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Informal Exposure and Global Englishes Awareness: A Sequential Mixed-Methods Study of Vietnamese Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

English increasingly circulates across diverse linguistic contexts, yet little is known about how informal exposure relates to pre-service teachers' Global Englishes (GE) awareness. This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study examined survey data from 271 third- and fourth-year students across seven Vietnamese universities using Spearman correlations and Kruskal–Wallis tests; nine follow-up interviews were analysed thematically. Participants reported frequent exposure through digital media, employment, and intercultural communication, although British and American English remained dominant. Exposure correlated positively with acceptance of local English ($r_s = 0.524$), acceptance of other Englishes ($r_s = 0.384$), confidence in English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication ($r_s = 0.637$), ELF communication intention ($r_s = 0.567$), and willingness to incorporate Global Englishes Language Teaching ($r_s = 0.429$), but not with lower native-speakerism ($r_s = 0.015$). Profile comparisons showed the same pattern. Interviews indicated that interactive, socially embedded encounters strengthened communicative confidence and acceptance of variation, whereas textbooks, assessment, employment practices, and stakeholder expectations preserved the authority of British and American norms. These findings reveal bounded pluralism: informal exposure was linked more readily to communicative openness and pedagogical willingness than to transformed language ideology. Teacher education should therefore combine diverse encounters with critical reflection and practical support for GE-informed pedagogy.

Keywords: global Englishes; global Englishes language teaching; informal exposure; pre-service teachers; Vietnam

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Introduction

In language education, the shift from native-speaker-based norms toward understanding English as a diverse global communicative resource is reflected in Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT). GELT encourages teachers and learners to recognize linguistic diversity, develop ELF communication strategies, value multilingual identities, and question native-speaker norms (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). For pre-service English teachers, Global Englishes (GE) awareness is important because teacher cognition, including teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes, can shape how they understand language teaching and how they later make classroom decisions (Borg, 2015). In the context of GE, these beliefs may influence whether future teachers continue to prioritize native-speaker norms or adopt more GE-informed practices, such as exposing learners to diverse Englishes and valuing intelligibility in English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) communication (Aslan & Altinkaya, 2024; Deniz et al., 2020). To examine such awareness systematically, recent research has conceptualized GE awareness as a multidimensional construct comprising acceptance of one's local English (ALE), acceptance of other Englishes (AOE), native-speakerism (NS), confidence in ELF communication (CELF), ELF communication intention (ELFI), and willingness to incorporate GELT into teaching (WGT) (S. Lee et al., 2025).

There is evidence in previous research that knowledge of GE, ELF awareness, and openness to pluralistic pedagogies can be gained through formal teacher education programs (Aslan & Altinkaya, 2024; Deniz et al., 2020). Also, studies indicate that structured exposure to Englishes via WE classwork, materials, and ELF interactions mediated by artificial intelligence chatbots has increased awareness about diversity in English, confidence in intercultural communication, and WGT (Ates et al., 2015; Karakas, 2021; S. Lee et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, less effort has been put into studying informal exposure, which takes place outside the scope of formal instruction, regardless of whether it is deliberate or not (Karakas, 2021; S. Lee et al., 2025). Besides, while there are reports of positive attitudes toward ELF/WE among pre-service teachers, there is also information about their awareness being accompanied by confusion and lack of pedagogical competence together with Standard English/native-speaker orientation (Aslan & Altinkaya, 2024; S. Lee et al., 2025). Although Dang and Chinwonno (2025) examined Vietnamese pre-service teachers following a structured GELT intervention, their informal exposure outside formal training remains underexplored. These gaps matter because, without understanding how informal exposure relates differently to specific dimensions of GE awareness, teacher educators cannot determine whether experiences outside formal coursework promote communicative readiness, challenge native-speaker beliefs, or merely increase familiarity with English variation. Clarifying this relationship can advance understanding of how GE awareness develops and help teacher educators identify which informal experiences should be supported in preparing Vietnamese pre-service teachers for linguistically diverse classrooms.

To address these gaps, this study aims to (1) examine the extent to which and the ways in which Vietnamese pre-service English teachers are informally exposed to diverse Englishes, (2) investigate how differing levels of informal exposure to diverse Englishes relate to Vietnamese pre-service English teachers' Global Englishes awareness, and (3) explore how Vietnamese pre-service English teachers with differing levels of informal exposure explain the ways in which such exposure shapes their Global Englishes awareness.

RQ1. To what extent and in what ways are Vietnamese pre-service English teachers informally exposed to diverse Englishes?

RQ2. How do differing levels of informal exposure to diverse Englishes relate to Vietnamese pre-service English teachers' Global Englishes awareness?

RQ3. How do Vietnamese pre-service English teachers with differing levels of informal exposure explain the ways in which such exposure shapes their Global Englishes awareness?

Literature Review

GELT and Multidimensional GE Awareness

GELT, first proposed by Galloway (2011), encourages learners to reconsider what English is, who owns it, and how it is used across different contexts (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Its core principles include exposing learners to diverse English varieties, raising awareness of linguistic variation, developing ELF communication strategies, recognising multilingual resources, respecting cultural and linguistic identities, and questioning native-speaker-based hiring practices (Galloway & Rose, 2015). GELT does not seek to establish new standardised varieties, but it aims to help learners recognise the legitimacy of different Englishes, communicate across linguistic boundaries, challenge native-speaker norms, and develop confidence in their own use of English (Galloway, 2011; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Rose et al., 2021). Recent studies view Global Englishes awareness as a multidimensional construct. S. Lee et al. (2025) identify six dimensions:

- (1) **ALE** refers to the extent to which learners view their own accents and use of English as legitimate rather than inferior to native-speaker norms (Boonsuk & Fang, 2022; Fang & Ren, 2018);
- (2) **AOE** concerns their openness to unfamiliar English varieties, accents, and communication practices (Fang & Ren, 2018);
- (3) **NS** reflects the extent to which learners continue to regard native speakers and British or American English as linguistic and educational standards (Rose & Galloway, 2019; K. Sung, 2019);
- (4) **CELF** refers to learners' confidence in communicating with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds (Mu et al., 2023; K. Sung, 2019);
- (5) **ELFI** concerns their intention to take part in such interactions (Cao & Wei, 2019; Mu et al., 2023);
- (6) **WGT** extends GE awareness into teaching by examining future teachers' readiness to include diverse Englishes, ELF communication strategies, multilingual perspectives, and critical discussions of native-speaker norms in their classrooms (Chen et al., 2023; Galloway & Numajiri, 2020)

