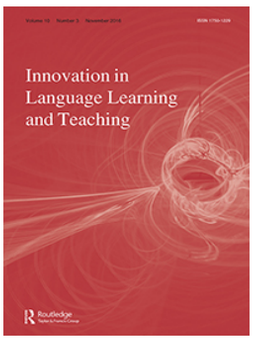

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Exposure to multiple accents of English in the English Language Teaching classroom: from second language learners' perspectives

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As a result of the global presence of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), it has been argued that learners of English should be exposed to a range of varieties of English, rather than a single variety of English, so that they can be better prepared to communicate with other people in ELF communication. However, little is known about second language (L2) learners' perspectives on exposure to multiple accents of English in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. This paper reports on a study that investigated the views of L2 learners of English concerning exposure to different accents of English in the classroom. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey at a university in Hong Kong. The analysis revealed that these L2 learners showed rather ambivalent attitudes towards exposure to different accents of English in the classroom. While many participants seemed to be aware of the value of exposure to different native and non-native accents, there was less than wholehearted support for such a proposal in practice because of a number of pedagogical and practical concerns. Implications of the findings for classroom teaching are also discussed.

Keywords: accent; English as a Lingua Franca; learner perceptions; varieties of English; language teaching

1. Introduction

English now serves as a global lingua franca and is increasingly used by both first language (L1) and second language (L2) speakers as a means of intercultural communication. As is currently conceptualized, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) refers to 'the common language of choice among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds' (Jenkins 2009, 200). With the global spread of English and the growth of ELF communication, English is spoken in a variety of accents by speakers from different parts of the world. Indeed, as early as 1980s, scholars such as Kachru (1985) argued for the recognition of 'Englishes' in the plural, pointing to the emergence of different varieties of English with different vocabularies, accents and discourse conventions. Given the importance of ELF communication in today's globalized world, it has been suggested that it is pedagogically relevant to acquaint learners with a variety of accents, rather than only one or two 'standard' ones (i.e., Received Pronunciation and General American), since listening to and processing accents of speakers of different varieties of English often presents considerable challenges for many L2 learners of English. As Buck (2001, 35) notes, 'L2 listeners sometimes have considerable problems

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when they hear a new accent for the first time'. In some cases, an unfamiliar accent can make comprehension almost impossible for listeners. Although there have been calls for inclusion of a wide range of L1 and L2 accents in the classroom among ELF researchers (Jenkins 2007; Kopperoinen 2011), there are few practical suggestions as to how such an example of pedagogical innovation could be implemented. Furthermore, very little is known about different stakeholders' perspectives on the introduction of multiple accents of English in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. This paper therefore aims to fill this gap and examines the issue concerning the introduction of multiple accents of English in the classroom from the perspectives of L2 learners of English.

2. Literature review

In many parts of the world, two dominant native-speaker varieties of English, namely British and American English, have been used as the main pedagogical models for ELT. Many of the 'global' ELT coursebooks provide classroom models for production which are largely based upon English as a Native Language (ENL; see Jenkins 2012). However, with the widespread use of ELF, the contentious issue has arisen concerning whether ENL norms should still be used in the ELT classroom, given that L2 learners are more likely to use English with other L2 speakers than with native speakers of English (Jenkins 2007). Accordingly, the 'default' adoption of these two major varieties of English in ELT practices has been questioned (Sung 2014a). Moreover, several ELF researchers have noted that the growth of ELF communication has given rise to linguistic innovations which are largely motivated by the need to achieve mutual intelligibility among L2 speakers of different lingua-cultural backgrounds (Cogo and Dewey 2012; Dewey 2007). As such, these researchers have attempted to challenge the appropriateness of the use of ENL models in ELT by advocating a reorientation of English away from the deference to ENL norms in classroom practices and by making a case for the legitimacy of variations displayed by L2 learners (Alptekin 2002; Jenkins 2007; Kirkpatrick 2007; Seidlhofer 2004).

As well as voicing their challenge against the appropriacy of native-speaker norms for L2 learning, some researchers argue that it is unnecessary for L2 learners to conform to native-speaker norms of pronunciation in order to be considered competent speakers of English (Jenkins 2000, 2007; Kirkpatrick 2007; McKay 2002). One reason that has been suggested is that most L2 learners' primary motivation is not to speak with native speakers, but to communicate with other non-native speakers who constitute more than 80% of the global English-speaking population (Crystal 2003; Sung 2013c). It has also been argued that continued adherence to native-speaker norms in pronunciation could have a negative impact on preparing learners for international use of ELF (Jenkins 2000). Therefore, it has been suggested that L2 speakers should be allowed to preserve their lingua-cultural identity by retaining some of their L1 phonological features when speaking English in ELF settings, since they may wish to preserve their own lingua-cultural identity as expressed through their pronunciation (Jenkins 2007).

