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TEACHING MULTIPLE ENGLISH VARIETIES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

The growing recognition of English as a global language has highlighted the increasing need to teach multiple English varieties in EFL contexts. This systematic review examines research on pedagogical approaches to teaching British, American, and other regional varieties of English, while evaluating their reported linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociolinguistic outcomes. The review synthesizes studies on exposure-based, contrastive, intelligibility-focused, and technology-assisted instructional strategies, highlighting how these approaches influence learners' listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, metalinguistic flexibility, confidence, and sociocultural understanding. Findings indicate that pluralistic teaching strategies provide multidimensional benefits, enhancing learners' ability to navigate diverse communicative contexts and fostering inclusive attitudes toward linguistic variation. At the same time, several challenges can impede effective implementation, including rigid curricula, limited instructional resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and persistent native-speaker bias. The review underscores the importance of adopting flexible, learner-centered instructional models that integrate exposure, contrastive analysis, and intelligibility-focused practices. Additionally, it highlights the need for professional development for teachers and the thoughtful incorporation of technology and authentic materials to support diverse learning contexts. Future research should employ longitudinal, experimental, and context-sensitive designs to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of pluralistic English instruction in a range of EFL environments. Overall, this study emphasizes the pedagogical value of pluralistic approaches for preparing learners to communicate effectively and confidently in global, multicultural, and multilingual settings.

KEYWORDS: English Varieties, EFL pedagogy, British English, American English, Accent Diversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has evolved from a national language into a global means of communication, functioning as an international lingua franca across education, business, technology, and diplomacy. As English spread worldwide, it diversified into multiple varieties shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts. Traditionally, British English and American English have dominated educational systems, textbooks, and assessment standards. However, the growing recognition of World Englishes and the increasing mobility of speakers have challenged the long-standing assumption that only one "standard" model should be taught in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

The coexistence of multiple English varieties presents both opportunities and pedagogical dilemmas. On the one hand, exposure to different accents, spelling systems, lexical items, and grammatical patterns can enhance learners' communicative competence and global awareness. On the other hand, variation may create confusion, particularly among learners who struggle to distinguish between pronunciation patterns (e.g., rhotic vs. non-rhotic accents), spelling differences (color vs. colour), or vocabulary contrasts (gas vs. petrol). In many EFL contexts, curriculum guidelines are inconsistent regarding which variety should be prioritized, leaving teachers to rely on personal preference, institutional tradition, or textbook orientation.

Recent shifts in applied linguistics emphasize intelligibility and communicative effectiveness rather than strict adherence to native-speaker norms. Perspectives such as World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) argue for recognizing linguistic diversity and preparing learners for real-world communication with speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, the question is no longer whether to teach British or American English, but rather how to manage multiple varieties effectively in pedagogical practice.

Despite growing interest in accent variation and global English, research findings remain scattered across different contexts and methodologies. Some studies highlight the benefits of exposure-based approaches, while others advocate for contrastive instruction or intelligibility-focused teaching. However, there is limited synthesis of these pedagogical strategies and their reported learning outcomes. A systematic review is therefore necessary to consolidate existing evidence, identify effective teaching approaches, and highlight gaps in the literature.

This study aims to systematically review research on teaching multiple English varieties, with particular attention to pedagogical approaches and reported linguistic, cognitive, and affective outcomes. By synthesizing findings from diverse educational contexts, this review seeks to contribute to curriculum development, teacher training, and future research in EFL pedagogy.

2. Conceptual Foundations

Understanding how multiple English varieties can be taught effectively requires a solid theoretical grounding. The discussion of British, American, and other English varieties is rooted in broader linguistic and sociolinguistic frameworks that challenge traditional monolithic views of "standard English." This section outlines the key theoretical perspectives that inform the teaching of multiple English varieties: World Englishes, English as ELF, and Standard Language Ideology.

2.1 World Englishes

The concept of World Englishes recognizes the pluralization of English as it has spread across the globe, adapting to a wide range of sociocultural, historical, and regional contexts. English is no longer a language confined to its native speakers but has evolved into a dynamic, international medium of communication. Kachru's (1985) influential Three-Circle Model provides a framework for understanding this global spread by categorizing English use into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, which includes countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States where English functions as a first language; the Outer Circle, encompassing countries like India and Nigeria where English has historical, institutional, and colonial influence and often functions as a second language; and the Expanding Circle, including nations such as Libya and China where English serves as a foreign language primarily for international communication. This model emphasizes that English now exists as a pluralistic phenomenon, no longer exclusively owned by native speakers, and that multiple standardized and localized varieties coexist alongside one another, each serving specific communicative and social functions.