Informal Exposure and Its Role in Global Englishes Awareness

Informal exposure to English may be intentional or incidental and may occur through online or offline activities such as watching films, listening to music, gaming, reading online content, using social media, and interacting with other English users (Liu et al., 2025; Soyoo et al., 2023; Sundqvist, 2024; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Recent research has treated informal exposure as a varied construct shaped by its frequency, diversity, purpose, mode of participation, and social context rather than as a single uniform form of learning (J. S. Lee, 2019; Liu et al., 2025; Sundqvist, 2024).

From a GE perspective, research on informal exposure has also found associations with more positive perceptions of English varieties and stronger cross-cultural communication strategies (J. S. Lee & Dražati, 2019), as well as broader perceptions of English as an international language (EIL) (J. S. Lee, 2020). Among pre-service teachers, receptive and productive online informal exposure have been linked to greater acceptance of English varieties and stronger openness to using EIL materials in future teaching (J. S. Lee et al., 2024).

However, greater exposure does not necessarily lead to stronger GE awareness across all dimensions. Informal experiences differ in the types of English learners encounter and their level of engagement with linguistic diversity (J. S. Lee, 2019; Sundqvist, 2024). More importantly, developing different dimensions of GE awareness may require different forms of experiential, communicative, pedagogical, or ideological change. This raises the question of whether and how informal exposure relates differently to each of the six dimensions.

Theoretical Mechanisms Linking Informal Exposure to Global Englishes Awareness

Three mechanisms may explain the relationship between informal exposure and GE awareness: familiarisation with linguistic variation, communicative development through interaction, and the pedagogical reinterpretation of experience.

First, exposure to intelligible speakers with different accents and linguistic features may normalise variation and make learners less likely to view it solely as a deficiency, supporting ALE and AOE (Boonsuk & Fang, 2022; Fang, 2016; Fang & Ren, 2018). Repeated exposure may also make accented speech easier to process and recognise as a valid communicative resource (Bradlow & Bent, 2008; Clarke & Garrett, 2004).

Second, interactive exposure may be particularly relevant to CELF and ELFI. Multilingual communication often requires accommodation, clarification, repair, and meaning negotiation. Successful interactions can serve as mastery experiences that strengthen communicative self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This confidence may reduce uncertainty and encourage future multilingual interaction, providing a pathway from experience to ELFI (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Third, the link with WGT is less direct because learners must reinterpret their experiences from a future teacher's perspective. Research suggests that experience shapes pedagogical beliefs through reflection and conceptualisation (Borg, 2003; Kolb, 1984). Informal exposure may therefore increase openness to GELT when learners can connect their experiences with pedagogical knowledge and critical reflection (Capraro & Zhao, 2026; Sifakis, 2019; Sifakis & Kordia, 2025).

Native-speakerism, however, may not decline through exposure alone. Informal contact may familiarise learners with diverse Englishes while reinforcing dominant native-speaker models. Funada (2025), for example, found that contact was associated with both GELT and “traditional” ELT preferences, showing that pluralistic and native-oriented attitudes can coexist. Native-oriented textbooks and educational environments may reinforce these norms further. Thus, informal exposure may support communicative flexibility more readily than ideological change when beliefs about correctness, authority, prestige, and professional legitimacy remain institutionally reinforced (Holliday, 2006; Kiczkowski & Lowe, 2024; Özkaynak & Sayer, 2026).

Previous Studies and Gaps

Much of the evidence comes from formal courses, structured interventions, or teacher-education activities rather than naturally occurring informal exposure. Curran and Chern (2017) found that Taiwanese English majors and teaching interns valued native-like proficiency. Similarly, K. Sung

(2019) reported that Korean elementary pre-service teachers recognised the value of diverse Englishes but still preferred Standard English as the instructional model. Acceptance of linguistic diversity, therefore, does not necessarily entail rejecting native-speaker norms or adopting GE-oriented pedagogy.

To address this tension, teacher-education interventions have combined exposure with explicit reflection. Ates et al. (2015) found that integrating World Englishes into undergraduate teacher education increased tolerance of English varieties. Deniz et al. (2020) reported that an ELF-aware course encouraged Turkish pre-service teachers to reconsider Standard English, intelligibility, language ownership, and native-speaker authority. Aslan and Altunkaya (2024) also found that a GE-oriented course promoted more pluralistic views, although some native-speakerist and racialised beliefs remained. Thus, even structured interventions may not transform all dimensions of GE awareness equally.

Other studies have examined how awareness can inform teaching practice. Karakaş (2021) proposed using audio and video materials featuring native and non-native accents to challenge conventional listening norms and encourage reflection on teacher identity. İnal (2021) asked pre-service teachers to examine whose Englishes and cultures appeared in ELT materials. In Vietnam, Dang and Chinwonno's (2025) ten-week GELT intervention combined theoretical input, lesson planning, microteaching, and reflection. Participants developed positive views of GELT and demonstrated favourable teaching practices. These studies show the value of guided pedagogical engagement, but awareness alone may not ensure classroom implementation.

Technology-mediated interaction and practicum experience provide further evidence. S. Lee et al. (2025) found that presentation activities and AI-chatbot interaction were associated with development across six dimensions of GE awareness. Huttayavilaiphan and Injai (2025) reported that practicum experience increased Thai pre-service teachers' acceptance of English varieties and confidence in using and teaching English beyond native-like standards, although some still preferred native-speaker norms. Communicative and experiential development may therefore coexist with persistent ideological beliefs.

