

Global English and World Culture: A Case Study of the Subjective Worlds of English Teachers in Taiwan

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Abstract

Most discussions of global English and world culture are at a macro-theoretical level since there are few attempts to examine these concepts in a daily context. This study aims to present different perspectives on world culture and global English from two native and two non-native English teachers in Taiwan. A qualitative methodology 'Portraiture' was used to explore their conceptions of English and English teaching. The findings show that the NS teachers shared more world culture and global English ideas than the local teachers did. The teachers' learning experiences are believed to contribute to the finding. The contrast between the two groups of teachers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds suggest that the value of empowerment in world culture and the advocacy of ownership in global English complement each other as western constructions, but the world may not yet be ready to embrace global English and world culture.

Keywords: English as an International Language, Global English, Teacher's Belief, World Culture

Introduction

The global spread of English is one of the major controversies in applied linguistics (Seidlhofer, 2003, p.2). It continues as globalization progresses. More and more attention has been given to the topic, not only from applied linguistics (see Jenkins, 2006), but also from fields such as economics (e.g. Lysandrou & Lysandrou, 2003) and politics (e.g. Ives, 2006). With the emergence of a global language, discussions on the possibility of a global culture or world culture abound (e.g. Robertson, 1992; Inkeles, 1998). Topics like global English and world culture are interdisciplinary in nature; however, these topics are usually approached in a theoretical manner. Rarely were these concepts connected with real life experiences. As a bold attempt, this qualitative study aims to provide grounded insights into how four English teachers in Taiwan experienced and conceived the evolving world and English through the lenses of world culture and global English. The purpose is to explore related issues emerged from connecting the macro theoretical and micro practical perspectives. Moreover, the experiences and conceptions of two groups of teachers with contrasting linguistic and cultural backgrounds (North-American native speakers and local Taiwanese) provide entry points to examine theoretical concepts in global English and world culture.

Global English

The idea of 'global English' (Graddol, 2006; Sonntag, 2003) or 'global Englishes' (Pennycook, 2007) can be traced to the studies in World Englishes and Kacru's (1985) three concentric circles, and is usually associated with English as an international language (EIL) (McKay, 2002) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2001). One line of studying global English is rooted in linguistics. The main assumption is that global English is developing into a linguistic system that contains its own features. Studies concerning global English--phonology (Jenkins, 2000), pragmatics (House, 2002), lexicogrammar (Seidlhofer, 2004), and spoken academic ELF (Mauranen, 2006).

Another approach to global English focuses on its socio-cultural implications. The birth of a global language challenges the taken-for-granted connections between languages on the one hand and place, nationality, race, and culture on the other. Just as globalization transcends the national boundaries and worldviews based on national societies, global English confronts fundamental assumptions on the roles of language. It also arouses polarized reactions: scholars on the left (e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998) lament that the Empire used English to exploit the world and destroy other languages while those on the right see global English promoting mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation (Gimenez, 2001) and facilitating (economic) development (Fishman, Conrad, & Rubal-Lopez, 1996).

In this paper, the term 'global English' is used in a general sense to refer to the global spread of English, not a particular variety of English. The reason of using the term 'global English' is that the global spread of English is conceptualized as part of the globalization process. Globalization leads to global English, which facilitates the process of global integration in a reciprocal way (Graddol, 2006,p.58).

The concepts related to global English may be categorized into the following four domains. (1) Ownership: English users and learners around the world can and should become participants in the evolution of this global language (Widdowson, 1994). (2) Identity: What language(s) we speak and who we are do not have direct and clear connections (Brutt-Griffler, 2005; Erling, 2007). (3) Culture: Cultures are decoupled from English, which becomes 'cultural free' or 'the most culture-rich language' (Medgyes, 1999: p.187-188). (4) Pedagogy: Communicability and

intercultural intelligibility replace conformation to native-speaker norms as the teaching goals (Alptekin, 2002; Sifakis, 2004). These theoretical ideas contrast with a reality different from the proposed ideal; for example, empirical studies showed that most nonnative learners and users still appeared norm-dependent (see, e.g., Matsuda, 2003; Bokhorst-Heng et al., 2007) while issues of re-colonization with the spread of English and its harmful consequences for national and local identity remain a major topic. Global English brings tremendous impacts and implications for contemporary human life, and among the implications, culture stands out as a key issue because it relates to all aspects of human life.