From a pedagogical perspective, World Englishes challenges the traditional notion of a single "correct" English and encourages educators to recognize and incorporate linguistic diversity in teaching. Scholars argue that English instruction should reflect this diversity by exposing learners to multiple accents, pronunciation patterns, lexical items, and grammatical structures (Jenkins, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2007). Limiting instruction to only British or American English may provide a constrained and unrealistic model of global communication, particularly in multicultural and international contexts where learners encounter speakers from various

backgrounds. Teaching with a World Englishes perspective encourages learners to develop not only linguistic competence but also adaptability, awareness of variation, and intercultural sensitivity. By recognizing the legitimacy of different English varieties, learners become better equipped to understand and communicate effectively with speakers across diverse contexts, enhancing both their confidence and communicative competence.

2.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

English as ELF emphasizes the role of English as a functional means of communication among speakers who do not share a native language. Unlike traditional models that prioritize native-like proficiency, ELF recognizes that successful communication depends primarily on mutual understanding and intelligibility rather than strict adherence to British or American pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar norms (Seidlhofer, 2011). In ELF interactions, speakers often adjust their speech patterns, simplify structures, or adopt strategies to accommodate interlocutors from diverse linguistic backgrounds, demonstrating that effective communication is context-dependent and socially negotiated.

Research in ELF indicates that many pronunciation features typically emphasized in native-speaker models may not significantly affect comprehension among non-native speakers. For example, variations in vowel length, stress patterns, or certain consonant distinctions often do not impede intelligibility in international communication (Jenkins, 2000). Consequently, the pedagogical focus shifts from the imitation of a single native variety to fostering learners' ability to adapt their language use to different contexts and interlocutors. Teaching within an ELF framework encourages flexibility in speech, the use of accommodation strategies, and the development of pragmatic competence, enabling learners to negotiate meaning successfully across diverse communicative situations. This approach also validates exposure to multiple English varieties, allowing learners to recognize that English is a global language with legitimate forms beyond the traditional British and American standards. By prioritizing intelligibility and communication effectiveness, ELF-oriented instruction prepares learners for authentic, real-world interactions where linguistic diversity is the norm rather than the exception.

2.3 Standard Language Ideology

Despite the growing recognition of English as a diverse and pluricentric language, many educational systems continue to privilege so-called "standard" varieties, most commonly British or American English. This preference is rooted in what linguists refer to as Standard Language Ideology, the belief that one variety of a language is inherently superior, more correct, or socially prestigious compared to others (Lippi-Green, 2012). This ideology often

frames institutional practices, influencing curriculum design, assessment standards, teacher training, and classroom instruction. As a result, learners are frequently exposed to the implicit message that native-like proficiency in a single standard variety is the ultimate goal of language learning.

Such institutional and social biases can have profound effects on learners' attitudes and motivation. When students perceive one variety as "better" or "more correct," they may experience heightened anxiety about pronunciation, spelling, or vocabulary usage, and they may undervalue or dismiss the legitimacy of non-native or alternative English varieties. This can also limit learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-world, international contexts, where speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds interact. Moreover, teachers themselves may unconsciously reinforce these biases, emphasizing native-speaker norms in assessment, feedback, and classroom modeling.

Challenging Standard Language Ideology is therefore crucial for fostering inclusive, realistic, and globally oriented English instruction. By explicitly acknowledging the legitimacy of multiple English varieties and incorporating exposure to different accents, spelling conventions, and grammatical patterns, educators can reduce learner anxiety, promote positive attitudes, and develop greater linguistic and sociocultural competence (Matsuda, 2012). Emphasizing a pluralistic and communicative approach helps learners understand that intelligibility and adaptability are more important than achieving a single native-like standard, supporting effective participation in a diverse, international linguistic environment.

3. Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Multiple Varieties

The growing recognition of English as a global and pluricentric language has prompted educators to reconsider traditional single-standard teaching models. Rather than privileging only British or American English, scholars increasingly advocate pedagogical approaches that reflect linguistic diversity while maintaining clarity and intelligibility. The following subsections synthesize the main instructional approaches discussed in the literature for teaching multiple English varieties.

3.1 The Single-Standard Model

The single-standard approach to teaching English involves focusing on one dominant variety, most commonly British or American English, as the primary model for instruction. This approach emphasizes uniformity in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures to minimize learner confusion and provide a clear, structured path for language acquisition (Matsuda, 2012). Many educational systems and curricula favor this approach

because it aligns with standardized assessment practices, textbook conventions, and national or institutional language policies, thereby facilitating consistency across classrooms and examinations.

Although the single-standard approach offers benefits in terms of clarity and pedagogical organization, it has notable limitations. Critics argue that emphasizing a single variety may inadequately prepare learners for real-world communication, where interaction often occurs with speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins, 2015). Exposure to only one "standard" accent or set of norms can restrict learners' ability to understand and adapt to alternative pronunciations, lexical choices, and grammatical patterns. Furthermore, the approach risks reinforcing native-speaker norms as the sole benchmark of correctness, which may contribute to learner anxiety and create unrealistic expectations for language mastery. In increasingly globalized contexts, where English functions as a lingua franca, the single-standard model may therefore be insufficient for developing communicative competence, intercultural awareness, and the flexibility necessary to navigate real-world interactions.

3.2 The Contrastive Awareness Approach

The contrastive approach in teaching multiple English varieties emphasizes the explicit identification and comparison of linguistic differences across varieties, including spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. In practice, teachers guide learners to analyze contrasting forms, such as *color/colour*, *gas/petrol*, or rhotic versus non-rhotic pronunciation, encouraging students to observe patterns rather than treating variations as errors (Seidlhofer, 2011). This method promotes active engagement and critical awareness of the structural and functional distinctions that exist between British, American, and other regional forms of English.

By fostering metalinguistic awareness, the contrastive approach can significantly reduce learner confusion and enhance overall linguistic understanding. When students recognize that variations follow systematic rules, they are better equipped to navigate multiple English varieties in both written and spoken contexts (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Additionally, research indicates that explicit comparison encourages cognitive flexibility, enabling learners to switch between varieties according to context, audience, and communicative purpose (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). This heightened awareness not only strengthens accuracy and comprehension but also contributes to learners' ability to adapt effectively to international communication scenarios. In essence, the contrastive approach transforms differences

between varieties into learning opportunities, fostering analytical skills, autonomy, and a deeper appreciation of the diversity inherent in the English language.

3.3 Exposure-Based Approach

The exposure-based approach focuses on providing learners with extensive listening and interaction opportunities across multiple English varieties rather than relying solely on formal instruction or explicit comparison. In this approach, learners engage with diverse accents and dialects through a variety of multimedia resources, including authentic recordings, films, podcasts, online videos, and interactive digital platforms. Exposure occurs naturally and repeatedly, allowing learners to internalize differences in pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and lexical choices without the pressure of immediate production or error correction. The approach emphasizes immersive learning, where familiarity and comprehension develop gradually as learners encounter English in varied real-world contexts.

Research indicates that systematic exposure to accent diversity enhances both listening comprehension and the ability to recognize and interpret unfamiliar speech patterns (Galloway & Rose, 2015). By hearing and processing multiple varieties, learners become more adaptable, improving their overall communicative competence. The exposure-based approach also aligns closely with the principles of World Englishes and English as ELF, which emphasize intelligibility, flexibility, and effective communication over strict adherence to a single native-speaker standard. In practical terms, this method prepares learners for global interactions, fostering confidence when engaging with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds, while simultaneously reducing accent-related anxiety. Exposure-based instruction thus complements contrastive and intelligibility-focused approaches, offering a holistic pathway toward multilingual and multicultural competence in English.

3.4 Intelligibility-Focused Approach

The intelligibility-based approach represents a fundamental shift in pedagogical focus, moving away from the pursuit of native-like accuracy toward the development of effective, comprehensible communication in diverse contexts. Rather than emphasizing exact replication of British or American pronunciation norms, this approach identifies key phonological features that significantly impact international intelligibility and prioritizes their accurate use over less critical native-like distinctions (Jenkins, 2000). The approach acknowledges that perfect imitation of native-speaker norms is neither necessary nor realistic for learners who primarily communicate with other non-native speakers in global settings.