However, these experiences remained embedded in formal courses or teacher education. Little is known about naturally occurring informal exposure outside teacher-directed GE instruction, particularly among Vietnamese pre-service teachers. Research has not adequately examined how such exposure relates to different dimensions of GE awareness or why communicative dimensions may be more responsive than ideological or pedagogical ones. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the extent and forms of informal exposure among Vietnamese pre-service teachers, its associations with the six dimensions of GE awareness, and the experiential and ideological mechanisms that may explain these relationships.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The quantitative phase first assessed participants' informal exposure and its relationship with GE awareness. The qualitative phase then explored participants' explanations of how such exposure influenced their GE awareness.

Research Context and Participants

In the quantitative phase, 276 Vietnamese pre-service English teachers from seven universities were recruited for the survey. Criterion-based purposive sampling was used to select third- and fourth-year students who were completing a teaching practicum and had taken teaching-methods courses. These criteria were selected because students at this stage were expected to have developed greater pedagogical awareness and decision-making experience (Borg, 2015; Farrell, 2015).

A total of 276 responses were collected, of which 271 valid responses were retained for analysis (Appendix A). Prior to data collection, an a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 to determine the minimum sample size required for the planned comparisons among the three exposure groups (Faul et al., 2009). Because G*Power does not provide a direct procedure for the Kruskal–Wallis test, a fixed-effects one-way ANOVA was used as a planning approximation for the corresponding non-parametric comparison. Using a conventional medium effect size ($f = 0.25$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, statistical power of 0.80, and three groups, the analysis indicated a minimum required sample size of 159 participants (Cohen, 1988). The final sample of 271 valid participants therefore exceeded the minimum requirement.

In the qualitative phase, maximum-variation purposive sampling was used to capture differing experiences and explain contrasting quantitative patterns (Patton, 2015). Twelve participants were recruited from the 84 survey respondents who voluntarily provided contact information, with four participants representing each exposure profile: low, medium, and high. Guest et al. (2006) observed that thematic saturation often occurred within the first 12 interviews. Among them, three participants took part in pilot interviews used to refine the protocol and were coded as P1 (medium), P2 (low), and P3 (high). The remaining nine participants constituted the analytic interview sample and were coded by exposure profile: H1–H3, M1–M3, and L1–L3 (Table 1).

Table 1

Qualitative Participant Selection Based on Standardised Informal Exposure Scores

Participant code	Z-score	Year level	Gender
P1	-0.5046	Year 4	Male
P2	-1.0905	Year 3	Female
P3	1.1075	Year 3	Male
H1	1.8401	Year 4	Male
H2	1.1075	Year 4	Female
H3	1.1075	Year 3	Female
M1	0.6678	Year 3	Male
M2	-0.0648	Year 4	Female
M3	-0.6509	Year 4	Male
L1	-2.2627	Year 3	Female
L2	-1.6965	Year 4	Female
L3	-1.5306	Year 3	Female

Note. Participants with z-scores below -1 were classified as low exposure, those between -1 and +1 as medium exposure, and those above +1 as high exposure.

Instruments

In the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was adapted from S. Lee et al.'s (2025) Global Englishes awareness scale. The original scale was conceptually grounded in the GE literature and measured six constructs: ALE, AOE, NS, CELF, ELFI, WGT. To align the instrument with the focus of this study, eight additional items were developed to measure informal exposure to diverse Englishes. These items were conceptually informed by research on Extramural English, Informal Digital Learning of English, and out-of-class ELF communication (Godwin-Jones, 2018; J. S. Lee, 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016; C. C. M. Sung, 2018). Three PhD-qualified experts reviewed the items

for conceptual relevance, clarity, and contextual appropriateness. Cognitive interviews with five pre-service English teachers then examined item interpretation and comprehensibility, leading to minor wording refinements (Artino et al., 2014). The final questionnaire comprised 26 items across seven dimensions, rated on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was prepared in English and Vietnamese, following guidance on cross-linguistic survey research (Dörnyei, 2007). Because expert review and cognitive interviews had already provided the main content and response-process checks, the pilot test was used only as a usability check of wording, contextual appropriateness, and completion time.

In the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed around the six GE awareness constructs and the initial quantitative findings (Appendix C). The protocol included core questions addressing all six constructs and profile-specific prompts designed to explore participants' particular informal-exposure experiences.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in several steps. First, survey data were collected both online and in class to increase participation. The consent statement was placed at the beginning of the form, and participants completed the questionnaire only after agreeing to participate. At the end of the survey, participants could choose to provide contact information for a follow-up interview. This information was stored separately from the survey responses and linked only through anonymised response IDs.

Second, preliminary quantitative analyses were conducted to calculate exposure scores and classify participants into low-, medium-, and high-exposure profiles. Participants were then selected for the qualitative phase. Three pilot interviews were conducted to check whether the questions were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting sufficiently detailed responses; the interview guide was revised accordingly. Finally, nine analytic interviews, each lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, were conducted via Zoom.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS 27 and JASP (Version 0.97.0; JASP Team, 2026). First, the data were examined for missing values, response range, and outliers. All responses fell within the expected Likert scale range of 1 to 7, and there were no missing values in the dataset. Despite the presence of some outliers in the boxplots, the responses were retained because they were valid Likert scale responses.

Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.70 or above considered acceptable (DeVellis, 2017). All seven constructs showed acceptable to good reliability, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.731 to 0.899 (Appendix D). Because the informal exposure measure was newly developed, EFA was conducted using Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation. The data were suitable for factor analysis, as indicated by a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value of 0.811 and a statistically significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, $\chi^2(28) = 537.553$, $p < 0.001$. Using the eigenvalue-greater-than-one criterion, two related factors were retained, with initial eigenvalues of 3.312 and 1.053. Following extraction, the two-factor solution accounted for 41.14% of the variance. The first factor, labelled Exposure to Diverse Englishes, comprised EXP2, EXP3, EXP4, EXP5, and EXP8, while the second, labelled Informal English Media Engagement, comprised EXP1, EXP6, and EXP7. Pattern coefficients ranged from 0.336 to 0.833, with no cross-loadings of 0.30 or above. The two factors were positively correlated, $r = 0.590$, suggesting that they represented related and complementary dimensions of broader informal exposure. Given this relationship and the acceptable internal consistency of the full measure ($\alpha = 0.787$), the mean of the

eight items was retained as a broad composite exposure index for participant profiling and group comparisons.