Furthermore, given the increasing use of ELF communication worldwide, several scholars argue that increased exposure to a range of varieties of English is considered to be crucial for successful communication with other L1 and L2 speakers in ELF interactions (Jenkins 2000, 2007; Kopperoinen 2011). Such an idea is in tune with Kachru's (1983) 'polymodel' approach, which involves exposing L2 learners to different varieties of English, rather than just one variety of English. According to Kachru (1983), a 'polymodel' approach should replace a 'monomodel' approach in ELT:

> In discussing English as an international and intranational language it is difficult to raise the question of choice of model. The local, national, and international users of English […] raise questions about the validity of didactic models, those which emphasize a monomodel approach to the teaching of English. One has to be realistic about such questions and aim at a dynamic approach, based on a polymodel concept. (Kachru 1983, 238–239)

More specifically, Kachru criticizes the adoption of a 'monomodel' approach which supposes that English is homogenous, a single variety, thereby overlooking the fact that English is characterized by variety and variation (see also Kirkpatrick 2007). A 'polymodel' approach, on the other hand, supposes variability, including 'variability related to acquisition; variability related to function; and variability related to the context of situation' (Kachru 1992, 66) and acknowledges the plurality of English varieties in today's world. It is therefore suggested that 'rather than selecting a single variety as the one to emulate and teach, the important thing is to expose learners to as many varieties as possible so as to prepare them to encounter English as it is actually used in the world' (Morrow 2004, 95). Similarly, Jenkins (2000) has suggested that repeated pedagogic exposure can help learners become familiar with different accents. In addition, it is argued that learners should receive sufficient exposure to other L2 accents, as part of the pedagogical process of developing their accommodation skills in ELF communication (Jenkins 2000, 2007). As Jenkins (2000) points out, exposure to L2 accents is more important than exposure to L1 accents, because L2 learners are more likely to encounter L2 speakers than native speakers in ELF settings.

In addition, it has been suggested that exposure to a wide range of accents of English will help learners develop the ability to interpret other pronunciations than those of their teachers and others L2 speakers. For example, Jenkins (2000) suggests that while it may not be possible to provide exposure to every single variety in the ELT classroom, it is important to encourage flexibility. Morrison and White (2005) also make the similar point that exposure to more varieties of Englishes can serve as a major catalyst for flexibility. As Seidlhofer (2004) notes, learners should be given a basis for understanding both native and non-native varieties, so that they can then fine-tune those varieties which are relevant for them. Furthermore, exposure is also considered necessary in developing a tolerance of diversity in the use of ELF. Specifically, exposure to non-native accents is seen by many scholars to be instrumental in inculcating a more tolerant attitude towards differences and variations in different Englishes (see Jenkins 2000; Matsuda 2006; Yoshikawa 2005). As Miyagi et al. (2009) note, introducing learners to different varieties of English can effectively challenge the hegemony of English and help learners broaden their worldviews.

However, despite the aforementioned advantages associated with exposure to different accents of English in the classroom, the incorporation of different accents in the classroom has not yet gained much currency in many different parts of the world. Indeed, most of the listening materials available in the ELT industry mainly involve the use of standard British or American accents, and exposure to L2 accents is not seen as an important part of the curriculum. It is not clear whether exposure to different accents would be welcomed by learners and teachers. Furthermore, relatively little is known about stakeholders' views about the introduction of different varieties of English in the classroom (see Park 2003). When there has been an extensive body of literature on learners' attitudes towards different varieties of English (see, e.g., Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997; Friedrich 2000; He and Zhang 2010; Hiraga 2005; McKenzie 2010; Zhang and Hu 2008), most of these studies do not focus on the specific issue of exposure to multiple varieties of English in the classroom. Given the importance of a learner-centred approach

to ELT (Nunan 1988), the study reported in this paper aims to explore the views of a group of advanced L2 learners of English in Hong Kong about exposure to multiple accents of English in the ELT classroom. Understanding learners' perspectives could shed light on whether, and how, exposure to different accents of English could be implemented in the classroom.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on a larger research project which investigated L2 learners' experiences of using and learning English in a multilingual university setting. The project was carried out in a major comprehensive university in Hong Kong. As Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city in Asia, there are plentiful opportunities for L2 learners to interact with people from all around the world and be exposed to a wide range of L1 and L2 accents in ELF interactions. However, despite the self-acclaimed status of Hong Kong as an 'Asia's world city', native-speaker norms, especially that of British English, are still entrenched in Hong Kong ELT practices. It would therefore be worthwhile to examine how the proposal of exposure to multiple accents of English in the classroom would be received by L2 learners in Hong Kong.