Cultural globalization and world culture

In the cultural dimension of globalization, three major perspectives offer a general picture (Held et al., 1999). With the development of a single global economy, a (homogeneous) global culture is expected by the *hyperglobalists*. In contrast, seeing the nation-state maintaining its hegemony over cultural development, the *skeptical* perspective projects a more divided world, with fundamentalism gaining ground to counter the dominance of a global capitalist culture. Defining globalization as a multidimensional process, the *transformationalists* focus on hybridity and creolization of cultures, --global cultures indigenized and local cultures globalized-- cultures mixing and interacting to produce new forms of culture. This approach posits that there will be global elements but also local distinctions. The transformationalist perspective is currently the mainstream paradigm in both sociology and applied linguistics (Dewey, 2007).

At the first glance, the global physical landscape appears standardized by multinational brands since you can see them at most cities worldwide. Scientific and technological development combined with the advance of capitalism has in the past several centuries transformed the world. This structural convergence has hyperglobalists heralding the emergence of a global culture. On the other hand, though the visible environment seemingly converges with the dominance of the modern nation states, institutions, organizations, and market forces, the spiritual outlook has not homogenized. Instead, more and more people in postindustrial countries have moved closer to the religious sectors as globalization swept the world (Thomas, 2005). Secularization did not accompany modernization as proposed by earlier scholars (e.g. Durkhem, 1965). Fundamentalism even gained ground with the help of internet and mobile phones in regions like Islamic countries (Mehran, 2003) and India (Kamat, 2004). While large-scale global surveys indicated that western values such as equality and democracy were increasingly adopted in newer generations, certain authoritative and paternalist values also remained strong in many places (see Hofstede, 2001; Inglehart, 2006). Most scholars in the globalization discourse tend to acknowledge that the world is both diversifying and standardizing in different dimensions, as illustrated by the term ‘*a heterogeneous world culture*’ (Van Der Bly, 2007).

The concept of ‘world culture’, developed by the neo-institutionalists in sociology, notably John Meyer at the Stanford University, provides a unique lens to interpret the phenomenon by seeing culture as institutional rules instead of a symbolic or meaning system. Boli and Thomas (1999) propose that world culture is characterized by universalism, rationalization, and individualism. Drori et al. (2003) assert that world culture is founded on “*science as a world institution, a culture frame and an ontology*” (p.8-9). Drori, Meyer, and Hwang (2006) posit that “*the two core features of modern world culture, rationalization and empowered actorhood are constructed and expanded through scientization*” (p.56). By focusing on the underlying norms, values, and ontology, the concept of world culture shifts the discussions surrounding global cultures to the *foundations* of cultural products, practices, and perspectives. World culture

stresses the roles modern institutions and organizations play in shaping human beings' worldviews and ways of making sense of the surroundings. The idea 'universalization of the particular' or 'Glocalization' (Robertson, 1992) echoes the theme that underlying rules converge to produce diversified representations. (For details about world culture, see Lechner & Boli, 2005).

Two Parallel Discourses: Global English and World Culture

Rooted in the (western) Enlightenment ideas, world culture 'spreads' worldwide along with the diffusion of modern institutions. World culture theory is founded on the empirical studies that focus on how two major institutions facilitated the development of world culture. (1) Modern schooling: Ramirez & Boli (1987) on the worldwide expansion and institutionalization of schooling; Meyer et al. (1992) on worldwide official curriculum guidelines. (2) International and modern organizations: Boli & Thomas (1999) on international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); Drori (2005) on United Nations; Drori, Meyer, & Hwang (2006) on formal organizations such as government and corporation. Individuals' worldviews are shaped by schooling (childhood), media (adolescence), and corporations (adulthood), all of which contribute to the development of world culture (Inkeles, 1998).

The global spread of English took similar paths, through (international) government, corporations, media, and education (Crystal, 2003) and same direction from the west (center) to the rest (periphery). But unlike world culture which is embedded in modern schooling, English was not a subject in compulsory education in most expanding-circle countries until recently (cf. Nunan, 2003). From a neo-institutional perspective, the inclusion of English in the official curriculum at a global level should shake up both the English language and people around the world because of the roles mass schooling plays in shaping individuals' worldviews. As a language that carries various cultural meanings, English gradually begins to play a role in the worldwide citizen-construction process through institutionalized education.