For the six conceptually grounded GE awareness constructs, a correlated six-factor confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in JASP using diagonally weighted least squares estimation with robust standard errors. The model yielded $\chi^2(120) = 512.948$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.940, TLI = 0.923, RMSEA = 0.110, 90% CI [0.100, 0.120], and SRMR = 0.076. Relative to commonly used fit benchmarks, CFI and TLI indicated marginal fit, SRMR was acceptable, and RMSEA indicated poor fit; the overall measurement-model fit was therefore mixed and warrants caution (Hu & Bentler, 1999). All standardised factor loadings were statistically significant and ranged from 0.586 to 0.908, while average variance extracted values ranged from 0.551 to 0.798. In addition, heterotrait–monotrait ratios ranged from 0.071 to 0.833, remaining below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). These results provided evidence of convergent and discriminant validity, but the global-fit limitations should be considered when interpreting composite-score results. Composite scores were subsequently calculated for informal exposure and the six GE awareness dimensions.

The distributions of the composite variables were examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, which indicated significant departures from normality for all variables ($ps < 0.001$) (Appendix E). Therefore, to examine the relationship between informal exposure and GE awareness while preserving the full variability of the exposure measure, Spearman's rank-order correlations were conducted between the continuous exposure score and the six GE awareness dimensions. Bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) 95% confidence intervals were estimated in SPSS using 5,000 bootstrap samples and a fixed random seed of 2026.

For qualitative sampling and complementary profile-based comparisons, the continuous exposure scores were subsequently standardised and categorised into low ($z < -1$), medium ($-1 \leq z \leq +1$), and high ($z > +1$) profiles. These thresholds were statistically defined using the sample distribution and methodologically motivated by the need to identify contrasting cases for maximum-variation sampling rather than by an established theoretical classification. Kruskal–Wallis H tests were then conducted to compare the six GE awareness dimensions across the three exposure profiles. Where significant group differences were found, Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons were used to determine which profiles differed. This non-parametric approach was appropriate because the variables departed from normality and the comparisons involved three independent profiles (Field, 2024). Effect sizes for the Kruskal–Wallis tests were calculated in SPSS using eta-squared based on the H statistic, allowing for an assessment of the magnitude of observed differences beyond statistical significance. Following Tomczak and Tomczak (2014), values of approximately 0.01, 0.06, and 0.14 were interpreted as small, moderate, and large effects, respectively.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved familiarisation with the transcripts, initial coding, category development, and theme identification. The analysis focused on how participants with different exposure levels understood the role of informal exposure in shaping their beliefs, confidence, identity, and future teaching intentions.

To support trustworthiness, member checking and peer debriefing were employed in qualitative data analysis (Adler, 2022). The qualitative findings were linked with the quantitative findings in order to understand the relationships between different types and degrees of informal exposure and participants' Global Englishes awareness.

Results and Discussion

Informal Exposure as Uneven and Socially Situated

Participants reported relatively frequent informal exposure to diverse Englishes, with a mean score of 5.43 on a seven-point scale ($SD = 0.85$; Table 2). However, the distribution of standardised scores showed that most participants belonged to the medium-exposure group (69.7%), while 15.9% and 14.4% were classified as having low and high exposure, respectively (Table 3). The interviews supported these profiles but also showed that the groups differed in more than frequency.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Informal Exposure to Diverse Englishes

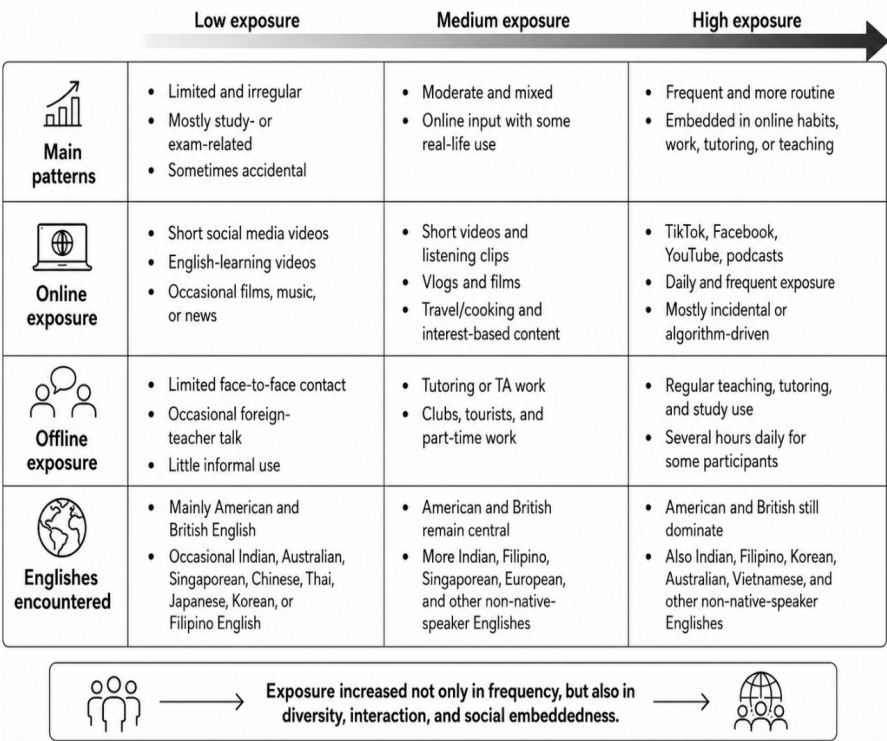
Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Informal Exposure	271	5.43	0.85	2.25	7.00

Table 3
Distribution of Participants Across Informal Exposure Profiles Based on Standardised Exposure Scores

Exposure level	n	%	Mean z-score
Low exposure	43	15.9	-1.66
Medium exposure	189	69.7	0.08
High exposure	39	14.4	1.42
Total	271	100.0	0.00

To further explain the quantitative exposure profiles presented in Tables 2 and 3, interview data were analysed to examine how participants in the low-, medium-, and high-exposure groups encountered diverse Englishes through informal learning. These pathways are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Informal Learning Pathways to Diverse Englishes Across Exposure-Frequency Groups



Note. Conceptual synthesis derived from the nine follow-up interviews

Although participants reported relatively frequent informal exposure to English, as shown in Figure 1, the interviews showed that this exposure varied in purpose, diversity, and level of interaction. This supports recent arguments that informal exposure to English should not be understood only in terms of frequency. Learners may use different platforms, engage in different activities, and encounter different speakers, producing varied learning experiences and outcomes (J. S. Lee, 2019; Liu et al., 2025; Sundqvist, 2024).