A mixed-methods design was adopted in this study, and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in two stages, via in-depth semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey. All the participants in the study were Hong Kong-born, Cantonese-speaking undergraduate students who were aged between 18 and 24. All of the participants were upper-intermediate or advanced L2 learners of English and had spent at least 12 years studying English at school before entering the university. At the time of data collection, they were taking an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at the university.

3.1. Semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 participants from the university, since interviews could provide a window into the interviewees' mind which cannot be directly observed (Kvale 1996). By using the method of snowball sampling (Cohen et al. 2007), 28 interviewees were recruited and participated in the study on a voluntary basis. All the interviews were conducted one-to-one with the author in Cantonese and were audio-recorded, with the informed consent obtained from the interviewees prior to the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to probe into the interviewees' views about exposure to multiple accents of English in the ELT classroom and about their goals of learning English. Each interview lasted from approximately one hour, and follow-up interviews were held for further clarifications.

Interviews were later transcribed and analyzed. Following the standard qualitative analytical procedures (Miles and Huberman 1994), the data were coded and re-coded line-by-line. With an inductive approach to data analysis, no a priori codes were used. During the coding process, a list of initial codes was generated and a coding frame was developed. Based on the codes identified, two main themes emerged from the analysis, namely, arguments in favour of and against exposure to different accents of English in the classroom. For example, under the theme 'arguments against exposure to different accents', several main categories were identified: 'negative perceptions of L2 accents', 'negative impact on language acquisition', 'practical needs', 'pedagogical concerns' and 'ease in understanding new accents'. All the data pertaining to each of these categories

were underlined on the transcripts with different colours and analyzed further in greater depth. In case of an overlap among these categories, additional coding was carried out and the categories in question were modified. In addition, representative extracts from interviews were also selected for inclusion in the paper in order to offer supporting evidence for each category that emerged from the data, allowing learners' voices to be heard.

After initial coding, all of the identified categories were checked against the entire data-set through an iterative process of constant questioning and comparing (Patton 1990). Further in-depth analysis was conducted to establish the relationships among specific categories. To ensure the reliability of the data analysis, a colleague of mine also coded 40% of the interview transcripts (as coding samples) independently. We compared our coded items, discussed the discrepancies in coding and resolved our differences through discussion and negotiation. The inter-coder agreement was 77.8%. Finally, the analyses were confirmed by the participants via member checking procedures (Creswell and Miller 2000).

3.2. Questionnaire survey

In addition to semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire survey was designed by the researcher and included both Likert-scale and multiple choice questions. It aimed to find out whether some of the perceptions that emerged from the interview data are shared by a larger population at the university. This paper only draws on data generated by parts of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire survey underwent two rounds of piloting procedures with 2 different groups of undergraduate students and was subsequently revised before finalization. In the end, the revised questionnaires were administrated to 451 undergraduate students by five EAP teachers during class time. After around one month of data collection, a total of 326 questionnaires were returned. However, only 318 questionnaires were valid and were subsequently used in the analysis. Among these respondents, 42.8% were male, 57.2% were female. It should also be noted that the questionnaire was anonymous and that the students were assured that their responses would not affect their grades in their EAP courses.

Descriptive statistics were generated by SPSS from the questionnaire data. For the Likert-scale questions, the mean of each statement was computed by assigning a value of 4 to responses in the 'Strongly Agree (SA)' category, 3 to 'Agree (A)', 2 to 'Disagree (D)' and 1 to 'Strongly Disagree (SD)'. The results of the questionnaire survey were subsequently compared and contrasted with those of the interview data, in order to find out whether the interview findings were confirmed or otherwise.

In the next two sections, the interview and questionnaire findings will be presented. Note that all the excerpts in this paper are translated from Cantonese and that the names of the interviewees are represented with numbers which are randomly assigned.

4. Findings from semi-structured interviews

As will be presented below, the analysis of the interview data revealed that both reasons in favour of and against the idea of exposure to multiple accents of English were mentioned by the participants.

4.1. Reasons in favour of exposure to multiple accents of English

4.1.1. Perceived need for international communication in English

One of the main perceived advantages concerning exposure to multiple accents of English in the classroom was related to the need to communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English. Twenty of the interview participants acknowledged the diversity of accents used by speakers of different cultural backgrounds and recognized the importance of familiarizing themselves with different accents of English in order to smooth out ELF communication with interlocutors from different lingua-cultural backgrounds.

