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Embedded Intervention for Ideological Change: Global Englishes and Anti-Accentism Readings in a Chinese English Teacher Education Course

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ABSTRACT

Despite global diversification of English, English language teaching (ELT) across the Global South remains entrenched in native-speakerism, perpetuating both hierarchies of English varieties and inequalities among English users. To build a more just and ethical ELT, it is essential to cultivate a Global Englishes (GE)-aligned teaching intention among pre-service English language teachers (PELTs). This study implemented a 10-week embedded dual-focused pedagogical intervention that integrated GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness with 97 undergraduate students in a Chinese English language teacher education program. After the course, 52 students submitted written reflections, and eight of them attended semi-structured interviews. Qualitative content analysis of the data reveals that most of the 52 reported substantial ideological shifts in their perceptions of diverse Englishes and in their understanding of accent-based perceptions and behaviors, both of which culminated in a reorientation of their future ELT intentions toward a GE-aligned model. These findings suggest that preparing PELTs to enact GE-aligned pedagogy requires not only a cognitive change toward diverse Englishes but also a moral awakening to English-user inequality.

Keywords: Global Englishes awareness; anti-accentism awareness; global Englishes-aligned pedagogy; pre-service English language teachers; pedagogical intervention

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Introduction

English today presents a diverse, pluricentric, and fluid sociolinguistic landscape, challenging the monolithic view of English and redefining the ownership of English. Under the conventional categorization of English speakers, nonnative English speakers (NNESs) now vastly outnumber native English speakers (NESs), and the majority of intercultural communication in English occurs among NNESs^[1] (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Crystal, 2012; Selvi et al., 2023). Paradoxically, English language teaching (ELT) across the Global South, including China, remains entrenched in native speakerism (Holliday, 2005). In pronunciation, native speaker accents, particularly Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA), are still upheld as the teaching and learning model (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026; Liu, 2025; Manzouri et al., 2024). Beyond leaving students ill-prepared for real-world communication in the current age of Global Englishes (GE) (Rose & Galloway, 2019), such practices continue to foster a pro-nativeness mindset among them, further reinforcing the hegemony of native Englishes and their speakers (Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2024; Selvi et al., 2024). Another serious but often overlooked consequence is the (re)production and even justification of accentism, i.e., accent-based prejudice and discrimination against NNESs by NESs, and even among NNESs themselves (Dryden et al., 2025).

To build a more just and ethical ELT ecology, ELT needs to shift from the native-speakerist model to a GE-aligned approach, one that is grounded in the sociolinguistic realities of English and committed to linguistic social justice. To facilitate this shift, it is essential to raise ELT stakeholders' GE awareness to help them recognize English diversity and acknowledge the legitimacy of nonnative Englishes (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Marlina, 2025). Equally important is to cultivate their awareness of—and, more importantly, moral awakening to—accent-based inequalities among English users (Kubota et al., 2022). This is particularly vital for pre-service English language teachers (PELTs), who are poised to shape the future of ELT (Borg, 2018). However, pedagogical interventions with PELTs remain limited in number and scope (Rose et al., 2021). Extant studies focus primarily on raising PELTs' GE awareness (e.g., Aslan & Altınkaya, 2024; Boonsuk & Fang, 2025), with little attention paid to anti-accentism awareness. To the best of the author's knowledge, no intervention to date has simultaneously cultivated both types of awareness.

To address these gaps, this study implemented a 10-week pedagogical intervention with 97 third-year undergraduate students enrolled in the English language teacher education (ELTE) program at a public university in Central China. Due to curricular constraints that preclude stand-alone interventions, the intervention was embedded within an existing compulsory course titled *English Academic Writing and Research Methods*. It involved guiding students to read and discuss six recently published journal articles—four on GE and two on accentism—aiming to cultivate their GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness to inspire a GE-aligned approach in their future teaching. Drawing on 52 structured written reflections and eight semi-structured interviews post-course, the study addressed three research questions.

1. How do students perceive diverse English varieties after the intervention?
2. How do they understand accent-based perceptions of and behaviors toward others after the intervention?
3. What approaches do they plan to take toward diverse English varieties, particularly diverse English accents, in their future teaching after the intervention?

This study extends extant pedagogical interventions by moving beyond GE awareness to encompass anti-accentism awareness, and demonstrates embedded pedagogical intervention as a viable pathway to counter native speakerism where stand-alone interventions are not feasible.

Literature review

GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness: Integrated tools against native speakerism

Central to native speakerism is the belief that NESs are the legitimate owners of English (Holliday, 2005). This runs counter to the diverse, pluricentric, and fluid landscape of contemporary English, as documented in scholarship on World Englishes (WE) (Kachru, 1985), English as an international language (EIL) (Matsuda, 2017), and English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2011). GE incorporates these strands of scholarship, further highlighting “the linguistic, sociolinguistic and socio-cultural diversity and fluidity of English use and English users in a globalized world” (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 4), and the co-ownership of English by all English users (Baker et al., 2026; Rose & McKinley, 2024). To facilitate the shift of ELT from the native-speakerist paradigm, it is essential to raise PELTs’ awareness of the sociolinguistic realities of English highlighted by these studies (Chen et al., 2023). However, recognizing the diversity of English does not guarantee accepting nonnative Englishes (Jenkins et al., 2018); studies show that many participants, though aware of English diversity, still held a deficit view of nonnative Englishes (e.g., Dewey & Pineda, 2020; Lowe, 2026). Informed by these findings, this study defines GE awareness as encompassing not only recognition of English diversity, but also acknowledgement of the legitimacy of nonnative Englishes, especially those historically marginalized or perceived as substandard or inferior.

