data and create the identifying themes. Finally, the researcher concluded the interview data. The research is expected to produce complex data and facts based on the voices conveyed by the international Islamic boarding school teachers in examining the teachers' identity development through their experiences in teaching English, which has been influenced and shaped by cultural, social, and other issues (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

Results and Discussion

The present study inquired about how the five interviewees (Nana, Hana, Miya, Layla, and Mila) developed their unique identities in their English Learning nuances, regarding realities, facts, and experiences. The endeavour unpacked three themes based on their stories: orientation, adjustment, and identity construction. The emerging themes have already coincided with the identity theory in elaborating the interviewees' experiences, comprehending their unique identity constructions, and acquiring the target language (English) (Sudarwati et al., 2022).

The Orientation

The five subjects come from diverse backgrounds, yet they share an identical English orientation in elementary school. They initially had negative perceptions of the language. They also shared the same feeling on their initial encounter with English. They believed that the role of teachers is pivotal in enhancing students' motivation to learn English. The teachers may influence students' motivation (Deloof et al, 2021; Meece, 2023). They also believed that teachers' strict rules in enforcing the standard English in terms of pronunciation and grammar may demotivate students' motivation to learn the language (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021), as depicted in their precepts:

Layla: At first, I did not like English, but fortunately, my teacher was patient and engaging, shaping my initial perception of the language change.

Mila: At first, I liked the language because my aunt was my teacher and tour guide. She frequently invited her foreigner guests to come to our house, motivating me to study the language. At that time, I could only speak how are you and good morning. But the foreigners' reaction to my address improved my motivation to study the language.

Nana: When I was in elementary school, I had a rigorous teacher. My teacher urged me to speak like an American and correct me directly when I used incorrect grammar. Thus, it decreased my personal motivation to study English when I was in elementary school. Fortunately, when I was in junior and senior high school, I got rigorous and engaging teachers. They corrected me when I finished practicing and gently corrected my error. Although my teacher insisted that his students speak with an American accent, he tolerated when we already struggled with the accent.

Miya: My elementary school encounter with English was a boring experience. It is a fact that teachers may impact the students' motivation to learn something. As we know, motivation comes not only from our inner, but also from other things. In addition, my junior and senior high school experience with the language could change my previous motivation regarding the language. In this phase, I began to realise that the significance of the language is not only about welcoming foreigners to our area, but also unlocking a new world with myriad international possibilities. Therefore, I started to take some courses and participate in competitions.

Hana: When I first studied English, I did not think I would like the language because I just did not like the language. In addition, I also got a judging teacher. My friend and I, at that time, when we were asked to come forward to present something in front of the class, we felt afraid because we knew that the teacher would correct us on the spot. Finally, my perception of the language changed in my last year of senior high school. My teacher at that time focused on fluency, strengthening my motivation to speak, and demolishing my initial perception of the language.

The precepts portrayed that teachers were crucial in influencing students' motivation to study English. As depicted by Miya (pseudonym), motivation does not only come from internal motivation (intrinsic), but also comes from external motivation (extrinsic) (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Furthermore, teachers' preferences for skewing and proclaiming the standard Englishes to the students may also demotivate students' motivation to study and practice the language (Joyce, 2025). Nana, Miya, and Hana (pseudonyms) depicted an analogous claim to the term.

The Adjustment

This theme raised a case about how the subjects constructed and implemented their Global Englishes identities into the EFL teaching and learning process. They also unpacked and showed that they were familiar with the American accent because their teachers introduced them. The subjects would portray unique data, involving their International Islamic boarding school philosophy. They sometimes traveled across Southeast Asia to join the school agenda,

provoking them to experience the peculiar varieties of English. Their experiences legionly contributed to the subjects' identity construction with the Global Englishes (Crystal, 2003; Syakur et al., 2024). They, moreover, paraded their perceptions regarding Standard English (SE) and Global Englishes (GE) in their interview as transcribed below:

Nana: Hmmmm, actually, I skew my choice on Standard English, and I tried to teach my students with an American accent, which is not too difficult for Indonesians to mimic. However, if their mother tongue (Javanese, Madurese, etc.) intrudes on the language too much, I will correct it. For example, the pronunciation of B and D is very thick in the Javanese accent. They will literally press to pronounce the B and D in every pronunciation. Although slightly annoying, the accent does not significantly bother the interlocutor in comprehending what she is saying. Thereby, I do not mind that, yaah, I remind my student a little about that, but yaaah. That is the accent. What can I do about that?. Moreover, when I conducted a speaking test, I preferred the Standard English accent since it sounds standard and appropriate for the language (English).