For low-exposure participants, English outside the classroom often remained an extension of formal learning. Their activities centred on examination preparation, pronunciation practice, vocabulary study, podcasts, and shadowing. These activities increased contact with English but continued to prioritise accuracy and native-oriented learning goals rather than social communication. L1 explained:

When I was younger, I mostly followed national-exam content, such as test-preparation videos and answer-key explanations. Now, I mainly follow pronunciation videos. I struggle a lot with pronunciation, so these clips have become my source for shadowing practice. (L1)

L2 showed a similar focus and believed that teachers’ pronunciation “*seriously affects*” their students. These accounts suggest that informal engagement was available to low-exposure participants, but it remained closely tied to school-valued skills.

Involvement in English activities was determined not solely by the availability of input but by interest, confidence, and knowledge of culture. For example, L1 did not like Western cultural productions. As a result, he sometimes had problems with understanding culture-related inputs and context when watching English movies: “*I saw a character laughing but I did not understand why he was laughing*.” The example shows that just being in contact with English-speaking content does not imply understanding of it yet. It is equally important for learners to find connections with culture and communication in the learned language.

Medium-exposure participants reported using both online information and direct contact with people via social networks, tutoring, part-time jobs, meeting tourists, and talking to speakers of other languages. M1 shared how working with Indian and Filipino customers helped him learn about the existence of English varieties beyond American and British versions. However, this experience did not help him master his listening comprehension skills:

The first time I encountered that variety, even though I recognized it as English, I could not understand it right away. Decoding the sounds and the intonations turned out to be a complex process. Even though the language used was fairly simple, I took a while to get the meaning behind it (M1).

Rather than preventing engagement, this difficulty made language variation more acknowledged, thus increasing acceptance of pronunciation variations. The mentioned episodes signal a shift toward English used as a practical means of communication rather than an object of study (C. C. M. Sung, 2018).

Participants in the high-exposure group indicated higher frequency of usage of English, as well as usage of English in social contexts; thus, English could function as a resource for their work, communication, and professional growth. Communicative engagement of this type could be particularly important since it gives individuals the chance to go through the process of intelligibility, accommodation, and communication itself. This reading is in line with the existing literature on the relation between digital engagement and attitude towards varieties of English (J. S. Lee et al., 2024).

The Selective Association between Informal Exposure and GE Awareness

Spearman’s rank-order correlations were first conducted using the continuous exposure score to preserve the full variability of the measure.

Table 4
Spearman’s Rank-Order Correlations Between Informal Exposure and GE Awareness

GE awareness dimension	<i>r_s</i>	95% BCa CI	<i>p</i>
Acceptance of Local English (ALE)	0.524	[0.425, 0.615]	< 0.001
Acceptance of Other Englishes (AOE)	0.384	[0.266, 0.491]	< 0.001
Native-Speakerism (NS_R)	0.015	[-0.117, 0.142]	0.808
Confidence in ELF Communication (CELF)	0.637	[0.559, 0.704]	< 0.001
ELF Communication Intention (ELFI)	0.567	[0.471, 0.651]	< 0.001
Willingness to Incorporate GELT (WGT)	0.429	[0.328, 0.519]	< 0.001

Note. N = 271. Confidence intervals are bias-corrected and accelerated and based on 5,000 bootstrap samples. Native-speakerism items were reverse-coded; therefore, higher NS_R scores represent lower native-speaker-oriented beliefs.

Informal exposure was positively associated with acceptance of local English, $r_s = 0.524$, 95% BCa CI [0.425, 0.615], $p < 0.001$; acceptance of other Englishes, $r_s = 0.384$, 95% BCa CI [0.266, 0.491], $p < 0.001$; confidence in ELF communication, $r_s = 0.637$, 95% BCa CI [0.559, 0.704], $p < 0.001$; ELF communication intention, $r_s = 0.567$, 95% BCa CI [0.471, 0.651], $p < 0.001$; and willingness to incorporate GELT, $r_s = 0.429$, 95% BCa CI [0.328, 0.519], $p < 0.001$. No statistically significant association was found between informal exposure and reverse-coded native-speakerism, $r_s = 0.015$, 95% BCa CI [-0.117, 0.142], $p = 0.808$. The strongest association was found for confidence in ELF communication, followed by ELF communication intention and acceptance of local English.

To complement the continuous-score analysis and examine the profiles used to structure the qualitative phase, Kruskal–Wallis tests were conducted across the low-, medium-, and high-exposure profiles. The profile-based analysis produced a pattern broadly consistent with the Spearman correlations: significant differences were found for acceptance of local English, acceptance of other Englishes, confidence in ELF communication, ELF communication intention, and willingness to incorporate GELT, but not for reverse-coded native-speakerism.

Table 5

Kruskal–Wallis Tests and Effect Sizes Across Exposure Profiles

GE awareness dimension	<i>H</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2_H	Magnitude
Acceptance of Local English (ALE)	58.692	2	< 0.001	0.212	Large
Acceptance of Other Englishes (AOE)	26.788	2	< 0.001	0.092	Moderate
Native-Speakerism (NS_R)	2.224	2	0.329	0.001	Negligible
Confidence in ELF Communication (CELF)	76.910	2	< 0.001	0.280	Large
ELF Communication Intention (ELFI)	61.248	2	< 0.001	0.221	Large
Willingness to Incorporate GELT (WGT)	35.953	2	< 0.001	0.127	Moderate

Note. $N = 271$. Effect sizes are reported as eta-squared based on the *H* statistic. Values of approximately 0.01, 0.06, and 0.14 indicate small, moderate, and large effects, respectively; values below 0.01 are considered negligible. Native-speakerism items were reverse-coded.