Teachers may absorb this imagined ideal of a global village with English as its language and world culture as its ontological foundation, or construct their own ideals incorporating their own cultures. At the individual subjective level, how these abstract ideas connect with real life remains unclear since very few studies approach the issues from a grounded perspective. This study aims to explore potential issues around global English and world culture by (1) investigating how four English teachers in Taiwan, two native-speaking English teachers (NESTs) and two Taiwanese teachers, conceived the evolving world and English through their experience and (2) comparing the teachers' conceptions in terms of world culture and global English.

Methodology

"Qualitative research has traditionally been seen as an effective way of exploring new, uncharted areas" (Dornyei, 2007: 39). Moreover, since the focus is on individual experience, a particular methodology 'Portraiture' is used. Portraiture focuses specifically on pursuing core understandings of the participants through in-depth life-history interviews with adult participants (Witz et al., 2001). The method is particularly suitable to investigate how values and deep concepts of adult participants were formed by thoroughly examining their life experiences (Witz, 2006). Portraiture as a qualitative method that incorporates the systematic approach of social science, particularly that of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and the aesthetic approach of art (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) has been proved to be effective in accessing

data related to unobservable and immeasurable mental activities, such as cultural norms, belief, and ideological assumptions (Dixson, Chapman & Hill, 2005).

In-depth interview was used as the data collection method. Two female Taiwanese English teachers and two male native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) were interviewed 3-4 times; each interview lasted around 1 hour. The gender divide reflected the real situations: 86% of the English teachers in Taiwan's secondary schools were female (Ministry of Education, 2010), while more than 65% of the forty-thousand-plus Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) with a working visa in Taiwan were male (Bureau of Employment and Vocational Training, 2010). Gender, not a main dimension in data analysis, may play a role in interpreting the results of the study, so this is a limitation.

All the interviews were voice-recorded with the participants' consent. The interviews with local teachers were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed in Mandarin and later translated into English for cross-comparisons and reporting while those with NESTs all in English. The participants were in their late 30s with around 10 years of teaching experience in secondary and/or tertiary levels. In an earlier study (Author, 2008), the researcher interviewed experienced teachers on the issue of world culture, so with generational comparison in mind, the focus in this project turned to the younger teachers. It is also believed that the inclusion of NESTs would yield valuable insights into how world culture and global English are reflected in the subjective experiences of teachers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The first interview session was semi-structured, focusing on the participants' experiences, practices, and various perceptions on life issues. Major topics include their path to becoming an English teacher, teaching experiences, and personal life decisions. This subjective understanding formed a basis to interpret their perceptions and conceptions related to English. Unlike most interview studies that directly prompt participants for responses to certain prescribed questions, in this study the participants' concepts about English were explored through real incidents and their reflections in the subsequent interviews. The researchers tried to identify important passages in which the participant expresses deep feelings and reflections. These would yield islands of understanding at the initial stages. The researchers sought to identify '*internal sources and structuring*' (Witz, 2006) and analyzed the data by both immersing in the passage--which often requires an intuitive mentality to tune in with the wave of the participant's flow of mind--and constant connections and comparisons within and between the passages, a key principle of grounded theory. After a holistic comprehension of the interview data, the researchers would make some conjectures about the uncertainties and explore them by asking relevant questions in the next interview. An individual timeline that marked significant personal and contextual events and life paths helped the researchers to achieve contextualized subjective understanding through life history. For each participant, each interview session was scheduled at least two weeks apart to give the researchers the time needed for deeper understanding and analysis of the data. The recursive process continued until the researchers had acquired sufficient and necessary understanding of the participant's subjective world for the purpose of the study.

The following discussions and analysis were filtered through the researcher's subjective position. To ensure credible and dependable interpretations of the data, the researchers complied with the systematic approaches, which include constant cross-comparisons within the data, follow-up verification with the participant, and data-based analysis. In the next section, due to limited space, only a brief sketch of the participants is presented, followed by discussions on world culture and global English from the participants' lived experiences.