However, GE awareness primarily addresses hierarchies among Englishes, with less attention paid to language-based inequalities among English users that native speakerism also engenders (Kubota et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2026; Tupas, 2020). Addressing this gap is central, as “advocating linguistic rights and diversity only is not sufficient to diminish human inequality” (Kubota et al., 2022, p. 294). Among English users, one of the most pervasive inequalities is driven by and manifested as accentism. Accentism is both an ideology and a practice. As an ideology, it is anchored in native speakerism, though entangled with other ideologies such as racism and sexism in certain contexts (Dovchin, 2025). In practice, it manifests both as negative perceptions of individuals with non-standard, particularly nonnative accents (Dragojevic et al., 2021; Fuertes et al., 2012), and as covert or overt discriminatory acts against them (Dryden & Dovchin, 2024; Orelus, 2023). Notably, discriminating against individuals with non-standard or nonnative accents entails simultaneous favoritism toward those with standard or native accents (Dryden et al., 2025; Piller, 2016). Due to the influence of native speakerism that upholds the acquisition of native speaker accents as the ultimate goal (Liu & Li, 2019), such accent-based inequalities are particularly acute in ELT. For instance, teachers with a native or native-like accent are often perceived and treated more favorably (Chantajinda, 2026; Hiratsuka, 2024), a pattern also evident among students (Liu, 2025; Huang & Hashim, 2022). Given the subtlety and pernicious effects of accentism, anti-accentism awareness, first, entails a recognition of the discriminatory nature of accent-based perceptions and behaviors. More crucially, it entails an ethical awakening to such practices, and a moral commitment to addressing them.

If GE awareness addresses hierarchies among English varieties, anti-accentism awareness addresses the inequalities among English users that this hierarchy engenders. The two are not distinct but integrated tools against native speakerism. GE awareness provides a cognitive and even affective foundation for accepting nonnative Englishes, whereas anti-accentism awareness supplies an awakening to accent-based inequalities among English users and a moral commitment to addressing this issue. Crucially, GE awareness without ethical drive may not translate into pedagogical practices; anti-accentism awareness without GE awareness may fail to explain why diversity matters. Therefore, cultivating both forms of awareness among PELTs is essential to inspire them to enact GE-oriented pedagogy in their future teaching.

Pedagogical interventions with PELTs in the Global South

Despite the urgency of raising PELTs' GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness, pedagogical interventions with them remain underdeveloped (Rose et al., 2021). Those conducted in Global South settings, as in the Global North (e.g., Eslami et al., 2019; Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Hall et al., 2023), have largely focused on GE awareness.

Pedagogical interventions in the Global South have yielded a consistent finding: most participants developed a GE awareness and came to accept their own English. In Colombia, for instance, Macias and Mosquera-Perez (2024) embedded a WE- and ELF-oriented module in an ELT pedagogy course for 22 undergraduate ELTE students. After the intervention, the vast majority developed a pluricentric view of English and came to appreciate their own nonnative English accents. A similar shift was reported by Boonsuk and Fang (2025), whose Thai participants came to acknowledge the diversity and complexity of English and became more open to Thai-accented English. In Turkey, Aslan & Altunkaya (2024) found that 19 of 26 participants no longer held a deficient view of their own English following a GE-informed course. These findings, though encouraging, leave open a question: whether GE awareness translates into GE-aligned teaching intention.

The answer to this question is far from straightforward. Aslan and Güler (2025) found that a GE-oriented course, combined with a study abroad program, inspired an intention to implement GE-oriented pedagogy among most of their Turkish participants. By contrast, Christou, Thomas, and McKinley's (2024) study revealed a striking paradox. Although conducted in the UK, this study involved 75 Chinese PELTs attending a UK-based MA TESOL program that included courses on GE and multilingualism. While participants broadly endorsed EIL principles, most expressed that after returning to China, they would prioritize standardized English in teaching, citing examinations, teaching materials, and student preferences in China's native-speakerist environment. The contrast between these two studies suggests that GE awareness alone may not translate into GE-aligned teaching intention automatically. This underscores the need to explore under what conditions GE awareness is likely to translate into GE-oriented teaching intention.

While the pedagogical interventions reviewed above have touched on accent issues, their attention has been confined to participants' affective shifts regarding their own nonnative accents (e.g., Boonsuk & Fang, 2025). No intervention has specifically cultivated PELTs' anti-accentism awareness, especially their moral awakening to, and ethical commitment to addressing accent-based prejudice and discrimination. Among extant studies, Wang et al.'s (2025) research at a Sino-US university in China comes closest to this goal. Drawing on a 17-week WE course for MA TESOL students, they examined five Chinese participants' cognitive and emotional trajectories from victims and witnesses of accent-based discrimination to critics of self-marginalization. However, this study was centered on PELTs' identity negotiation and reconstruction, without examining whether such critical awareness might translate into intentions to address accent-based prejudice and discrimination in their future teaching.