> [#11] It may not work anymore nowadays if you only understand the traditional accents of English. You also need to know different varieties of English and accents used by different people.

From the extract above, the interviewee clearly understood the sociolinguistic reality of different Englishes and thus the need to comprehend a wide range of accents for ELF communication.

Nine of the participants also considered that it would be easier to accommodate to people with different accents if they had prior exposure to different accents of English.

> [#18] I think it's a good idea to include not just the British accent, but also accents of other varieties of English. If you listen to more varieties of English, you may learn English better. It's because if you are used to listening to just one single accent, you will not understand the others if they use a different accent. If you try to listen to more varieties of English, you will understand others more easily with little effort.

Two interviewees also pointed out that familiarity with different accents of English could expedite the process of understanding people with different accents when communicating with them in ELF interactions.

> [#23] Perhaps I could process the spoken English more quickly when I listen to other people's accents. And when I would know that the people from a certain country will speak English in that way, the time used for processing what is said will be shortened.

4.1.2. Interest and curiosity

In addition, nine of the interviewees mentioned their interest and curiosity about understanding different accents of English. In particular, they were interested in learning about the differences in how sounds are pronounced differently by speakers of different L1 backgrounds. In addition, some interviewees also showed curiosity about how phonological differences are caused by L1 interference and other factors.

> [#19] I think I am quite interested in learning about the Indian accent. I find it quite interesting. For example, the 'r' sound sounds like the Spanish 'r'. It's difficult to learn that and I find it quite interesting. And the Japanese accent also sounds interesting. I try to learn different accents out of sheer interest and I want to find out how different people pronounce English differently.

Overall, from the analysis above, the perceived usefulness of exposure to multiple accents of English in the classroom can be attributed to (1) these interviewees' understanding of the plurality of accents present in ELF communication and (2) their interest in understanding different accents of English and how they differ from each other.

4.2. Reasons against exposure to multiple accents of English

4.2.1. Negative perceptions of non-native varieties of English

Fifteen of the interviewees expressed rather negative perceptions towards certain non-native accents of English, such as Japanese English, Korean English and Philippine English, and had reservations about exposure to multiple accents of English in the classroom.

> [#28] Maybe because of my own bias, I don't like the English spoken by Koreans or Japanese. I think their accents are strange.

One reason for these negative perceptions may be the ingrained stereotypes about non-native accents of English (e.g., Matsuda 2003; Zhang and Hu 2008), which may stem from the strong attachment to 'native speaker ideology' (Lippi-Green 1997). Because of the belief that native-speaker English is the 'best' and the 'standard', these interviewees may evaluate non-native accents against the native-speaker yardstick, which may explain why these accents were perceived as 'strange' or 'weird'. Indeed, as can be seen from the extract above, the interviewee actually admitted to the 'bias' she had about certain non-native accents of English.

4.2.2. Possible negative impact on language acquisition and confusion

Another point raised in the interview data pertained to the possible negative impact of exposure to non-native English accents on the participants' acquisition of English pronunciation, as mentioned by 13 of the interviewees. For example, they mentioned the negative impact of exposure to non-native accents on their language development.

> [#14] I would like to know more about non-native varieties of English, but these varieties of English do not provide a perfect accent. […] I think I am willing to talk to Singaporeans, but I won't like to be in an environment where Singaporean accent is commonly heard. I think that would do more harm to my language development. I don't think these varieties of English provide a good model or whatever.

From the extract above, the interviewee thought that certain L2 accents of English do not necessarily provide an appropriate model of pronunciation, probably because they were considered deviant when judged against the 'traditional' native-speaker norms of English. It was therefore felt that extensive exposure to these 'non-standard' accents of English may lead to an adverse impact on language development.

It also appears that the interviewees were worried that they might be confused as to what they should learn when they are exposed to multiple accents of English in the classroom. Given that the presentation of different accents in the classroom may be seen to interfere with their acquisition of English pronunciation based on a native-speaker model, these interviewees may wish to avoid any possible confusion which could arise from exposure to more than one single pronunciation model.

4.2.3. Pedagogical concerns

In the interview data, several pedagogical concerns were raised by 11 of the interview participants. For example, these interviewees indicated the need of a pronunciation model for pedagogical purposes. It was felt that some accents of English should not be presented in the classroom if they deviate too much from 'standard' English pronunciation, as the extract below shows:

> [#8] For the purpose of learning English, it is not a good idea to include speech samples of different varieties of English. It's because different varieties of English are spoken with very different accents and it's easy to misunderstand what has been said. For learning English, there should be a specific focus. It's not a good idea if the accent deviates too much from standard English.