By focusing on intelligibility, instruction emphasizes clarity, comprehensibility, and the functional aspects of communication. Learners are encouraged to develop strategies for

accommodating variations in accent, vocabulary, and syntax when interacting with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. This fosters pragmatic awareness, allowing learners to adjust their speech, interpret meaning, and negotiate communication effectively in multicultural environments (Seidlhofer, 2011). The intelligibility-based model also complements exposure to multiple English varieties by encouraging learners to recognize that diverse forms of English can be acceptable and functional, as long as mutual understanding is maintained. In this sense, the approach supports a pluralistic, flexible pedagogy, equipping learners with the skills needed to participate confidently in global communication while reducing the anxiety associated with striving for a single "correct" accent.

3.5 Technology-Assisted Approach

Technological tools provide a dynamic and flexible avenue for teaching multiple English varieties, enabling learners to engage with diverse accents, pronunciations, and lexical variations in ways that traditional classroom instruction may not easily allow. Tools such as pronunciation software, speech recognition systems, AI-based feedback platforms, and online corpora offer learners opportunities to interact actively with authentic language input from different regions. These digital platforms expose learners to natural speech patterns, intonation, rhythm, and stress variations, facilitating repeated and self-paced practice. By integrating technology, learners can explore the diversity of English in a controlled, individualized, and interactive manner, allowing them to address specific areas of difficulty while reinforcing strengths.

Recent research indicates that technology-mediated pronunciation training significantly enhances learners' awareness of accent differences and improves intelligibility in both listening and production tasks (Jenkins, 2015; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). Learners can receive immediate feedback, monitor progress, and compare their pronunciation with multiple English varieties, which promotes metalinguistic awareness and greater confidence. Moreover, digital tools support exposure to less familiar varieties that may not be represented in standard textbooks, providing a broader understanding of English as a global language (Canagarajah, 2013). Overall, the integration of technology complements traditional pedagogical approaches by offering individualized, flexible, and contextually rich learning experiences, enabling learners to navigate the pluralistic nature of English with greater competence and adaptability.

4. Reported Learning Outcomes

Research on teaching multiple English varieties has examined not only instructional strategies but also their impact on learners' linguistic performance, cognitive development, and affective responses. Rather than focusing solely on accent imitation, contemporary studies evaluate broader outcomes such as intelligibility, listening comprehension, metalinguistic awareness, and learner attitudes. The following subsections synthesize the main categories of outcomes reported in the literature.

4.1 Linguistic Outcomes

One of the most frequently reported linguistic outcomes of exposure to multiple English varieties is enhanced listening comprehension and improved recognition of diverse accents. Learners who are systematically exposed to a range of pronunciation models develop greater flexibility in decoding unfamiliar speech patterns and adjusting to variations in intonation, stress, and rhythm (Galloway & Rose, 2015). This flexibility enables learners to comprehend spoken English more effectively across different international contexts, reducing miscommunication and enhancing overall communicative competence.

Research in the field of English as ELF further emphasizes that instruction focused on intelligibility, rather than strict adherence to native-speaker norms, significantly improves learners' ability to interact successfully with speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Jenkins, 2000). When multiple English varieties are integrated into instruction, learners not only become familiar with different pronunciation patterns but also develop the ability to identify systematic phonological distinctions, such as rhotic versus non-rhotic pronunciation, and recognize differences in vocabulary, spelling, and lexical usage (Kirkpatrick, 2007). This exposure equips learners with practical skills for navigating real-world communication, promoting both comprehension and confidence when engaging with interlocutors who may use British, American, or other regional varieties of English. Consequently, integrating multiple English varieties in teaching contributes directly to the development of adaptive listening skills, a critical component of effective global communication.

4.2 Cognitive and Metalinguistic Outcomes

Teaching multiple English varieties has also been strongly associated with enhanced metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility. When learners engage in explicit comparison of forms, such as *color/colour*, *gas/petrol*, or analyze differences in pronunciation and stress patterns, they gain a deeper understanding of language variation as systematic and rule-governed rather than arbitrary (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). This process

encourages learners to think critically about the structure and function of language, enabling them to recognize patterns across varieties and make informed linguistic choices.