Notably, although conducted at a Sino-US university, Wang et al.'s (2025) study revealed, through participants' retrospective accounts of their undergraduate experiences, the vitality of accentism in undergraduate ELTE programs at Chinese state-run universities. However, in these university settings, even GE awareness intervention studies remain scarce. The few that exist have involved undergraduate students broadly (e.g., Fang & Ren, 2018; Lu & Fang, 2025), with no specific attention paid to ELTE students.

To address these gaps and the curricular constraints that preclude stand-alone interventions, this study implemented an embedded pedagogical intervention with undergraduate ELTE students at a state-run university in China. Unlike prior pedagogical interventions, it treats raising GE awareness

and anti-accentism awareness as equal and integrated instructional goals, aiming to motivate participants to enact GE-oriented pedagogy in their future teaching.

Methodology

Context and participants

This study was conducted within an undergraduate ELTE program at a state-run, teaching-oriented university in Central China. The program prepares English teachers for rural junior middle schools. As with all other undergraduate programs at this university, the ELTE program carries a heavy and highly structured curriculum. Despite the transformed landscape of English, the program continues to uphold RP or GA as the pronunciation standard, and still offers the three traditional course types—English language skills, foundational knowledge in linguistics and Anglo-American literature, and pedagogical knowledge and skills—without offering any course on GE or cultural politics in ELT. Due to the curricular constraint that precludes stand-alone intervention courses, this intervention was embedded in *English Academic Writing and Research Methods*, a 17-week compulsory course for third-year ELTE students, taught by the author. The intervention was conducted during the first 10 weeks of this course.

A total of 97 students (86 female and 11 male), all Chinese nationals aged between 20 and 22, attended this course in the spring semester of 2025. They were taught in their respective administrative classes. The course met once a week, with each session lasting two class hours. At the end of the course, students were invited to write a reflection on their learning experiences in the course. Of the 97 students, 52 (48 female and 4 male) submitted a reflection. Of the 52 reflections, 40 were anonymous; the remaining 12 provided their names and expressed willingness to participate in follow-up semi-structured interviews. When the interviews were conducted one month later, four of the 12 volunteers withdrew because they had started their part-time jobs during the summer vacation. Ultimately, eight (6 female and 2 male) participated in the interviews.

The pedagogical intervention

The intervention involved guiding students to read and discuss six research articles: four on GE and two on accentism. The four GE articles included: (1) Dhami and Prabjandee (2022), exploring TESOL graduate students' perceptions of GE in Nepal; (2) Christou, Thomas, and McKinley (2024), examining beliefs about EIL among Chinese PELTs attending an MA TESOL program in the UK; (3) Boonsuk, Wasoh, and Ambele (2023), investigating Thai in-service teachers' attitudes toward both GE and its incorporation in Thai higher education; and (4) Boonsuk and Fang (2025), examining the impact of a curricular innovation on Thai PELTs' GE awareness and their attitudes toward implementing GE-oriented pedagogy. These articles were selected to familiarize participants with concepts about GE and GE-aligned pedagogy, inspire among them a GE awareness, and make them recognize the need to transition ELT from the native-speakerist model to one aligned with the current realities of English.

The two accentism articles were Dryden and Dovchin (2024) and Tarrayo, Srimalee, and Bamroongkit (2025). The former explored female nonnative English-speaking immigrants' experiences of accent-based discrimination perpetuated by NESs in Australia; the latter examined Thai employees' experiences of accent-based discrimination inflicted by both NESs and Thai colleagues in Thai workplaces. These two articles were chosen to demonstrate that accentism exists in various social settings, not merely in ELT, and that it is perpetuated not only by NESs against NNESs but also among NNESs themselves. It aimed to broaden students' understanding of accent-based inequality and strengthen their moral commitment to addressing this issue.

The four GE articles were addressed during the first six weeks of the 10-week intervention, and the two accentism articles were addressed in the remaining four. Before each class, students read these articles in groups with the aid of AI-powered tools. During class, they participated in both teacher-led and student-led discussions. In addition to examining the research methods and writing skills exemplified in these articles, classroom discussions focused on key concepts such as native speakerism, Standard English, accentism, GE, alongside their implications for ELT. At the same time, students were encouraged to reflect on both their perceptions of diverse Englishes and their accent-based experiences, as victimizers, victims and/or witness. As part of their regular coursework, students were required to write a critique of four of the six articles, evaluating their designs, findings, and implications for future ELT practice.

Data collection and analysis

Data were gathered from two sources: structured written reflections collected at the end of the course, and semi-structured interviews conducted one month later. To guide students' written reflections, the author provided a set of prompts. While some items were designed to solicit students' feedback on course delivery, the core prompts were intended to capture their views on diverse Englishes, their understanding of accent-based prejudice and discrimination, and their intended approaches for future teaching, both before taking the course and after completing it. Students were allowed to write reflections in Chinese so that they could express themselves in depth. Of the 97 students attending the course, 52 submitted reflections.

Eight of the 52 students participated in follow-up semi-structured interviews. During the interviews, they were encouraged to elaborate on their written reflections and to share additional experiences related to diverse Englishes, English accents, and their intended future ELT approaches. The interviews, also conducted in Chinese, took place online on a one-to-one basis, as the students were off campus for the summer vacation at that time of interview. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes and were audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Qualitative content analysis was employed to analyze the data due to this method's suitability for addressing research questions of a descriptive nature and its capability for systematic categorization of qualitative data and quantification of identified patterns across cases (Schreier, 2012). Prior to analysis, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. After that, both the transcripts and the written reflections were translated into English by the author, validated by a colleague specializing in Chinese-English translation.