Participants

The researchers set out to recruit both native-speaking English teachers and local Taiwanese English teachers. It is supposed to generate interesting insights and comparisons by including both native and non-native English teachers in the study. Gender balance was considered during the recruiting stage, but since most English native speakers were males and most local English teachers were female, in the end two male native-speaking teachers and two female local teachers were recruited. Another criterion was that the participating teachers should have taught for more than five years. In other words, novice teachers were excluded because the study aims to explore experience and perceptions of change.

Wendy

Wendy grew up in an authoritative family in southern Taiwan. Her father decided for her which school and department to study, even her first job after graduation. In the fifth grade, she had a dream of becoming a teacher after meeting a strict teacher who helped her become successful in school. After graduating from a vocational school, she taught English in a cram school. Cram schools are private enterprises that provide supplementary instruction to formal schooling. Sometimes branded as ‘shadow education’ (Bray, 1999), it is a common practice in East Asia, especially at the secondary level. This experience further ascertained her interest in teaching. But her father arranged a job in a bank for her. She was not happy working in the bank, and a manager suggested her father to have her study abroad. After a few months, her father sent in the resignation letter for her and she was off to the United States for a language school. Wendy stayed in the U.S. for almost 6 years, where she grew independent, living alone outside campus and teaching part-time at a Chinese school. After she obtained the Bachelor’s, her parents urged her to continue studying for the MBA. Without parents by her side, she had made up her mind to study what interested her: teaching English. After completing her Master’s in TESOL, she returned to Taiwan. She first taught in a vocational school, and later in the current private university for 9 years. Due to the influence from her primary school teacher, she was a strict teacher as well.

Susan

Sue grew up in a traditional farmer’s family, following her family’s expectation to become a teacher. She was a playful girl and believed that her personality conflicted with what the society expected a typical teacher to be, namely highly disciplined, obedient, and moralizing. In the junior high school, she was touched by her English teacher’s care and transformed from an abandoned student into an academically successful star. She studied extremely hard and was able to become a high school teacher. She taught in the junior high school for one and a half years and then in the high school for ten years. At first she paid great attention to help students achieve academic success, but later her students, a few years after graduation, told her that they only remembered those little life stories she shared in class. Lately she began to shift more focus to teaching morality and how to be a good citizen.

Chuck

Chuck was a full-time cram-school teacher from America, who first came to Taiwan on Fulbright scholarship in 1994. Then he fell in love with this place and has been living on the island for more than nine years. His students ranged from second graders to young adult learners. In college he majored in sociology, and had always been interested in people. “My biggest

strength has always been, to get along with other people, relating to people.” He never thought of becoming a teacher, but after some experiences he found out that teaching allowed him to make a positive difference to the world, and decided to teach English in Taiwan. His internal thirst for self-growth drove him to leave his hometown to live on the other side of the earth. He felt connected to the people and culture in Taiwan. In his words, the interpersonal relationship in Taiwan is “more real, genuine” than that in the U.S., which values individual privacy more.

John

John was a Canadian who spent his childhood in Belgium. In his teenage years his family moved to Ontario, and later to Victoria, where he went to college, first majoring in English but later transferred to developmental studies. His first job involved government contracts, and one task was teaching English to the immigrants. This positive experience led to his decision to teach in Taiwan because he was quite concerned with the rise of China and hoped to learn more about East Asia. He had been teaching English in Taiwan for six years, mostly at the secondary level but also adult tutoring. One of his favorite hobbies was yachting, and he had sailed to many places in the world. His journey and unusual experience probably related to his sharing most ideas in world culture and global English.

World culture and the participants’ worldviews

There is a tendency for the participants to absorb or incorporate different worldviews, particularly in their young adulthood. However, the cultural milieus in which the participants grew up still play an important role in their teaching practices. Wendy and Susan basically played a conservative teacher’s role, being strict and rigid, which is congruent with how a good teacher was traditionally conceived in Taiwan and East Asian cultures. But they adapted to some new educational norms. For Chuck and John, resonances with world culture ideas such as human rights and rational progress appeared frequently as reflected in their assumption on individual rights and students’ roles. But their ideal society, the goal of human civilization, seemingly resembled Eastern Oneness that sees individuals as part of a larger entity.