Such comparative awareness contributes to cognitive flexibility, allowing learners to adjust their language use according to context, interlocutor, or communicative purpose. They learn to navigate between different accents, vocabulary sets, and grammatical conventions with confidence, rather than perceiving variation as confusion or error. Matsuda (2012) emphasizes that recognizing English as a pluralistic and evolving language not only strengthens analytical and problem-solving skills but also equips learners for authentic, real-world communication in global contexts. By fostering metalinguistic insight, instruction that incorporates multiple varieties helps learners develop both linguistic competence and the cognitive strategies necessary for successful interaction in multicultural and multilingual environments (Rubin & Zafar, 2011). Ultimately, this approach nurtures independent, adaptive, and reflective language users who are capable of engaging effectively across a wide spectrum of English-speaking contexts.

4.3 Affective Outcomes

Beyond linguistic competence, exposure to multiple English varieties has a significant impact on learners' affective development, including their attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence. When students are made aware that variation across English varieties is natural, rule-governed, and socially legitimate, anxiety associated with "sounding native" often decreases (Seidlhofer, 2011). This understanding helps learners feel more comfortable producing English in authentic communicative situations, reducing fear of making mistakes or deviating from a perceived "correct" standard.

Research also indicates that integrating Global Englishes perspectives into instruction fosters more positive learner attitudes toward non-native accents. Learners who engage with multiple varieties begin to recognize that intelligibility and effective communication are more important than strict imitation of native norms (Galloway & Rose, 2015). This shift in mindset not only increases confidence in interacting with speakers from diverse backgrounds but also challenges entrenched native-speaker biases, encouraging inclusivity and appreciation of linguistic diversity (Ur, 2012). In turn, learners are more willing to participate actively in classroom discussions, group tasks, and international exchanges, demonstrating that affective development is closely linked to exposure, awareness, and recognition of pluralistic English varieties (Lippi-Green, 2012). Such outcomes suggest that teaching multiple varieties not only enhances communicative skills but also supports positive attitudes, intercultural openness, and a growth-oriented learning environment.

4.4 Sociolinguistic Awareness

Another significant outcome of teaching multiple English varieties is the development of sociolinguistic competence, which extends beyond mere linguistic accuracy to include awareness of the cultural, historical, and social dimensions of language use. Learners exposed to a range of English varieties begin to understand that differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar are not errors but reflect legitimate, context-dependent forms of communication shaped by social and cultural factors. According to Kirkpatrick (2007), this understanding of linguistic diversity plays a crucial role in fostering intercultural communicative competence, enabling learners to navigate interactions with speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds more effectively, and supporting the development of global citizenship.

By recognizing that English is not the property of any single nation, learners develop a more realistic, inclusive, and flexible perspective on language use. They learn to interpret meaning in context, adapt their speech according to the interlocutor, and appreciate the social significance of language variation. This awareness is particularly important in multilingual EFL environments, where communication frequently occurs between non-native speakers with differing accents, vocabulary, and grammatical conventions. Exposure to multiple varieties thus equips learners not only with practical communication skills but also with the sociocultural sensitivity necessary for participating confidently and respectfully in international and multicultural settings. Overall, sociolinguistic competence enhances learners' ability to engage in meaningful, contextually appropriate interactions, complementing the linguistic, cognitive, and affective benefits of pluralistic English instruction.

5. Challenges in Teaching Multiple Varieties

While the integration of multiple English varieties into EFL instruction offers significant linguistic and sociocultural benefits, it also presents practical and ideological challenges. Educational systems have traditionally favored a single standardized model, and shifting toward a pluralistic framework requires pedagogical, institutional, and attitudinal adjustments. The following subsections outline the key challenges reported in the literature.

5.1 Curriculum and Policy Constraints

Many national curricula and standardized assessment systems continue to align closely with either British or American English norms, often presenting one variety as the official standard for instruction and evaluation. Textbooks, examination rubrics, teacher guidelines, and

official language policies typically reinforce this singular focus, providing limited guidance for incorporating alternative varieties in classroom practice (Matsuda, 2012). As a result, teachers who attempt to expose learners to multiple English varieties may encounter structural constraints, such as mandated lesson plans, prescribed textbook content, or assessment criteria that favor one standard over others.