The analysis proceeded through three phases, combining deductive (top-down) and inductive (bottom-up) approaches. In the first, deductive phase, data were coded according to the main categories aligned with research questions. In the second, inductive phase, data within each main category were further coded into sub-categories. For instance, the reflection of SR-34 categorized into the main category (i.e., perceptions of diverse Englishes) was divided into three subcategories: "I now realize that there is no single standard for the English language (coded as *critical awareness of Standard English*). English is made up of many different regional and other varieties (coded as *awareness of English diversity*). Therefore, we need to respect and acknowledge all of them (coded as *acceptance of nonnative Englishes*)."

The phase also involved revisiting initial subcategory and even main category assignments, and reclassifying data. For instance, SI-1's account of using her own nonnative accent in a classroom presentation and receiving a positive comment on her English was initially coded under the main category of *understanding of accent-based perceptions and behaviors*, but was reclassified under "*perceptions of diverse Englishes*" after contextual analysis and member checking. In addition, participants were counted by subcategory: each participant was counted once for a subcategory if at least one meaning unit in their reflections fell into it. The same participant could thus appear in the frequency counts of multiple subcategories, reflecting ideological changes on

different dimensions within a single individual. In the final phase, all categories and sub-categories were compared and organized into a coherent network.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, the author coded the data iteratively. The code frame was developed with the help of a colleague familiar with qualitative research methods and the topic of this study. Specifically, after analyzing the first 10 written reflections and one interview transcript, this colleague was invited to review the coding and analytic results to refine the frame. Meanwhile, member check was conducted with the interviewees when ambiguous expressions arose in the data.

Ethical considerations and researcher positionality

The university where this study was conducted has an ethics committee that primarily reviews medical research, and studies of this educational nature involving adult students do not fall into its purview. However, permission for this study was obtained from the associate dean of the School of Foreign Languages and the head of the English Department. Students were explicitly informed that participation was entirely voluntary and would not affect their course grades, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also assured that data would be used solely for research purposes and teaching improvement. To further reduce their concerns, they were allowed to submit their written reflections anonymously. In reporting findings participants were anonymized, with “SR-1” denoting the first student whose written reflection was analyzed, and “SI-1” referring to the first student whose interview was analyzed.

The author served as both the researcher and the course instructor. This dual role may have introduced social desirability effects in students’ responses and generated researcher expectancy regarding intervention outcomes. To mitigate social desirability effects, the author reminded students, prior to collecting data, that candid responses were essential to the integrity of the research. To minimize bias arising from researcher expectancy, the author engaged in ongoing reflection during data analysis, particularly when interpreting ambiguous cases, to ensure that interpretations accurately represented participants’ meanings rather than researcher expectations.

Findings

Perceptions of diverse Englishes

Data revealed a marked difference between participants’ reported pre-course and post-course perceptions of diverse Englishes. All 52 participants admitted to having taken a native-speakerist stance prior to this course. They equated Standard English with native Englishes, particularly Anglo-American English, which they described as “authentic” (SR-25), “standard” (SR-13), “elegant” (SR-20) or “professional” (SI-4), typical adjectives used to depict native Englishes.

After the course, 50 of the 52 participants reported a shift from a monocentric view of English toward a pluricentric appreciation of its global diversity. In particular, they developed a markedly sophisticated understanding of what they had previously taken for granted as “Standard English”. They came to see that their previous beliefs were rooted in their schooling, where listening materials, exams, and teacher feedback consistently privileged RP or GA. As SI-4 noted, “we have been taught British and American English since starting to learn English.” Crucially, they recognized Standard English as a social construct.

Standard English is not a natural given, but something constructed socially. Whoever holds the power gets to decide whose standard is taken as the authority ... Now I understand that the “standard” is humanly constructed and entangled with power and colonial history. (SR-30)

This critical understanding of “Standard English” demonstrates a reorientation in students’ language ideologies, and opens the door for a wider acceptance of nonnative Englishes, which they had previously considered substandard or inferior. For most participants after the course, English is no longer a single entity, but “a collection of diverse varieties, each embedded in its own history, culture, and social background, and each possessing its own value” (SR-34). Each variety, as they articulated, deserved “respect and acknowledgement” (SR-4). One student drew an analogy to Chinese dialects to articulate this newfound understanding:

Just as different regions in China have their own dialects, English has evolved into different varieties across the globe. These varieties, such as Singaporean English and Indian English, are not incorrect English; they are legitimate forms of expression rooted in their own cultural contexts. (SR-36)

These cognitive shifts from the native-speakerist view of the English language led most participants to reconsider their previous relationship with English accents. All participants reported having equated success in learning English with the acquisition of an accent similar to RP or GA before the course. Most of them expressed that they had constantly tried to “imitate native accents” (e.g., SI-1, SI-3, SR-25, and SR-29) and had been often “afraid of speaking up in class due to their Chinese accent” (SR-45). Evidently, the pursuit of RP or GA was not merely a learning goal, but also an emotional burden, specifically, a fear of being judged and found deficient. As a student narrated:

Before taking this course, I had been wishing that I could have a genuine British or American accent, and this, I believed, could help me to communicate with others at ease. I had thought that only British and American accents are the best, so I deliberately imitated these accents. Often I was afraid of speaking in English, because I was afraid that my accent was not good. (SR-2)

After the course, however, 35 of the 52 participants reported a cognitive shift: they no longer viewed their own accents as inferior. Many began to see the naturalness of having a foreign accent when speaking another language. Some drew on an analogy between Chinese English accents and the accents of nonnative Chinese speakers to legitimize their own English accents.