The local teachers gradually came to respect students’ individual human rights, which they did not enjoy when they were students but fought for their own rights as they became teachers. The fighting experiences, Wendy’s rebelling against her parents’ will to choose her major when she was in the U.S. and Susan’s resolution to be a super fair teacher treating each student equally and respectfully due to her once being an abandoned student, paved ways for their accommodation of student’s individual agency. But overall speaking their teaching practices and educational beliefs were closer to the Oriental philosophy that stresses social harmony and collective achievement.

Wendy saw students as passive and inert learners; teacher plays a dominant and aggressive role, determining what students should learn and what level they should achieve. Teacher’s influence can be as much as parents’. The idea of individual agency, empowered children, and inborn human rights does not fit with Wendy’s worldview. Students are supposed to earn their rights from performing their duty and responsibilities. Susan had a similar view, but stressed more on the collective sense of community. She even punished those who failed to remind their classmates not to do a misconduct that harmed the reputation of their class even though these students did not make any misbehavior.

On the other hand, both Chuck and John showed their admiration of the Eastern worldviews. Chuck immersed himself in the Taiwanese culture and appreciated everything and

everyone around him. While most NESTs in Taiwan are sojourners who seldom stay for more than five years and some even never learn to speak any local languages, Chuck rode a motorcycle to the local market and chatted with local elders. In Chuck's words, "you can talk about the real thing, real self" in Taiwan. The distance between individuals is much shorter in Eastern cultures compared to Western ones. People involve with others' business and see others' life deeply connected to their own. For John, his change was more conceptual and abstract. On how to make the world better:

[A]t one point I thought it could be done quite simple, and now I realize, I don't know if it's impossible or something, it's much deeper than just feeding people. It's changing people's beliefs, in Taiwan, in Canada, everywhere. It seems flaky: at spiritual level, everything is connected. There's no other, in a sense, we ARE the others. I mean, you're not me and I'm not you, but everything is ONE. And the idea that, somebody is god, finding out the solution to everyone, it's ridiculous, we're all struggling. By changing yourself, you change the idea of the other. (John 4th interview, capital words John's emphasis)

The step John took, to change himself in order to change others, implies tremendously deep philosophical and religious ideas of the East.

Though Chuck and John reflected on their worldviews and changed their ways of seeing the world, their teaching practices still manifested their cultures of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 2002) that emphasize students' agency. Chuck valued participation (the process) over performance (the result of education). John's educational ideals were the dialogue style in the Greek tradition, in which teacher and students engage in constant arguments. Meyer and McEneaney (2000) pointed out the world culture concepts of equality and active participation in educational settings, and these ideas are illustrated in the following excerpts:

I know in Taiwan there're a lot of people that have this idea that controlling the student, you have to control them; I don't agree with that philosophy. I don't like the sound of the word; I don't think it's a good way of education. (Chuck 3rd interview)

The actual performance is actually not the most important part. The most important part for me is when they're practicing with their partner; they repeat these dialogues again and again. That's the key to me. (Chuck 3rd interview)

The methodology of teaching English in Asia comes from the teaching of Confucius; the idea of Confucius: students listen, the teacher talks, the teacher writes, the students absorb the knowledge, there isn't a dialogue in which you can, like in Greek tradition, you can argue back and forth. So that presents a challenge teaching a language because you can't teach a language when people just listen to you. (John 1st interview)

Both Chuck and John valued students' initiative actions, and encouraged students to express and develop their own ideas. Here this slight worldview convergence suggests that globalization and the cultural contacts and mixture it brings produce a two-way process; more cultural elements from other cultures contribute to world culture, not just western science and rationality overpowering other cultures.

Global English and the participants' concepts of English

Fundamental worldviews are closely connected to how the teachers conceive and teach English. Wendy's and Susan's ideas about English stemmed from their lived experiences grounded in the Taiwanese culture, corresponding to the concept of English as a foreign language (EFL). Though they gradually recognized the importance of communication (at the global level), English for them remains mostly a subject area to teach and learn. Chuck emphasized a lot on communication because many courses he taught are conversational ones. He paid relatively little attention to norms and standards because he did not have to deal with tests. John tried to use teaching materials with local contents to provide students with the notion of EIL, which he picked up recently.