Specifically, seven of the participants pointed to the need for one single instructional model of pronunciation which is widely accepted by most people from around the world. As they pointed out, there is a need for a point of reference in teaching English, which is considered more important than exposure to different Englishes for enhancing their receptive skills. In most cases, it was felt that the instructional model should be a 'standard' variety of English.

> [#26] I think we only need one single model for teaching English. If students want something else, they should go look for another model by themselves. If there is a standard, most people will learn English with reference to the standard, and they will accept that standard. Since we're learning English in order to communicate with the rest of the world, we will be able to achieve the goal of learning English if we use the standard which is accepted and used by most people around the world. I think the English used by different people is still the same, but is just spoken in different accents.

From the extract above, it appears that the interviewee prioritized the importance of an instructional model (for productive purposes) over the need to be exposed to different accents of English (for receptive purposes). As evident in the data elsewhere, the interviewees' pedagogical concerns about learning from a single model of English seem to override the perceived need to enhance their receptive skills of comprehending multiple accents of English.

4.2.4. Perceived ease in accommodation

Nine of the interviewees expressed reservations about the idea of introducing different accents of English into the ELT classroom because of the perceived ease in accommodating to different L1 and L2 accents without needing prior exposure. In most cases, they considered it easy to accommodate to different accents in real life, as the extract below shows:

> [#26] It's very easy to pick up the accent and to understand the accent. I think there's no need to be exposed to different varieties of English accents intentionally.

In addition, three interviewees also pointed out that some L2 speakers of English, such as speakers of Indian English and Philippine English, do not tend to speak English with a strong accent, which means that prior exposure to these L2 accents of English may not be considered necessary for successful ELF communication.

> [#19] Indeed, the Indians whom I have contact with do not really speak with a very strong Indian accent. Their accent is very light and they also use an accent closer to the American or British model.

Perhaps because of these interviewees' perceptions of the relative ease in understanding different (unfamiliar) accents of English and the relatively 'weak' accents displayed by most L2 speakers they encountered before, they did not seem to consider it necessary to be exposed to different accents of English in the classroom.

4.2.5. Practical needs

Eight interviewees questioned whether they would actually come into contact with a wide range of accents in English in their life, and cast doubt on the practical value of

introducing different varieties of English into the ELT classroom. For example, one interviewee said:

> [#25] I am open to the idea of being exposed to different varieties of English, but it sounds very academic. In reality, we probably won't be in contact with so many different varieties of English. I don't see the need to be exposed to different varieties of English.

In other words, although these interviewees were aware of the existence of different English varieties and accents in today's globalized world, there are some indications in the data that their actual encounters with a wide range of English accents may not be commonplace in their own lives, which led them to question the practical need of exposure to different accents in the classroom.

4.3. Summary of interview findings

Overall, the analysis of the interview data above showed that the participants' views about exposure to multiple accents in the classroom were not straightforward and were characterized by ambivalence. Specifically, both reasons in favour of and against the proposal coexisted, albeit with the latter being more dominant in the interview data. On the one hand, most participants appeared to be interested in understanding different accents (and varieties) of English for ELF communication, a finding which seems to be somewhat different from the lack of sociolinguistic awareness of different Englishes as revealed in some of the previous studies (e.g., Friedrich 2000; Matsuda 2003). On the other hand, these participants expressed concerns about the possible confusion that may have arisen from being exposed to different varieties of English. Additionally, some of them showed negative attitudes towards certain non-native accents of English, confirming similar findings in previous studies (e.g., McKenzie 2010; Hiraga 2005; Zhang and Hu 2008). Based on the analysis above, therefore, it appears that despite the awareness of ELF communication worldwide, most participants had reservations about exposure to multiple accents of English in the classroom and seemed to place more emphasis on the learning of 'standard' English pronunciation (for productive purposes) than on understanding different accents of English (for receptive purposes).

In addition, several instances of contradictions were also noticeable in the data. For example, while some participants recognized the need to comprehend different accents of English given the sociolinguistic reality of widespread ELF communication (Jenkins 2000, 2007), they cast doubts on their actual encounters with a wide range of accents in their everyday lives. Some also mentioned that most L2 speakers' accents are not particularly strong to understand. Also, although some participants believed that more exposure to different accents of English could help them comprehend unfamiliar accents more quickly, they also remarked that it just took a relatively short time to get used to a particular unfamiliar accent. Interestingly, these contradictory comments can be said to be illustrative of the complexity of the participants' views on exposure to multiple accents in the classroom.