When foreigners learn Chinese, they inevitably speak with a foreign accent. This is the same natural phenomenon as Chinese people speaking English with a Chinese accent. Accent is an objective feature resulting from mother tongue transfer. There is no such thing as having an accent versus not having one; there are only differences. (SR-3)

Beyond recognizing the inevitability of having a foreign accent for nonnative speakers, most participants reported having come to see that all accents of English are equal linguistically, and many expressed they had begun to regard their accents as part of their identity (e.g., SR-18, SR-19, and SR-25). Some even no longer regarded their own accents as a problem for communication (e.g., SR-42, SI-4), and began to “pursue clarity of pronunciation, not blindly chasing a standard accent” (SR-29). These self-articulated shifts were vividly captured by a classroom episode recounted by one interviewee (SI-1), who had long been ashamed of her Chinese English accent.

During a classroom presentation, I just used my own accent. When I finished, a classmate said, “Your English has improved.” But the thing is, it hadn’t. I just wasn’t afraid of speaking anymore. What improved was my mindset, not my pronunciation. (SI-1)

SI-1's linguistic competence in English had not changed; what had changed was her relationship with her own accent. This suggests that embracing one's own accent, free from the fear of being judged, can transform not only how one speaks, but also how one is perceived, even in terms of English proficiency. The perceived "improvement" by her classmate might be attributed to that SI-1's confidence in her own accent improved her fluency and allowed her to be heard without the filter of anxiety. This case illustrates, in practice, the importance of shifting from accent shame to accent confidence at the individual level.

Understanding of accent-based perceptions and behaviors

A notable difference was also observed between participants' reported pre-course and post-course understandings of accent-based perceptions of and behaviors toward others. All 52 participants reported having habitually perceived others and behaved toward them based on their accents before the course. Specifically, they admired those speaking with a British or American accent, viewing them as superior and more competent, those with a strong Chinese accent were regarded as "inferior" or "less intelligent" (e.g., SR-23, SR-28, and SI-5). When hearing a classmate speaking English with a strong Chinese accent, they "used to not listen to" (SR-10) and/or often "couldn't help laughing" (SI-6). As SI-2 narrated, "I laughed... and I saw my classmates laughed too". Some even "mocked the accent repeatedly after returning to the dormitory" (SI-7).

The shared nature of these accent-based reactions among students within the classroom and beyond reveals the prevalence and normalization of such practices. It suggests that accentism had become a socially shared norm, transcending individual bias. This phenomenon is further illuminated by SI-4's account of a group presentation.

Once in a class, we were required to do group presentations. The grade for the presentations depended, to a great extent, on the presenters' accents. Our group drew lots to decide who would present, and it happened that we drew a classmate whose pronunciation was not [considered] good. She offered to let another go on stage. All other group members agreed tacitly, all thinking that her presentation would lower the group's scores ... [as] our teachers often grade students' presentations based on their accents. (SI-4)

The student's willingness to step aside, alongside the group's tacit agreement, demonstrates the depth of internalization of native speakerism. For them, a person with an accent considered "not good" was unfit for speaking in public. That the student voluntarily withdrew suggests that even those who were discriminated against accepted such accentist practices—a compelling example of self-discrimination among NNEs (Molina, 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Moreover, their statement about their teachers' benchmark for scoring presentations points to an implicit native-speakerist orientation of the ELTE program where this study was conducted.

Forty-five of the 52 participants reported that after the course, they came to see such accent-based perceptions of and behaviors toward others as discriminatory, and 28 of the 45 condemned such practices as immoral. In their written reflections, they frequently used words such as "discrimination", "prejudice", and "microaggression" to define such accent-based practices (e.g., SR-1, SR-17, and SR-39). During the interviews, six participants used the word "bullying" to describe their past accent-based behaviors. More notably, SI-4 defined such practices as "aesthetic bullying".

There is nothing wrong with many people liking British or American accent, but they should not equate sounding so-called good with correctness, thereby denigrating other accents ... We should be cautious of this aesthetic bullying, and should not let our personal preference influence how we evaluate others' speaking competence. (SI-4)

Framing accent-based perceptions of and behaviors toward others as “aesthetic bullying” captures a nuanced form of moral awakening to accentism. It identifies a key mechanism through which accent-based prejudice and discrimination are articulated or even justified in the name of aesthetics. The moral awakening to accentism also involved many participants condemning their past accent-based practices as “ridiculous” (SR-39), “ignorant” (SI-8) and “a shame” (SR-2).

The awareness of, and moral awakening to, accent-based perceptions and behaviors as a form of discrimination translated into reported behavioral changes for many participants. Specifically, of the 45 participants who deemed accent-based perceptions and behaviors as discriminatory after the course, 32 stated that they no longer judged and treated others based on their accents. As SR-25 stated, “I have abandoned accentist behaviors, not judging others based on accents any more, both intentionally and unintentionally”. The transformation was vividly captured in the self-report of SR-10.