Wendy conceived English as a school subject to be mastered through diligent learning. Like most students in Taiwan, she learned the language as a foreign language; she had foreign tutors in high school to help her pronunciation. She worked very hard to improve her English when studying in the U.S. In her teaching she put emphasis on the basic skills such as pronunciation, spelling and grammar, and that was how she learned English. Similarly, Susan used her own way to teach English, which included three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and reading. She started from vocabulary and gradually shifted to reading as students proceed along. She taught English as a foreign language, but saw it as a future global language:

If you are not competitive it's very hard to survive in the future. You would be like those grandmas or gramps who cannot speak Mandarin (if you don't speak English). In the future you might have a problem taking mass transportation (if you don't speak English). (Susan 3rd interview)

Forty years ago most Taiwanese spoke only Taiwanese, a local dialect. Then the Nationalist government used Mandarin as the only official and public language. While people could still use the local native tongues to communicate in their community, all citizens had to learn this national language in order to communicate at the societal level. Susan saw English taking a similar role as a socio-politically advantaged language in Taiwan. Wendy's and Susan's perceptions of English might reflect how most secondary English teachers in Taiwan conceived English: as a subject matter that students have to master through systematic studies of English vocabulary, grammar, and texts. For these teachers, English is a global language not because of its global presence but its socio-political power at the global level. It is a language all students must master if future success is desired,

The NESTs' conceptions of English differed from Wendy and Susan probably due to their relationship to the language. English was their first language and thus they learned English differently. Their learning experiences pointed to the importance of helping students see the need to learn the language. John elaborated how he motivated his students to learn English:

I try to get them to think international...I used to push this, ENGLISH IS THEIR LANGUAGE. It's the language that belongs to the world, it's not a foreign language, and it's important that they put their culture into English. I give the example like, ChoDouFu (stinky tofu); I said, if you look into an English dictionary, you would see the word sushi, and that was not an English word twenty years ago. It's becoming an English word...maybe one day, ChoDouFu would be in the English dictionary...you should in fact put your culture into the language because it's a world language. Every other culture in this world is

influencing this language, approaching this language...you clearly make it your language, you teach to the rest of the world by putting your culture into the language. (John 2nd interview, capital words John's emphasis)

John admitted frankly that the idea of seeing English as the students' own language was a *selfish* one because it would be easier for him, the English teacher and native speaker. However, if the students realize the practicality of the language, they are supposed to learn with higher motivation. John attempted to rid the EFL concept and plant the new EIL concept in his students' mind:

Before learning English, I think many people have this resentment, why are we learning English, why not Chinese, and that's really understandable... it's important for them to realize that it's truly their language, and they can't think of it as an American language. They must think of it as a language of young people, as a language of (pause) international culture... You're not learning English to speak to Americans. You learn English to speak to Brazilians, to Japanese, German people. (John 2nd interview)

John saw English more as a useful communication tool, rather a cultural colonizing medium. He began to pick up this EIL idea very recently, probably after 2005, when the news that non-native English speakers had outnumbered native speakers became widely-known. The EIL rationale fit with his teaching philosophy and served well to encourage learners' motivations.

For Chuck, the issues concerning EFL, EIL, and global English did not seem to be an important topic. Compared to John, he seemed not mindful of the identity issue of English. "I think the goal is communication, be able to understand." He focused on his own teaching, helping students learn English without bothering to touch upon all those sensitive issues behind this powerful language. Chuck did not have to deal with the test part because of his role as a NEST. It is common that local teachers take care of test preparation while NESTs focus on interacting with students and making English fun and interesting. This dual track system—NESTs teach conversation and communication (what is used) while local teachers focus on grammar and reading (what is tested)—is popular in English-teaching institutions across Taiwan, where the government started to recruit NESTs from inner-circle countries to help English teaching in remote areas (Chang, Chern & Lo, 2008). Simultaneous team teaching involving a NEST and a local instructor has been implemented in many places, particularly in East Asia countries such as Japan and Hong Kong (see Lai, 1999; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). In such a system, local teachers are in charge of the traditional EFL goals: learning NS norms and rules, basically 'learning' English; on the other hand, NESTs only need to focus on 'using' English, so this might lead to NESTs' higher resonance with global English ideas, an intriguing phenomenon that may be related to the testing culture in East Asia.