5. Findings from the questionnaire survey

As will be presented below, the results of the questionnaire survey confirmed to a large extent the interview findings concerning the participants' ambivalent attitudes towards exposure to multiple accents in the classroom. Note that only questions relating to exposure to multiple accents of English and instructional models of pronunciation are reported here and that the questions in the questionnaire survey are re-numbered for clarity of presentation.

Table 1. Perceptions of the need for exposure to multiple accents of English.

Q. 1: Which of the following statements do you most agree with?	$N = 318$	%
(A) In the classroom, it is okay if students are exposed to only an educated native-speaker accent	75	23.6
(B) In the classroom, it is okay if students are exposed to only an educated Hong Kong speaker accent	15	4.7
(C) In the classroom, students should be exposed to both educated Hong Kong non-native speaker and native-speaker accents	106	33.3
(D) In the classroom, students should be exposed to other educated non-native speaker accents of English, in addition to both educated Hong Kong non-native speaker and native-speaker accents	122	38.4

As Table 1 shows, around 20% of the respondents considered acceptable if students are exposed to only an educated native-speaker accent; only 4.7% of the respondents considered acceptable if students are exposed to only an educated Hong Kong speaker accent; around one-third of the respondents thought that students should be exposed to both educated Hong Kong speaker accent and native-speaker accents; and more than one-third of the respondents agreed that in the classroom, students should be exposed to other educated non-native speaker varieties of English, in addition to both educated Hong Kong non-native speaker and native-speaker accents. As the last two sets of responses (i.e., options C and D) indicate, more than 70% of the respondents considered it important for students to also be exposed to non-native-speaker English accents (including the educated local Hong Kong speaker accent), as opposed to native-speaker accents only. From the results here, there seem to be some signs of awareness of the importance of exposure to non-native accents of English in the classroom. Evidence of such sociolinguistic awareness is also found in the interview data. As the interview findings show, some interviewees expressed an interest in understanding more about different varieties of English for ELF communication.

As can be seen in Table 2, responses to Q. 2 show that more than 80% of the respondents considered it a good idea to be exposed to different native and non-native accents of English in the classroom. Note, however, that when compared with the results

Table 2. Perceptions of exposure to multiple accents of English.

Q.		*N*	Disagree (SD and D)	Agree (SA and A)	Mean	s.d.
2	In the classroom, I think it is a good idea to be exposed to different native and non-native accents of English	318	16.4% (52)	83.6% (266)	3.09	.681
3	It is relatively easy to understand different native and non-native accents of English that I have not heard before	318	44.3% (141)	55.7% (177)	2.58	.735
4	Introducing different accents of English in the classroom may cause confusion when I learn English pronunciation	318	41.2% (131)	58.8% (187)	2.61	.736

for Q. 1, only around 40% of the respondents thought that students should be exposed to other educated non-native speaker accents of English, in addition to both educated Hong Kong non-native speaker accent and native-speaker accents (option D in Q. 1). One possible interpretation of the discrepancy here is that while most of the respondents appeared supportive of the idea of introducing multiple accents of English in the classroom *in theory*, they may or may not consider it necessary *in practice*. Interestingly, the findings here can be said to echo the ambivalent attitudes towards exposure to different accents of English in the classroom, as evidenced in the interview data.

In addition, responses to Q. 3 indicate that slightly more than half of the respondents considered it relatively easy to understand different native and non-native accents. The result here seems to suggest that if understanding new accents is not seen by the majority to be problematic, it is likely to follow that they will also see it as unnecessary and potentially risky to introduce them into the classroom. Such a view is consistent with the interview findings which show some participants' perception of the relative ease in understanding new accents of English.

As to the results for Q. 4, about 60% of respondents perceived possible confusion due to exposure to different accents of English in the classroom. Similar perceptions are confirmed in the interview data concerning the possible negative impact on language acquisition as a result of exposure to multiple accents in the classroom.

Furthermore, Table 3 (Q. 5) shows that the majority (74.2%) of the respondents thought that a native-speaker variety of English should be used as the instructional model for pronunciation (option A); around 21% of the respondents did not show any preference over any variety of English (option C); and only 5% of the respondents indicated the preference for the kind of English spoken by educated Hong Kong non-native speakers (option B). The questionnaire result here indicates that there seems to be a preference for a native-speaker variety as the instructional model of pronunciation among the majority of the respondents, thereby confirming the interview finding that there was a desire among L2 learners for a native-speaker pronunciation model in the ELT classroom.

6. Discussion

The present study explored L2 learners' perspectives on the introduction of multiple accents into the ELT classroom, with the aim of bringing learners' voices to the fore when considering such a case of pedagogical innovation. Overall, the analysis revealed rather ambivalent attitudes towards the exposure of multiple accents of English in the ELT classroom. Although both arguments in favour of and against the proposal existed side by side, there was a predominance of the latter in the interview data. While many

Table 3. Preference for an instructional model of pronunciation.