Before this course ... when a classmate with a strong Chinese accent spoke, I often paid no attention, lowering my head, playing with fingers, and avoiding eye contact... but now these behaviors have been rectified with my changed mindset. I have gradually looked at them objectively, paying attention to what they say. (SR-10)

In addition, many participants reported having shown no concern about others’ comments on their accents. For instance, when asked during the interviews how they would respond now if somebody commented, “You have a Chinese English accent”. All interviewees replied that they would not care anymore. Further, they would think, “That person is narrow in mind and does not know about the realities of English today” (SI-6). Such replies suggest a deeper ideological shift among them, from fear of being judged to active confrontation and even critique of accentism.

Some participants even began to deploy the concept of accentism that they learned in class as a tool to defend themselves from or challenge accentist practices beyond the classroom. SI-2 recounted an incident in which his roommate used the concept to push back against accentism.

I have a roommate from Sichuan [a province in southwestern China]. We used to make fun of this roommate for his Sichuan accent embedded in his Putonghua [standardized Chinese] and English. After learning the concept of accentism, when we made fun of his accent again, he would respond immediately, “Look, this is accentism.” (SI-2)

This story illustrates how the concept of accentism, once learned, can be mobilized in real-life moments to name and challenge accentist practices. It also reveals that accentism resides not only in English, but also in other languages—in this case, the Chinese language. More broadly, it illuminates the typical operation of accentism, namely, through humor or banter.

Future ELT intentions

A parallel difference was found between participants’ reported pre-course and post-course intentions for their future teaching regarding diverse Englishes and accents. All 52 participants stated that prior to this course, they had planned to adopt a native-speakerist approach in their future teaching, taking British and American English as the model.

After the course, however, 51 of the 52 participants reported a shift from this teaching orientation, expressing that they would adopt an approach aligned with the realities of English today. They deemed it necessary or even urgent to bring diverse Englishes to students. As SR-36 stated, “I feel desperate to introduce Global Englishes to my students.” Even those who themselves still regarded British and American English as Standard English after the course, such as SI-8, found it necessary

to bring diverse Englishes to students. In terms of pronunciation, most participants stated that they would prioritize intelligibility over the mere pursuit of native speaker accents.

The objective of my future teaching is to move from [cultivating] imitators of native speakers to intelligibility, ensuring clarity in pronunciation rather than demanding accentless English. (SR-19)

This adjustment of teaching objective, according to many participants, would enhance students' confidence in speaking English (e.g., SI-2), cultivate in them an awareness of linguistic equality, and help them eliminate their tendencies to judge or treat others based on accents (e.g., SR-7, SR-12). Some participants (e.g., SI-2, SI-4, and SI-5) further elaborated this intention in terms of the ethical role of teachers and the goal of education. For instance,

As an English teacher, I have a duty to disrupt the entrenched myth of Standard English, to convey the concepts of linguistic equality, and to help eliminate students' accent-based discrimination ... I feel this is an essential part of education, and key to shaping students' character. (SI-5)

While directed toward students' development, these articulations suggest a transformation in participants' self-perceived role from traditional English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers toward what Hiratsuka (2024) termed "teachers of Global Englishes". This transformation in pedagogical vision also entails an extension of the role of teachers beyond teaching language skills to encompass an ethical obligation to cultivate linguistic justice.

Beyond this broad pedagogical vision, many participants proposed concrete teaching strategies. In addition to adjusting assessment criteria for spoken English by paying more attention to speech content rather than accent (e.g., SR-19, SR-34, and SI-4), another frequently mentioned strategy was to incorporate audio and video clips featuring diverse English accents. Regarding listening warm-up activities, SI-5, for instance, planned to use video clips of speakers from different countries reading the same sentences, telling students that "these varied accents are normal, and they need to get used to these accents". Some others (e.g., SR-23, SI-7) noted that they would create authentic GE communication opportunities for their students via strategies such as inviting speakers of different Englishes to the classroom.

Although planning to enact a GE-oriented approach, participants anticipated challenges from various sources. One challenge, identified by all interviewees, came from various ELT stakeholders—including students, parents, school leaders or colleagues—who might equate "good English" with native-like pronunciation. When facing challenges, especially from school leaders or senior colleagues, most participants stated that they would draw on GE and accentism concepts to persuade these stakeholders (e.g., SI-3, SI-4). Even if persuasion failed, they stated that they would still insist on a GE-oriented approach.

Even if my open class is questioned [by school leaders and senior colleagues] because it conflicts with the mainstream teaching philosophy at my school, I will not compromise ... I must let students see the broader world beyond standardized English. (SI-7)

Four interviewees anticipated another challenge: the scarcity of teaching materials featuring diverse English accents, a typical obstacle to the implementation of GE-aligned pedagogy (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Marlina, 2025). SI-5, who was undertaking part-time teaching at a junior middle school while taking this course, described this challenge based on her own experience.

Almost all mainstream textbooks and their accompanying listening materials adopt a British or American accent. It is hard to find teaching materials that feature diverse English accents from multiple countries. Every time I search for relevant videos for teaching, it takes me a lot of time, and the cost of lesson preparation is very high. (SI-5)

Beyond documenting this practical constraint, SI-5's account is more telling in another aspect: she had already begun applying what she learned in this course to her teaching.