Discussion

In light of the participants' lived experiences, an interesting question emerges: Why did the concepts of world culture and global English resonate more with the NESTs than with the local teachers?

A possible explanation is that the underlying ideas of world culture and global English reinforce each other. Empowerment as the central value in world culture and ownership as the guiding principle in global English go hand in hand. To take ownership over a nonnative

language requires a high degree of empowerment. The NESTs, with an empowering mentality growing up in environments saturated in ‘world culture’, showed a higher degree of accepting the ownership idea for nonnative speakers. In the world culture perspective, education is to build “a cultural base or model of modern society that emphasizes expanded and universal participation” (Meyer & McEneaney, 2000, p.192). Participating in world affairs, interacting with international societies, and engaging in intercultural communication are regarded as desirable and valuable. Isolation and seclusion denote outdated norms. Global English allows people to participate in world society, and the participation may lead to the development of a global identity and a sense of global citizenship. Empowerment and self-determination founded on human rights constitute the theoretical assumptions for both world culture and global English.

However, the critiques against world culture may apply to global English as well. World culture stemmed from the (western) Enlightenment project, with core values in liberal individualism that praises individual agency and self-determination. These values may be taken for granted in European and North American cultures, but not in other cultures. The term ‘empower’ already implies unequal power relationships that cannot be changed by simply giving power to the powerless. In addition, in the conceptual framework of world culture and global English, individuals (often in peripheral situations) are given the ownership of a dominant culture and a global language, while in fact economic conditions never allow them to develop the owning capacity. It is the powerful that empower those powerless with such emancipative ideas of *world culture*, which promotes diversity and prosperity of local cultures constructed on a universal cultural platform, and *global English*, which advocates speakers of other languages to take charge of a global language in their own ways. Promoting both ideas serves the interests of the powerful because it leads those powerless to share the worldviews and language of the powerful. Global capitalism as the source of power behind world culture guarantees the prevalence of a global language because “[l]inguistic and cultural differences are barriers to trade and profit” (Kushner, 2003, p.21). World culture and global English may serve as a decoy, the sugarcoat that beautifies and moralizes the privileged, the elite.

The NESTs have had much more experiences growing up in a world culture environment in which they had contacts with different cultures and English variations; thus, it is natural for them to embrace both ideas. John and Chuck differ from typical NESTs in that they both stayed in Taiwan for over five years and have integrated into local cultures. Moreover, this study only probe their conception of English, not attitudes toward a particular variety of English, so these differences may explain why they have a different attitude from those NESTs in Jenkins’ (2007) study. Also how the participants learned English influences greatly how they perceived English. For the NESTs, English has always been the communication medium, so bringing other cultures into it and letting students take ownership do not change their relationship with it. In contrast, the local teachers learned English in EFL ways, through regularity, standards, and most importantly, tests. With a strong testing culture in which tests are privileged, it is not surprising to see, for example, Japanese secondary students refuting the idea that English belongs to international users (Matsuda, 2003). Even if the local teachers recognize the variations, the norms and standards remain integral to their teaching. Unlike the NESTs who grew up speaking English as their mother tongue, most English learners do not use English in their daily life. Perhaps they will use it when they start to work, but when they learn it in the compulsory education, English remains an academic subject instead of a communication medium. Global English or ELF teaching model (Kirkpatrick, 2006) should be a better sell in adult English education, not in the elementary and secondary education in non-English-speaking countries, where penetration of

English into students' daily life remains peripheral. In official curricula and language policies, sometimes it is Standard English that denotes global comprehensibility while local variations are obstacles to international communications (Farrell & Tan Kiat Kun, 2008). The above reasons contribute to most nonnative teachers' and students' acceptance of native-speaker norms (e.g. Timmis, 2002).

Conclusion

This study investigates four English teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions related to the concepts of global English and world culture. The findings suggest that NESTs resonate more with the ideas of global English and world culture, both of which are theoretical productions of western academia. Based on the subjective experiences of the two Taiwanese teachers, it may be argued that while NESTs' may urge their nonnative students to 'see English as their language', it seems unlikely that students identify with English in the near future. As this is an exploratory qualitative study with only four participants, the claims are limited. Further studies are necessary to examine these rudimentary findings and help us understand how the global influence the local culturally and linguistically in the globalizing world.

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