Q. 5: Which variety of English should be used as an instructional model of pronunciation?	$N = 318$	%
(A) A native-speaker variety of English (e.g., American/ British/Australian English)	236	74.2
(B) That spoken by educated Hong Kong non-native speakers	16	5
(C) Any variety of English, provided that I'm understood	66	20.8

interviewees understood the value of exposure to different accents of English (i.e., facilitating understanding in ELF communication), they had reservations about the idea of exposure to different accents of English in the ELT classroom. In particular, concerns were raised with respect to the practical value of familiarizing themselves with a diverse range of accents, the possible negative impact of being exposed to certain non-native accents of English on the acquisition of 'standard' pronunciation and the need to avoid possible confusion. In a similar vein, the findings of the questionnaire survey affirmed the participants' reservations about the practical value of exposure to different accents and their concerns over the learning from a 'standard' pronunciation model for productive purposes. Importantly, the findings suggest that while the majority of the respondents seemed to welcome exposure to different accents of English *in theory*, they did not seem to consider it necessarily appropriate *in practice*. In other words, there was clearly less than wholehearted support for the introduction of multiple accents in the ELT classroom.

The findings of the study also indicated that most learners seemed to show 'love and hate' feelings about different accents and varieties of English, largely because the goal of learning 'standard' pronunciation and the need for understanding a range of accents of English in the real world were perceived to be in conflict with each other. While most learners seemed to be aware of the possibility of encountering multiple accents of English given the plurality of English accents in ELF communication, they also perceived the importance of a single instructional model for learning English. As revealed in the study, most participants still held on to the value of a single 'standard' model of pronunciation for pedagogical purposes, even though it does not correspond to the sociolinguistic reality of Englishes which exist in ELF communication (see Young and Walsh 2010). Also evident in the interview data is that most L2 learners were concerned about the possible confusion and inconsistency in their learning of 'standard' pronunciation, and these views appear to be driven by primarily pragmatic and pedagogical reasons. Taken together, the findings appear to suggest that most participants held a rather practical perspective on exposure to multiple accents of English in the ELT classroom. In particular, the need to be exposed to different varieties of English appears to be seen as more of a side issue, and the learners' goals of learning 'standard' pronunciation seem to take precedence over the ability to understand and process different accents of English for ELF communication in reality. Indeed, L2 learners' preference for learning from a 'standard' or 'native-speaker' model of pronunciation are consistent with the findings reported in many previous studies (e.g., Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997; Friedrich 2000; He and Zhang 2010; Park 2003).

Furthermore, the results of the study also seem to corroborate with Csizer and Kontra's (2012) finding that the concepts of ELF and ENL coexist in the learners' beliefs. As revealed in Csizer and Kontra's study, both the concepts of ELF and ENL seem to impact on the learners' beliefs about the reality of Englishes and their learning goals. While the concept of ELF made the learners in this study recognize the value of exposure to different accents of English, the concept of ENL gave rise to their continued insistence of the use of a single native-speaker model of pronunciation for pedagogical purposes. As a result, the coexistence of the concepts of ELF and ENL caused some tension between the acceptance of more exposure to different Englishes and the need for a single model for the sake of learning (for production). It can therefore be seen that these advanced learners of English appeared to be caught up in the competing influences from both ELF and ENL, which in turn resulted in ambivalence, or even 'attitudinal schizophrenia' (Kachru and Nelson 2001).

It is also interesting to note the discrepancy between the learners' perspectives reported here and the dominant view in the ELF literature with respect to the incorporation of multiple accents in the ELT classroom. Despite the advocacy of familiarizing learners with different accents of English in various parts of the ELF literature (see, e.g., Jenkins 2007; Kirkpatrick 2007; Kopperoinen 2011), the majority of the participants were ambivalent about such a proposal. In particular, most participants still seemed to place a high value on the 'accuracy' of their pronunciation, particularly with reference to native-speaker norms, and were concerned about possible negative interferences as a result of exposure to other non-native accents of English. It can therefore be seen that the perceptions of the L2 learners are somewhat different from the view prevailing in the ELF literature that there is a need to expose learners to a range of L1 and L2 accents in the classroom. As Taylor (2006, 52) points out, 'applied linguists may see things differently but we should not ignore or override the attitudes and perceptions of learners themselves'. It is therefore important for researchers to acknowledge learners' preferences and their concerns about language learning.