The third, and most complicated challenge anticipated by all interviewees was the current native-speakerist examination system with regard to language norms. Faced with this anticipated challenge, most interviewees stated they would have to modify their intended teaching approach. For instance,

I will first teach standardized phonetics and fundamental pronunciation [i.e., RP or GA]. After confirming that students can convey information with clear pronunciation, I will proceed to expand diverse English accents. (SI-3)

SI-3's intended practice—starting with standard accents, and then expanding to incorporate other accents—was a strategic, context-sensitive accommodation to deal with the examination demand. Although it places RP or GA at the starting point, this intended practice is not a retreat to the native-speakerist teaching approach, but a way for teachers to exercise agency to create a third space to balance the goal of teaching GE with the institutional constraints.

Discussion and implications for ELTE practice

Findings presented in the preceding section indicate a marked difference between participants' reported pre-course and post-course ideological orientations, evident across the three interconnected dimensions: perceptions of diverse Englishes, understandings of accent-based perceptions and behaviors, and future ELT intentions.

Regarding diverse Englishes, almost all participants (50/52) reported a departure from their pre-course native-speakerist stance, recognizing Standard English as a social construct implicated in power relations and colonial history, rather than a natural given. They described English not as a single entity, but as a collection of diverse, equally legitimate varieties. This articulated cognitive change was accompanied by a reported affective transformation with regard to their own English accents. The vast majority of the participants reported a shift from shame to self-acceptance, and in some cases, to self-confidence. Some even began to pursue intelligibility rather than nativeness. These findings align with those of previous pedagogical interventions with PELTs in other Global South contexts (e.g., Aslan & Altunkaya, 2024; Macias & Mosquera-Perez, 2024), suggesting the potential of GE knowledge in contributing to an ideological shift with regard to diverse Englishes, particularly the legitimacy of nonnative Englishes.

As for accentism, the vast majority of the participants (45/52) reported that they had come to see accent-based perceptions of and behaviors toward others as discriminatory after the course, and many regarded such practices as immoral. They expressed regret for their previous accentist practices, and some even reported having discontinued such behaviors. These findings on participants as victimizers extend those of the two accentism readings used in this study (Dryden & Dovchin, 2024; Tarrayo et al., 2025) and other accentism literature (e.g., Wang et al., 2025), both of which center on victims of accentism. Notably, some interviewees framed such accent-based perceptions and behaviors as “bullying” or “aesthetic bullying”. Beyond moral awakening, this framing implies that these participants positioned accent-based discrimination alongside other

forms of discrimination, and recognized its operation through aesthetic discourse, a key mechanism of accentism production (Lee & Jenks, 2019; Ramjattan, 2015).

In terms of future ELT intentions, 51 of the 52 participants expressed a shift from their previous native-speakerist approach after the course, intending instead to enact a GE-oriented approach. They considered it necessary to bring diverse Englishes to their students, and regarded it as an obligation to eliminate accentism through their teaching. Notably, one participant reported having begun to implement GE-aligned pedagogy in her part-time teaching after attending this intervention for several weeks. Despite anticipated challenges—ideological resistance from various stakeholders such as school leaders and senior colleagues, and infrastructural constraints from teaching materials and examinations—they remained committed to implementing GE-aligned pedagogy in their future teaching. These findings form a stark contrast to those of Christou et al. (2024), most of whose Chinese ELTE student participants intended to teach standardized English due to the native-speakerist environment in China, despite their awareness of EIL. This suggests that the integration of GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness may inform PELTs' commitment to GE-aligned pedagogy, particularly in contexts such as China where native speakerism prevails.

What emerges from these findings is a pattern that resonates with Mezirow's (2006) transformative learning theory, with participants' reported reorientation in their future ELT intentions appearing to involve both GE awareness and moral awakening to accentism. According to participants' accounts, GE readings fostered an understanding of Standard English as a social construct and an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of diverse Englishes, while anti-accentism readings cultivated an awareness of inequalities among English users; both forms of awareness worked in tandem, coinciding with a GE-aligned teaching intention. In other words, GE awareness informed participants of the necessity of teaching in line with GE, and anti-accentism awareness provided them with a moral commitment to this pedagogical model. This dual-focused intervention design offers an empirical engagement with Kubota et al.'s call (2022) for moving beyond language hierarchy to illuminating language-user inequality in addressing linguistic injustice. In particular, the findings point to anti-accentism awareness as a significant dimension in the reorientation of ELT toward a GE-aligned approach.

It is important to note that data for this study were only from 52 of the 97 students enrolled in the course, which may limit the representativeness of the findings. However, the high proportions of participants who reported ideological reorientation—50/52 regarding diverse Englishes, 45/52 on accent-based perceptions and behaviors, and 51/52 on future ELT intentions—point to the value of this dual-focused intervention design. Equally notable is participants' frequent use of terms, such as “discrimination”, “microaggression”, and “accentism”, in their written reflections and interviews. This suggests the need to distinguish between learning to articulate a critical discourse and undergoing a deep ideological change. However, the richness and specificity of their accounts suggest that the reported ideological shifts were not superficial.