As shown in Table 5, significant differences were found across exposure profiles for acceptance of local English, $H(2) = 58.69$, $p < 0.001$; acceptance of other Englishes, $H(2) = 26.79$, $p < 0.001$; confidence in ELF communication, $H(2) = 76.91$, $p < 0.001$; ELF communication intention, $H(2) = 61.25$, $p < 0.001$; and willingness to incorporate GELT, $H(2) = 35.95$, $p < 0.001$. The effect sizes were large for acceptance of local English ($\eta^2_H = 0.212$), confidence in ELF communication ($\eta^2_H = 0.280$), and ELF communication intention ($\eta^2_H = 0.221$), and moderate for acceptance of other Englishes ($\eta^2_H = 0.092$) and willingness to incorporate GELT ($\eta^2_H = 0.127$). No significant difference was found for reverse-coded native-speakerism, $H(2) = 2.22$, $p = 0.329$, and its effect size was negligible ($\eta^2_H = 0.001$).

Table 6
Mean Ranks of GE Awareness Dimensions Across Exposure Profiles

Dimension	Low exposure (<i>n</i> = 43)	Medium exposure (<i>n</i> = 189)	High exposure (<i>n</i> = 39)
ALE	65.22	139.79	195.68
AOE	98.26	134.23	186.19
NS_R	124.26	140.65	126.44
CELF	58.80	138.39	209.55
ELFI	64.85	139.29	198.50
WGT	84.17	137.26	187.03

The mean-rank results in Table 6 showed a consistent ordering across the five significant dimensions. For acceptance of local English, acceptance of other Englishes, confidence in ELF communication, ELF communication intention, and willingness to incorporate GELT, the high-exposure profile had the highest mean ranks, followed by the medium- and low-exposure profiles. This ordering indicates that participants with higher informal exposure tended to report higher levels of these five GE awareness dimensions.

Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons showed significant differences between all three exposure profiles for acceptance of local English, confidence in ELF communication, and ELF communication intention (all adjusted *ps* < 0.001). For acceptance of other Englishes, differences were found between the low- and medium-exposure profiles (adjusted *p* = 0.018), the low- and high-exposure profiles (adjusted *p* < 0.001), and the medium- and high-exposure profiles (adjusted *p* < 0.001). For willingness to incorporate GELT, the low-exposure profile differed from both the medium- and high-exposure profiles (both adjusted *ps* < 0.001), and the medium- and high-exposure profiles also differed significantly (adjusted *p* = 0.001). No pairwise comparisons were conducted for native-speakerism because the omnibus Kruskal–Wallis test was not significant.

Overall, the continuous-score and profile-based analyses indicated that greater informal exposure was associated with stronger acceptance of English diversity, greater confidence in ELF communication, stronger ELF communication intentions, and greater willingness to incorporate GELT into future teaching. However, informal exposure was not significantly associated with the reverse-coded native-speakerism score.

From Informal Exposure to Bounded Pluralism: Communicative Openness without Ideological Transformation

The findings suggest that informal exposure is related to different dimensions of GE awareness through different processes. The strongest associations were with CELF and ELFI, while native-speakerism showed almost no relationship with exposure. This pattern suggests that informal encounters may change how learners manage linguistic differences in communication more readily than how they judge linguistic legitimacy, correctness, and professional authority.

The strong association with CELF may reflect the demands of authentic multilingual interaction. Participants had to communicate despite unfamiliar accents, incomplete comprehension, and non-standard forms. H1 recalled an interaction with a Korean customer:

"If I could only hear part of what they said, I understood by relying on their gestures. It did not need to be too grammatically correct." (H1)

Rather than preventing communication, partial comprehension led H1 to infer meaning from contextual and non-verbal cues. Such encounters may serve as mastery experiences that strengthen communicative self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and shift attention from formal accuracy to intelligibility, accommodation, and meaning negotiation (Cogo, 2012; C. C. M. Sung, 2018).

ELFI may develop through a similar process. Repeated interaction can make communication difficulties less threatening. Misunderstandings prompt clarification, simplification, gestures, or repair; successful understanding builds confidence; and greater confidence may encourage further communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Importantly, confidence did not require complete comprehension. H2 remained less comfortable with unfamiliar accents but explained that exposure reduced the pressure to approximate an ideal native-speaker model and encouraged her to focus on "communicating clearly and effectively." Exposure therefore appeared to build tolerance for communicative uncertainty rather than mastery of every variety.

Repeated exposure also appeared to normalise linguistic variation, which may explain the associations with ALE and AOE. H2 viewed systematic differences as expressions of linguistic and cultural identity rather than simply as errors, while L1 resisted pressure to erase a Vietnamese accent. However, acceptance remained incomplete. M3 recognised Vietnamese English as a variety but still considered it "a mistake." Participants could therefore recognise linguistic diversity as socially meaningful and communicatively viable while still judging it against British or American norms. This distinction helps explain why greater acceptance of diversity did not necessarily reduce native-speakerism.

Native-speakerism operated at a deeper ideological level because it concerned not only whether different Englishes could function, but also which Englishes were seen as correct, prestigious, authoritative, and professionally valuable (Holliday, 2006; Kiczowski & Lowe, 2024). H2's account illustrates this distinction:

"In terms of recruitment, native speakers are usually prioritised, particularly those from British or American contexts. Where I work, it is the same." (H2)

Her account shows why exposure alone may be insufficient. Multilingual encounters showed that diverse Englishes could support effective communication, while employment practices suggested that native-associated English still held greater professional value. Native-speakerism was therefore reinforced not only by individual preferences but also by the perceived material rewards attached to particular accents, speaker identities, and linguistic credentials. Research in Vietnam also shows how institutional and market expectations can shape teacher identity and encourage strategic compliance with valued linguistic credentials (H. L. T. Nguyen & H. T. M. Nguyen, 2026).

