

# Attitudes of German secondary-school teachers towards a didactic approach of ‚World Englishes‘

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## Introduction

- “ELF is often accepted in the abstract by teachers but rejected in the classroom” (Jenkins, 2015: 189)
- 80 per cent of Japanese high school teachers surveyed saw a necessity of considering English varieties in the classroom, but only 7.8 per cent actually did. (Sasaki, 2004)
- Mentioned obstacles were lack of proper teacher training and resources (e.g. time and materials)

## Literature & Research gap

- BrE and AmE score highest for correctness, pleasantness, and int'l acceptability, when asking non-native English teachers (Jenkins, 2007)
- Focus on varieties is often restricted to inner circle differences (BrE vs. AmE) (Sasaki, 2004)
- Problem: Mostly, other varieties are hardly covered in the curriculum (Stephan, 1997)
- Problem: Classroom interactions do not reflect the authentic language interactions students experience outside the classroom → Confrontation with ‘peculiar’ varieties (Bieswanger, 2008)
- Authentic language interactions of students
- Reasons for concern were fear of superficial teaching and losing linguistic ground
- Generally teachers were at ease with a shift away from ENL norms
- But: Felt compelled to teaching ‘standard’ English as common ground (Decke-Cornill, 2003)

### Research Gap

- Lack of (semi-)authentic materials is a common concern
- German studies in this field are still rare

**Aim:** How do German teachers of English view Siemund et al., 2012?

## Methods

### Research instrument

- Qualitative content analysis of 2 interviews (each 30 minutes of length)
- Direct approach

### Participants

- 2 Secondary school teachers of English (Gymnasium and Gesamtschule)
- Both native speakers of German
- They have been teaching English for about one year

### Contexts

- They were asked questions concerning:
  - their own use of English in- and outside the classroom
  - preferences for a specific variety of English
  - attitudes towards “World Englishes” in general and
  - its practicability in the EFL classroom, using the textbook “the Amazing World of Englishes”

## Results

### 1) Ambivalent relationship between concept acceptance and realization

- Teacher 1:** “Well I found it [WE] to be a nice concept, quite implementable, maybe not to such a large extent, but it makes sense”  
**T2:** “I think it is quite important that pupils know that there is more than one English in the world.”  
**T2:** “[...] but it would never be about describing certain characteristics in particular.”

### 2) Lack of desired realization due to institutional and learner constraints

- T1:** “At the moment I teach in 7<sup>th</sup> grade myself ... there is only little room [...] in this grade ... I would not have found the time to implement this, no.”  
**T2:** “But [...] at the beginner’s level it is hard enough to be somehow confronted with English, that is why, in the textbook, the focus is on one variety only.”  
**T2:** “[...] and that is why it is simply good for students that initially not to much is mixed there.”  
**T1:** “Well, if I try to imagine 5<sup>th</sup> graders, I would say, that they would be overwhelmed with such a complex content, as comparing grammatical sentences.”  
**T1:** “Problems [related to the implementation] here could be the relationship [of the students] of their immediate surroundings [to the concept of WE].”

### 3) Teacher varieties often restricted to ENL types (BrE, AmE)

- T1:** “I would say that I speak British English, because I started to learn it in school and continued it from then onwards”  
**T2:** “I would say that I like speaking American English a lot, because I find it very authentic, personally. I think it sounds beautiful.”

### 4) Standard English viewed as adequate foundation and common ground

- T2:** “I observe myself, when I speak in class, to be speaking the British variety, because BrE is the one being taught especially in the earlier grades in the textbooks.”  
**T2:** “But it is also relatively easy to understand RP, right? [meaning compared to other varieties]”  
**T2:** “As a teacher you are encouraged, well this is partly out of date already, [...] but in daily teaching and also in teacher training, heads of department say, this is what you have to adopt, either BrE or AmE, and either one flawlessly.”

### 5) Lack of authentic material initially brought forward as argument for non-adoption

- T2:** “Me as a teacher, I cannot shoulder to constantly be a linguistic role-model for various World Englishes.”

### 6) ‘The Amazing World of Englishes’ was generally embraced as a suitable implementation of WE

- T1:** “I think this I very interesting and one could connect this with the debates that are given [in the book], by taking different positions and people, for instance and Indian, who can advocate their opinion.”  
**T2:** “Generally, I think it is a cool thing to take the time to prepare such varieties as IndE for class like this and to tell the students, that there are different Englishes around the world and that one should be sensitized there, because especially IndE is sometimes stigmatized by students [...]”

### 7) Yet the scope of the book (even single chapters) was generally seen as to extensive for implementation

- T1:** “Maybe it is not necessarily important to consider every single type of variation, but more mere examples. I think here [the book] a lot is considered and I would definitely reduce this, [...] in the regular lessons I cannot imagine this.”  
**T2:** “Time pressure is a real issue and with all the restrictions, which are relevant in the particular teaching units [...] one could only cover, for instance, IndE in an exemplary way. It would have to be explicitly embedded in the regular routine of the class.”

## Conclusions

Generally, the concept of WE is said to be important and should therefore be considered in the ELT classroom to some extent. Teachers agree that a standard form of English (like BrE or AmE) should be taught first before other varieties of English are introduced. ESL varieties should be treated in upper grades or advanced courses only.

Although there is an overall agreement about the necessity of raising the awareness that there is more than just one English in the world, it is still unclear how this can be realized and implemented in the classroom. The respondents mentioned obstacles like unauthentic material, the fact that some sort of standard English has to be acquired first, which already poses a problem to many pupils and another aspect that was brought up is the time constraint. This latter issue is probably the most important one since it was stated over and over again by the interviewed teachers.

As it seems, the curriculum only incorporates the concept of WE to a small extent and leaves not enough room for the pupils to explore it in more detail.

For future research it would be helpful to collect more interview data so that the results would be more significant. The two teachers that were interviewed are still very young with little teaching experience. Therefore, it could be interesting to compare attitudes of teachers with many years of experience with those who just started their careers. In addition to that, it would be useful to see how parts of the book “The Amazing World of Englishes” can be included in ELT and how this would be perceived by the pupils.

## References

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