This institutional orientation can lead to inconsistencies and challenges for both teachers and learners. Educators may struggle to balance the demands of the curriculum with the goal of introducing pluralistic instruction, while students may experience confusion over which forms of spelling, pronunciation, or grammar are considered "correct." Such uncertainty is particularly pronounced in high-stakes examinations, where strict adherence to a single standard is often expected, potentially discouraging learners from experimenting with alternative forms or engaging confidently with diverse varieties. Consequently, curriculum rigidity and assessment practices remain significant barriers to implementing inclusive, globally informed English instruction, highlighting the need for policy reform and teacher support to facilitate the teaching of multiple varieties.

5.2 Teacher Preparation and Attitudes

A significant challenge in teaching multiple English varieties lies in teacher training and professional development. Many language teachers themselves were educated within single-standard systems, often focusing exclusively on either British or American English. As a result, they may lack the knowledge, experience, or confidence to incorporate accent variation and linguistic diversity explicitly into their classroom practice (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). Without adequate preparation, teachers may find it difficult to design lessons that balance exposure to multiple varieties with the need for clarity and comprehensibility.

Furthermore, research indicates that some educators hold implicit or unconscious preferences for specific native-speaker norms, often viewing them as the most legitimate or "correct" forms of English. These attitudes can influence instructional choices, including the selection of teaching materials, classroom modeling, and assessment practices, thereby reinforcing Standard Language Ideology and marginalizing non-standard or alternative varieties (Lippi-Green, 2012). Teachers who are untrained or unaware of pluralistic approaches may inadvertently perpetuate learner anxiety about pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar, particularly when students encounter unfamiliar accents. Targeted professional development programs that introduce teachers to the principles of World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and exposure to multiple varieties are therefore essential. Such training can enhance instructional competence, encourage more inclusive classroom practices, and equip educators

to foster learners' flexibility, intelligibility, and confidence when engaging with diverse English forms.

5.3 Learner Confusion and Cognitive Load

Although exposure to multiple English varieties offers substantial benefits for linguistic and sociocultural awareness, it may initially lead to confusion and uncertainty among learners, particularly those at lower proficiency levels. Differences in pronunciation, stress patterns, spelling, and vocabulary. For example, *color/colour*, *gas/petrol*, or *rhotic/non-rhotic pronunciation*, can create ambiguity about which forms are "correct" or expected in academic and formal contexts (Kirkpatrick, 2007). This uncertainty may cause learners to hesitate in speaking, writing, or participating in classroom activities, potentially reducing confidence and engagement.

Cognitive load theory suggests that presenting multiple variations without adequate scaffolding can overwhelm learners, as they must process, store, and apply diverse forms simultaneously. When learners are not guided to recognize patterns or understand the systematic nature of variation, the additional cognitive demands may impede learning rather than enhance it. Therefore, careful sequencing of exposure, gradual introduction of differences, and explicit explanation of the rationale behind variation are critical. Structured guidance allows learners to build a mental framework for understanding multiple varieties, fostering both accuracy and flexibility. By combining exposure with systematic instruction and supportive practice, educators can reduce confusion, maintain learner motivation, and facilitate the development of adaptive communication skills in diverse English-speaking contexts.

5.4 Native-Speaker Bias and Identity Issues

The persistence of native-speakerism represents a significant challenge in teaching multiple English varieties. Many learners continue to equate language proficiency with the ability to speak like a native British or American speaker, often perceiving these varieties as inherently more prestigious, correct, or desirable (Jenkins, 2015). This perception is reinforced by societal attitudes, media representations, and traditional educational practices that emphasize native-speaker norms as the ultimate benchmark for success.

Such beliefs can create resistance toward pluralistic models of English instruction, causing learners to undervalue the legitimacy of non-native varieties or alternative accents. Learners may experience frustration or anxiety when exposed to multiple varieties, fearing that deviation from the "ideal" native accent reflects inadequacy or failure. Over time, this mindset can limit engagement, reduce confidence, and discourage experimentation with

diverse English forms. According to Seidlhofer (2011), addressing native-speaker bias requires a fundamental reframing of English as a shared international resource rather than the exclusive property of any specific nation. By promoting the view that intelligibility and effective communication are more important than emulating native-speaker norms, educators can help learners develop more inclusive attitudes, greater flexibility in language use, and an appreciation for the global diversity of English. This shift is essential for fostering learner confidence and enabling successful participation in multicultural and international communication contexts.