Despite these caveats, findings of this study carry several implications for ELTE education in contexts similar to where this study was conducted. First, to prepare PELTs to enact a GE-aligned approach in their future teaching, ELTE programs should raise PELTs' GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness. In raising GE awareness, curricula should include materials and activities that help PELTs recognize Standard English as a social construct. This recognition, as suggested by this study, is an important step toward demystifying the perceived superiority of native Englishes. In raising anti-accentism awareness, curricula should demystify the discourses, particularly the aesthetic discourse that privileges native accents. Special attention should be paid to the moral aspect of accent-based perceptions of and behaviors toward others, helping PELTs recognize such practices as discriminatory and as perpetuating inequalities among users of English.

Second, given that program-level reformation may not be feasible in the immediate future due to the native-speakerist ideological and material constraints, an embedded intervention approach remains an option. Teacher educators who are committed to linguistic justice may have to implement interventions in their own classrooms. Even if conditions permit a stand-alone course, embedded interventions in other courses are still needed, because a single course alone cannot solve native speakerism, a systemic issue within ELT. In addition, these teacher educators are encouraged to form a community of practice that coordinates their efforts to promote GE-aligned pedagogy (Baker et al., 2026). This initiative can help these teachers to solve concrete problems. For instance, they can work together to develop GE-aligned teaching materials, as current textbooks remain bound by and oriented to native speaker language norms (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026; Marlina, 2025). More importantly, the concerted efforts of this community can broaden its reach, potentially contributing to increased institutional recognition of the necessity to raise GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness.

Third, ELTE should help PELTs understand why they should enact a GE-aligned pedagogy, and more importantly, how to do so. As suggested by this study, the practical skills include adjusting spoken English assessment criteria to prioritize content over accent, and exposing students to diverse Englishes. One feasible way is to engage PELTs in hands-on tasks to develop such an assessment rubric or a lesson plan. Conditions permitting, teacher educators can ask PELTs to conduct a mock teaching following the lesson plan. Meanwhile, teacher educators should help PELTs recognize challenges to implementing a GE-aligned pedagogy. As suggested by this study, the challenges include ideological resistance from students, parents, school leaders and senior colleagues, infrastructural constraints arising from teaching materials, and institutional barriers posed by examinations. Thus, teacher educators should help PELTs develop strategies to navigate such challenges. In particular, they need to develop skills to create a space that balances GE-oriented goals and these constraints. Notably, this space does not mean a retreat but a principled strategy, as GE pedagogy is not a total substitution of, but a complement to conventional ELT pedagogies within the current ELT context (Lu & Buripakdi, 2022).

Finally, it is also essential to raise teacher educators' GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness. As SI-4 mentioned, "our teachers often grade students' presentations based on accents." A question arises: if teacher educators continue to follow the native-speakerist paradigm in teaching, how can they prepare PELTs to enact a GE-aligned pedagogy in their future teaching? This calls for teacher educator training programs to adjust objectives and content in line with the sociolinguistic realities of English today and the principles of linguistic social justice.

Conclusion

This study implemented a 10-week embedded pedagogical intervention with undergraduate ELTE students at a state-run university in Central China through reading and discussing GE and anti-accentism literature. Findings indicate a marked ideological reorientation among participants across three interconnected dimensions—cognitive, ethical, and intentional—as reported by the vast majority of the participants. Almost all participants reported a shift from a native-speakerist view of diverse Englishes toward an inclusive, egalitarian stance, and most reported a cognitive and moral awakening to accentism. Both forms of awareness were associated with the intention reported by almost all participants to enact a GE-aligned pedagogy in their future teaching. Taken together, these findings suggest the potential value of such dual-focused intervention for preparing future teachers to build a more just and ethical ELT ecology.

This study contributes to pedagogical intervention research by integrating GE awareness with anti-accentism awareness, rather than focusing on the former alone. Theoretically, the findings imply

that preparing PELTs to enact a GE-aligned pedagogy in their future teaching requires not only cognitive change but also ethical awakening. Practically, this study offers a replicable pathway for teacher educators to conduct embedded pedagogical interventions within contexts where highly structured curricula preclude stand-alone intervention courses. It also has implications for pedagogical practices to enhance PELTs' problem-solving skills in navigating challenges in enacting GE-aligned pedagogy, such as infrastructural hindrances from teaching materials, institutional barriers from examination systems, and ideological resistance from stakeholders such as school leaders and colleagues.

This study was conducted with PELTs at one university, relying on post-course self-reports from a single group of participants, without independently collected pre-course data or a comparison group. The participants were self-selected, and the author's dual role as teacher-researcher may have introduced social desirability effects despite efforts to minimize them. To further test the effects of this dual-focused intervention framework, future research might adopt a one-group pretest-posttest design or a pretest-posttest design with a comparison group. It could also extend this intervention to other comparable ELTE contexts through observations in the classroom and other settings to examine the consistency between PELTs' reported ideological shifts and their actual English learning and use, or through a longitudinal design that tracks PELTs into their internships and early-career teaching to explore the enactment of these shifts in actual teaching. Finally, the respective contributions of GE awareness and anti-accentism awareness within this intervention framework remain to be examined.

Note: Although I use terms such as *native Englishes*, *nonnative Englishes*, *native English speakers* (NESs), *nonnative English speakers* (NNESSs) in this article, I am aware of the limitations of their native-nonnative distinction, particularly in the context of Global Englishes. The use of these terms here follows convention in the literature and is not intended to reinforce native speakerism that this study seeks to challenge.

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