Layla: In this era of globalization, I think the function of speaking has already shifted to communicative-based speaking. The variation of English does not arise because of the language's downfall. The variation occurs because everyone in the world tries to speak the language. Hereby, the language variation happens due to the mixing between the speakers' first language and the target language. In my prejudice, I still prefer teaching my students with Standard English, for I am the coach of my students' competition activity. I coach them at national and sometimes international competitions, which helps me understand the national and international judges' preferences in speaking. The judges prefer the Standard English, which does not go against our school philosophy (international). However, we can not neglect that we are in an expanding circle of English, making us understand that we should tolerate our local variation. I will accept my students if they use their local accent, but not to change the meaning of the target language they are using. Their friends and I should understand the meaning of the variation, and then I can accept it. For example, when I went to Singapore, I could not understand what the person was saying. I keep saying pardon me for three times to understand their full English variation. Thus, I do not want my students to speak with their local variation at an international event to avoid misunderstandings between judges and interlocutors.

The interview session unveiled that the subjects preferred to teach with Standard English under high tolerance to their local English variation, as long as the variation and accent do not change the meaning of the target language. The notion was analogous to Kirkpatrick's & Schaller-Schwaner's (2022) ideology on how ELF might be incorporated into language teaching and learning in English as a lingua franca. Furthermore, the subjects believed that the emerging variation of English is not an error. They further portrayed that the language variation emerged due to the expanding spread of the language. Crystal (2003) depicted that the language, nowadays, does not belong to a particular region or variation; the language belongs to everyone who speaks it.

Identity Construction

In the final findings theme, the subjects will portray their identity construction regarding their experiences. In this precept, they will portray their hope for the students to implement their learning process from the school into their daily speaking, formal education, and international conference or competition activities. The subjects revealed that native-like performance is not always significant when speaking English. The subjects displayed that the students should understand when to use Standard English or Global English(es). In the context of daily activity, English variation or non-standardized English is okay to use. However, formal English should

be incorporated in the context of formal English nuance, such as education and an International conference (Kirkpatrick & Schaller-Schwaner, 2022), as depicted by Miya, Layla, and Mila:

Miya: I do not mind if the students use standardized or unstandardized English in their daily context because my friends and I sometimes speak with a Javanese accent in our daily speaking. Therefore, I just want my students to speak English fluently. However, in a more serious context, like a special event, we will use our formal style of English to speak because at that time we are officially representing our institution. It is a fact that the more standard you talk, the more sophisticated someone thinks you are.

Layla: In my perspective, I think we have to go back to the goals of speaking; that is a communicative speaking. Although we are in Islamic International Boarding School context, we can not neglect that some of the students are not at the level of using native like performance skills. The main point is the consistency of practicing the language to avoid demotivation of the students in practicing the language. Furthermore, I believe that when they master English, they will fix their pronunciation to improve their English. For those already at the level of implementing native like performance, I hope they will consistently implement the Standard variation in their daily speaking and formal contexts.

Mila: I hope that the students will implement the native like accent and the international standard of English as our school name under the philosophy of Islamic International Boarding School. However, if they speak unstandardized English, but still have the correct pronunciation and with slight interference from the local accent, I think that is still okay to implement.

Conclusion

The current endeavour recruited five Indonesian International Islamic Boarding School Teachers to explore how they construct their identities in the era of Global English and to what extent Global Englishes influence their identity in teaching the EFL classroom. The study implemented a qualitative method, focusing on EFL teachers' perspectives, opinions, and experiences in Global English, piloting In-depth interviews and observations under Braun's & Clarke's thematic analysis (2006). The study unpacked three discussion themes (orientation, adjustment, and identity construction). In the orientation, the subjects revealed that their first encounter with English was in elementary school. They identically depicted that teachers had a significant role in motivating students to learn English. They suggest that the students should not only be taught Standard English. The teacher should tolerate the students' errors in practicing the language to avoid deterring students from studying the language. Moreover, after experiencing the development of English, Nana, Hana, Miya, Layla, and Mila (pseudonyms) suggest that they will still accentuate the teaching of Standard English, but with a high tolerance for those who have just learned or are still struggling to master the language in the adjustment theme. Finally, in the theme of identity construction, they believed that the students should skew their preferences towards standard English to sound more sophisticated in the formal context. However, in the less formal context, the teachers believed the students could communicate through the Global Englishes tenet.

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