5.5 Limited Instructional Materials

Although digital media and online platforms have significantly expanded learners' access to a wide range of English accents and varieties, many traditional teaching materials continue to focus predominantly on British or American English. Textbooks, worksheets, and audio recordings often present only a single standard, limiting learners' exposure to the full spectrum of global English (Galloway & Rose, 2015). This lack of systematically designed instructional resources for teaching multiple varieties can discourage teachers from adopting inclusive or pluralistic approaches, particularly if they are concerned about maintaining clarity, avoiding confusion, or meeting standardized assessment requirements.

Developing teaching materials that balance accessibility with linguistic diversity remains a persistent challenge in applied linguistics. Effective resources must provide clear guidance on variation, highlight contrasts between varieties, and offer opportunities for practice with authentic accents, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. Such materials should also integrate visual, auditory, and interactive elements to support learner comprehension and engagement. Without these carefully designed tools, even well-prepared teachers may struggle to implement pluralistic approaches effectively, potentially limiting the benefits of exposure to multiple English varieties. Addressing this gap requires collaboration among curriculum developers, educators, and linguists to create resources that are both pedagogically sound and reflective of the global, dynamic nature of English.

6. Synthesis and Critical Evaluation

Integrating multiple English varieties in EFL instruction has been widely acknowledged as both necessary and challenging. The preceding sections have outlined pedagogical approaches, reported learning outcomes, and teaching challenges. This section synthesizes these findings and critically evaluates their implications for practice, policy, and future research.

6.1 Synthesis of Findings

Research consistently indicates that pluralistic approaches, those that expose learners to multiple English varieties while explicitly raising awareness of their differences, yield a wide range of multidimensional benefits. Linguistically, learners demonstrate significant improvements in listening comprehension, accent recognition, phonological awareness, and the ability to distinguish between systematic variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2000). Cognitively, these approaches foster enhanced metalinguistic flexibility, allowing learners to recognize patterns, make informed linguistic choices, and navigate diverse communicative contexts with greater ease (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). From an affective standpoint, exposure to multiple varieties has been associated with increased learner confidence, reduced anxiety over "sounding native," and the development of more positive attitudes toward non-native accents and alternative English forms (Seidlhofer, 2011). These outcomes collectively contribute to learners' ability to engage effectively in international, multicultural, and multilingual communication settings.

Various pedagogical strategies have been shown to support these outcomes when implemented with appropriate scaffolding and guidance. Contrastive instruction helps learners compare and understand differences between varieties, exposure-based activities provide immersive listening experiences, intelligibility-focused approaches prioritize clear and effective communication, and technology-assisted practice offers individualized feedback and access to authentic speech materials (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Jenkins, 2015). Despite these demonstrated benefits, the single-standard approach continues to dominate many educational contexts, largely due to institutional policies, ideological biases, and limitations in teaching resources (Matsuda, 2012). This persistence highlights the need for more flexible, inclusive, and contextually informed pedagogical frameworks that can bridge the gap between theoretical pluralistic models and practical classroom implementation, ensuring that learners gain the full benefits of exposure to multiple English varieties.

6.2 Critical Evaluation

Despite the well-documented benefits of teaching multiple English varieties, several limitations and challenges emerge from the literature that can affect the effectiveness of pluralistic approaches. First, curriculum rigidity and standardized assessment systems often constrain the implementation of multiple varieties in classroom practice. Many educational programs are aligned strictly with either British or American English norms, and textbooks, examinations, and teaching guidelines reflect this focus (Matsuda, 2012). Such structural constraints create a gap between the ideal of pluralistic instruction and the practical realities

teachers face, limiting the opportunities for learners to experience diverse varieties in meaningful ways.

Second, teacher preparedness is highly variable across educational contexts. Many educators have been trained exclusively in single-standard systems and may lack the knowledge, confidence, or pedagogical strategies necessary to integrate multiple varieties effectively (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). Without targeted professional development, teachers may unintentionally prioritize one standard over others, reducing learners' exposure and undermining the potential benefits of pluralistic instruction.