Educational structures appeared to reinforce the same hierarchy. H2 stated that changes in her teaching would be slow because she still had to follow "textbooks, native-speaker norms, the standardised curriculum, and students' examination pressure." She also questioned why major dictionaries foreground US and UK pronunciation, viewing this institutional prominence as evidence that these varieties remained pedagogical reference points. This interpretation is consistent with research showing substantial examination washback in Vietnamese English education (Phuong et al., 2025) and an Anglophone orientation in Vietnamese English textbooks that reflects only part of the diversity found in real-world English communication (T. T. M. Nguyen et al., 2021).

WGT occupied an intermediate position between communicative openness and ideological change. Participants did not generally reject GELT but tended to view it as a supplement. H1 proposed multiple-accent listening tasks, while L2 argued that teachers should teach the “correct standard first” and introduce diversity afterwards. M2 also viewed diverse-English materials as an “extension” or “optional” component, explaining that a 90-minute lesson left little room for additional materials.

This limited willingness reflected several constraints. Participants reported limited knowledge of unfamiliar varieties and difficulty finding suitable resources. H2 identified her own lack of expertise and appropriate materials as barriers. Parental and learner expectations also mattered, especially in examination-oriented courses, where M2 felt that teaching had to meet recognised certification criteria. Participants also worried about placing too much pressure on learners. M1, for example, feared that introducing many varieties alongside existing pronunciation demands might make students feel that English involved “too many things to know” and discourage them.

Curriculum and teacher-education practices also limited pedagogical autonomy. During her practicum, H2 reported having too little classroom time for additional role-plays or videos and needing to ensure that lesson content met observation requirements. L2 stated that about 70–80% of lesson planning still had to follow the textbook and supervising teacher, making major departures from established practice professionally risky. WGT therefore involves more than individual willingness: experience must be translated into pedagogy within constraints related to resources, workload, learner and parental expectations, assessment, curriculum, institutional supervision, and participants’ continued investment in Standard English (Borg, 2003; Sifakis, 2019).

Conclusion

This study examined Vietnamese pre-service English teachers’ informal exposure to diverse Englishes, its relationship with six dimensions of GE awareness, and participants’ explanations of how such exposure contributed to their awareness. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the quantitative phase identified exposure patterns and differences in GE awareness across low-, medium-, and high-exposure groups, while the qualitative phase explained the contexts and experiences underlying these patterns.

Participants generally reported relatively high informal exposure, although most belonged to the medium-exposure group. Exposure occurred mainly through online media, learning materials, tutoring, employment, and intercultural communication. Nevertheless, British and American English remained the most familiar and frequently encountered varieties. Greater informal exposure was significantly associated with stronger AOE and ALE, greater confidence in ELF communication, stronger intentions to use ELF, and greater willingness to incorporate GELT. However, no significant difference in native-speakerism was detected across exposure groups. The interviews showed that regular, interactive, and socially embedded encounters provided more experience-based awareness than passive or study-oriented exposure. The findings also show that greater exposure did not necessarily reduce native-speaker norms. Participants still linked British and American English with correctness, assessment, professional credibility, and employability. Overall, informal exposure helped participants become more accepting of different Englishes and more confident in communication, but it did not fully challenge the higher status often given to British and American English.

Theoretically, the study shows that different aspects of GE awareness do not develop in the same way. Informal exposure may increase acceptance of different Englishes, ELF confidence,

communication intention, and willingness to use GELT, but it may not reduce native-speakerism. Methodologically, the sequential explanatory design shows not only whether exposure levels were related to GE awareness, but also how the type, interactivity, and social embeddedness of exposure helped explain the statistical patterns.

Practically, for teacher education, the findings suggest that programmes should connect pre-service teachers' informal experiences with guided reflection on intelligibility, language ownership, Vietnamese English, assessment, and native-speakerism. They should also offer pre-service teachers more chances to interact with diverse English users and design activities that include different accents and ELF communication.

The study has some limitations. It is cross-sectional, relies on self-reported data, and focuses on one national context. Future research could use longitudinal and multi-context designs, and combine questionnaires and interviews with learning diaries, digital records, observations, and teaching practice data. This would help show how informal exposure and GE awareness develop over time.

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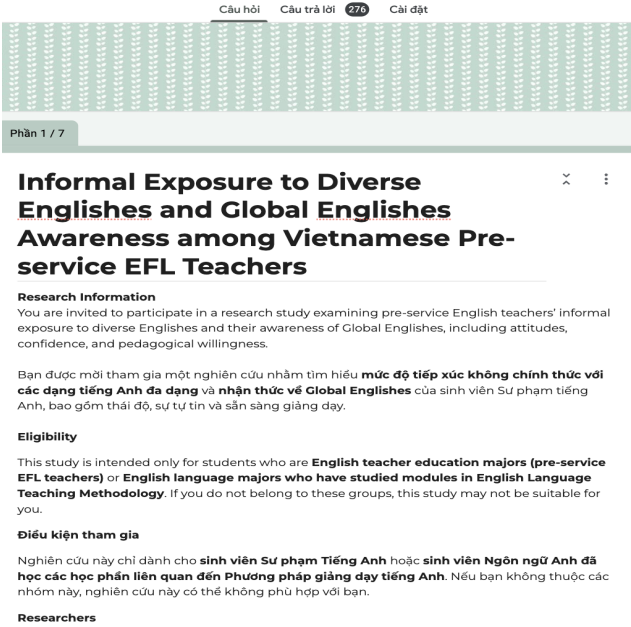
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Appendix A
Screenshot of the Survey



Appendix B
Survey Questionnaire

1. Informal Exposure to Diverse Englishes

- EXP1.** Outside my formal English classes, I frequently watch or listen to English-language videos or media.
Ngoài giờ học chính thức, tôi thường xuyên xem hoặc nghe các nội dung tiếng Anh.
- EXP2.** I am regularly exposed to English spoken by people from different countries or linguistic backgrounds.
Tôi thường xuyên tiếp xúc với tiếng Anh được nói bởi người đến từ nhiều quốc gia hoặc nền ngôn ngữ khác nhau.
- EXP3.** The English I hear includes a wide range of accents, not only British or American English.
Tiếng Anh tôi nghe bao gồm nhiều giọng khác nhau, không chỉ giọng Anh hoặc Mỹ.
- EXP4.** I pay attention to how different speakers use English in informal media.
Tôi chú ý đến cách những người nói khác nhau sử dụng tiếng Anh trong các phương tiện truyền thông không chính thức.
- EXP5.** I sometimes interact with English content online, such as by commenting or replying.
Tôi đôi khi tương tác với nội dung tiếng Anh trực tuyến, ví dụ như bình luận hoặc phản hồi.
- EXP6.** I use English media not only for entertainment but also for learning.
Tôi sử dụng các phương tiện tiếng Anh không chỉ để giải trí mà còn để học.
- EXP7.** I use various platforms, such as films, YouTube, and social media, to engage with English.
Tôi sử dụng nhiều nền tảng khác nhau, như phim, YouTube và mạng xã hội, để tiếp xúc với tiếng Anh.