Finally, the analysis revealed some L2 learners' different perceptions about native and non-native accents of English. As the questionnaire results showed, most participants still indicated a preference for native-speaker varieties to serve as the norm for pedagogical purposes in the ELT classroom, thereby confirming learners' perceptions of native-speaker varieties of English as reported in previous studies (e.g., Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997; He and Zhang 2010; Matsuda 2003; Zhang and Hu 2008). Additionally, there is some evidence of negative perceptions towards certain L2 accents of English, which may partly explain the learners' ambivalent attitudes towards exposure to multiple accents of English in the classroom. As these negative perceptions of L2 accents are likely to result from entrenched stereotypes and the 'native speaker ideology' (see Lippi-Green 1997), it is vital for teachers to provide learners with an accurate picture concerning the global role of English and the use of ELF worldwide. For example, teachers can introduce learners to the view that English is no longer the exclusive property of its native speakers and that the ownership of English is now shared among both L1 and L2 users of English (Matsuda 2006). It is hoped that in so doing, learners will develop a tolerant and open-minded attitude about the diversity of English varieties and accents around the world.

7. Implications

By considering L2 learners' perspectives on exposure to different accents of English in the classroom, this study has several pedagogical implications. While this study does not reject the idea of exposure to L1 and L2 varieties of English alongside one main model of pronunciation in the classroom, it seems to suggest a need for caution. As McKenzie (2010) points out, it does not seem reasonable to impose a single or a restricted range of pedagogical models for the ELT classroom in today's globalized world. He also considers it advantageous to expose students to both native and non-native accents (see also Matsuda 2006). However, a number of issues may need to be considered for the implementation of a 'polymodel' approach which involves the inclusion of different varieties (and accents) of English in the classroom. For example, should different L1 and L2 varieties of English be presented in the classroom? If so, which varieties of English and what kinds of variants should be selected? In addition, teachers should also consider a number of practical issues, e.g., which L1 or L2 accents should be included, whether only highly intelligible accents or a full range of accents should be used, how much exposure would be needed in the ELT classroom, and when learners are ready for

increased exposure to different accents. In other words, a careful and systematic approach to introducing multiple varieties of English must be in place before any attempts to incorporate a 'world Englishes' approach in the classroom (Sung 2013a). Further (action) research on classroom implementation of exposure to accents of English would be needed.

In pedagogical terms, I would suggest that exposure to different accents of English could be implemented after it is felt that sufficient time has elapsed for the primary pronunciation model to become properly established, thereby minimising the risk of confusion (see Sung 2013a). In doing so, such an approach would be in keeping with the need for a more nuanced approach to incorporating a 'polymodel' model into pedagogy. One possibility would be a predominantly awareness-raising approach, whereby little emphasis is placed on production. In other words, such an approach would involve exposing learners to different accents of English in comprehension mode whenever possible, and training learners' receptive ability in understanding different variants of English in ELF situations. In so doing, it is hoped that learners may increase their comprehensibility and their tolerance of different 'non-standard' phonological features in ELF interactions. It should be noted, however, that raising learners' awareness of language variation should not replace the teaching of a chosen instructional model of pronunciation (for production), as revealed in the views of the learners in the study.

It must be noted, however, that this study is not without its limitations. For example, it only looked at learners' perceptions, and other stakeholders' views, including those of teachers, were not examined but should be taken into account when considering the implementation of exposure to different Englishes in the classroom. In addition, since the study focused only on the context of Hong Kong and collected data from one particular university, any generalizations to other contexts must be made with caution. Further research could be conducted on a much larger scale and also in other contexts.

Despite these limitations, some tentative conclusions can be drawn. On the whole, this study not only suggests that there is a need for learners to be exposed to more than one single model of pronunciation given the sociolinguistic reality today, but it also points out that the recommendation to introduce different accents of English in the ELT classroom should be implemented with caution, by considering concerns of the kind expressed by the learners in the present study. For example, attention should be paid to the amount of exposure to L2 varieties of English and the specific varieties of English that should be included the curriculum (Sung 2013a). While it seems inevitable that exposure to multiple accents can be useful in raising learners' awareness of different accents in global ELF communication, they cannot be regarded as the only factor when deciding on the kinds of linguistic input that may be best for pedagogical purposes, since 'ELT is concerned primarily with attempting to meet language learning needs rather than simply presenting models of language use' (Sung 2013b, 186). For pedagogical purposes, therefore, there is a need for a consistent model to which learners can orient. While there is clearly some value in helping learners to deal with different accents of English in their everyday lives, it is perhaps equally important to explore ways to bring about changes in learners' perspective and their attitudes towards the plurality of English varieties in ELF communication (Sung 2014b, 2014c).

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