EXP8. I often encounter English used among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds.
Tôi thường gặp tiếng Anh được sử dụng giữa những người có nền ngôn ngữ khác nhau.

2. Acceptance of One's Local English

ALE1. I feel comfortable using my own English accent.
Tôi cảm thấy thoải mái khi sử dụng giọng tiếng Anh của mình.

ALE2. My English does not need to sound native-like to be effective.
Tiếng Anh của tôi không cần phải giống người bản ngữ để giao tiếp hiệu quả.

ALE3. I accept my English as a legitimate way of communication.
Tôi chấp nhận tiếng Anh của mình như một cách giao tiếp hợp lệ.

3. Acceptance of Other Englishes

AOE1. English spoken with different accents should be accepted.
Tiếng Anh với các giọng khác nhau nên được chấp nhận.

AOE2. There are many acceptable ways of speaking English worldwide.
Có nhiều cách nói tiếng Anh được chấp nhận trên thế giới.

AOE3. Understanding different English varieties is important.
Việc hiểu các dạng tiếng Anh khác nhau là quan trọng.

4. Native-speakerism

NS1. Native speakers are better English teachers than non-native speakers.
Giáo viên bản ngữ giỏi dạy tiếng Anh hơn giáo viên không phải bản ngữ.

NS2. English teaching should mainly follow native-speaker norms.
Việc dạy tiếng Anh nên chủ yếu theo chuẩn của người bản ngữ.

NS3. Non-native English teachers are less competent.
Giáo viên tiếng Anh không phải bản ngữ kém năng lực hơn.

Note. Native-speakerism items were reverse-coded during analysis.

5. Confidence in ELF Communication

CELF1. I feel confident communicating in English with people from different backgrounds.
Tôi tự tin khi giao tiếp bằng tiếng Anh với người từ các nền ngôn ngữ khác nhau.

CELF2. I can communicate effectively despite accent differences.
Tôi có thể giao tiếp hiệu quả dù có sự khác biệt về giọng.

CELF3. I am confident in using English in international contexts.
Tôi tự tin sử dụng tiếng Anh trong bối cảnh quốc tế.

6. ELF Communication Intention

ELFI1. I am willing to use English with people from different countries.
Tôi sẵn sàng sử dụng tiếng Anh với người đến từ các quốc gia khác nhau.

ELFI2. I intend to use English as a lingua franca in the future.
Tôi có ý định sử dụng tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ chung trong tương lai.

ELFI3. I am open to using English without focusing on native norms.
Tôi cởi mở khi sử dụng tiếng Anh mà không quá chú trọng chuẩn bản ngữ.

7. Willingness to Incorporate GELT

WGT1. I am willing to include Global Englishes in my future teaching.
Tôi sẵn sàng đưa Global Englishes vào việc giảng dạy trong tương lai.

WGT2. I want to expose students to different English varieties.
Tôi muốn cho học sinh tiếp xúc với các dạng tiếng Anh khác nhau.

WGT3. I am interested in designing lessons reflecting English as a global language.
Tôi quan tâm đến việc thiết kế bài học thể hiện tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ toàn cầu.

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Section A. Core Questions for All Participants

1. Could you describe how you usually encounter or use English outside formal classes?
2. What kinds of English varieties or accents have you encountered?
3. Can you describe a memorable experience communicating with someone who used a different variety or accent of English?
4. What do you think about Vietnamese-accented English?
5. Do you think Vietnamese speakers should try to sound British or American? Why or why not?
6. How confident do you feel when communicating with people from different linguistic backgrounds?
7. Which model of English do you think is most appropriate for formal teaching?
8. Would you include different English varieties or Global Englishes in your future teaching? Why or why not?

Section B. Questions for Low-Exposure Participants

1. What factors limit your exposure to different Englishes?
2. What makes unfamiliar accents difficult for you to understand?
3. Do you feel comfortable communicating with speakers of different English varieties? Why or why not?
4. What kinds of experiences would help you become more confident?

Section C. Questions for Medium-Exposure Participants

1. How would you describe your balance between online exposure and real interaction?
2. Have your experiences changed how you view non-British or non-American Englishes?
3. Do you still prefer British or American English for formal teaching? Why?
4. What would help you feel more confident using diverse Englishes?

Section D. Questions for High-Exposure Participants

1. Which experiences have most influenced your views on English diversity?
2. Has frequent exposure changed your communication strategies?
3. Do British or American norms still influence what you consider correct or professional?

Appendix D

Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire Constructs

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α
Informal Exposure to Diverse Englishes	8	.787
Acceptance of Local English	3	.736
Acceptance of Other Englishes	3	.747
Native-speakerism	3	.764
Confidence in ELF Communication	3	.899
ELF Communication Intention	3	.731
Willingness to Incorporate GELT into Teaching	3	.831

Appendix E

Normality Tests for Composite Variables

Variable	Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistic	df	p	Shapiro–Wilk statistic	df	p
Exposure	.084	271	< .001	.975	271	< .001
ALE	.124	271	< .001	.958	271	< .001
AOE	.154	271	< .001	.870	271	< .001
NS_R	.088	271	< .001	.977	271	< .001
CELF	.078	271	< .001	.972	271	< .001
ELFI	.091	271	< .001	.952	271	< .001
WGT	.121	271	< .001	.898	271	< .001

Note. Lilliefors significance correction was applied to the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

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