Third, while exposure to multiple varieties is advantageous for linguistic, cognitive, and affective development, cognitive load considerations are critical. Introducing numerous differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar simultaneously may overwhelm learners, particularly those with lower proficiency levels (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Without carefully sequenced instruction and structured guidance, the very exposure intended to foster flexibility and awareness can create confusion and hinder learning.

Finally, native-speaker bias continues to influence learner attitudes and expectations, often leading to resistance against non-standard or alternative varieties despite pedagogical interventions (Lippi-Green, 2012). Learners may perceive one variety as superior, equating language proficiency with the ability to approximate native-speaker norms, which can limit engagement with pluralistic instruction and reduce confidence in their own linguistic abilities. Taken together, these findings indicate that teaching multiple English varieties is most effective when it is guided by explicit instructional design, supported by comprehensive teacher training, and integrated with carefully developed teaching materials that balance clarity with linguistic diversity. The literature underscores the need to move away from prescriptive, single-standard models toward adaptive, learner-centered approaches that reflect the realities of English as a global, pluricentric language. Such approaches can maximize learner engagement, promote intercultural competence, and prepare students for authentic, real-world communication across diverse English-speaking contexts.

7. Pedagogical Implications

The synthesis of research on teaching multiple English varieties highlights practical insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. Integrating British, American, and other English varieties in EFL classrooms requires deliberate strategies that balance linguistic diversity with clarity, intelligibility, and learner confidence. This section outlines the key pedagogical implications derived from the literature.

7.1 Curriculum Design

Curricula in EFL contexts should be designed to reflect the pluricentric and global nature of English, providing learners with systematic and structured exposure to multiple varieties while clearly explaining the purpose, context, and functional relevance of each form. Rather than presenting a single standard as the "correct" model, curricula should integrate activities, texts, and listening materials that include authentic examples from British and American English, as well as other regional or World Englishes varieties where appropriate. Matsuda (2012) emphasizes that carefully selected teaching materials can reinforce learners' understanding of linguistic variation as legitimate and meaningful, helping them to navigate differences in spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures.

By including multiple varieties in the curriculum, educators create learning environments where learners can develop practical skills for real-world communication, rather than focusing narrowly on conformity to one standardized form. Structured exposure encourages learners to compare forms, notice patterns, and apply rules flexibly in different contexts, which enhances metalinguistic awareness and cognitive adaptability (Nation, 2013). Moreover, pluralistic curricula promote sociolinguistic understanding, preparing students to communicate effectively with speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and helping them recognize English as a shared international resource rather than the property of any single nation. In this way, curriculum design plays a pivotal role in supporting inclusive, learner-centered instruction that aligns with contemporary approaches in applied linguistics and global English education.

7.2 Teacher Training

Effective implementation of pluralistic approaches in EFL classrooms depends heavily on comprehensive and targeted teacher training. Many educators continue to rely primarily on native-speaker norms, often due to their own educational backgrounds in single-standard systems, and may lack the pedagogical strategies required to integrate multiple English varieties effectively (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). Without appropriate preparation, teachers may inadvertently reinforce a single standard, limit learners' exposure to diverse accents, and fail to address learners' questions or confusion about variation, reducing the potential benefits of pluralistic instruction.

Teacher education programs should therefore include dedicated modules on World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and accent diversity, equipping teachers with both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for classroom implementation. Such training can familiarize educators with the principles of pluralistic instruction, including contrastive

analysis, exposure-based activities, intelligibility-focused techniques, and technology-assisted pronunciation tools (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). By increasing teachers' confidence and competence, these programs enable educators to design lessons that balance clarity and diversity, scaffold learner understanding of variation, and address sociolinguistic, cognitive, and affective aspects of learning. In doing so, teacher training becomes a crucial component in ensuring that pluralistic approaches are not only conceptually understood but effectively applied in diverse EFL contexts, ultimately enhancing learner engagement, communicative competence, and intercultural awareness.

7.3 Instructional Strategies

Pedagogical approaches for teaching multiple English varieties should integrate multiple complementary strategies to maximize learner outcomes. Specifically, instruction should combine exposure-based activities, contrastive instruction, and intelligibility-focused practices in a coherent and scaffolded manner. Guided exposure to diverse accents through multimedia resources, authentic audio recordings, videos, and interactive classroom activities allows learners to experience English as it is used by speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Jenkins (2015) and Galloway and Rose (2015) emphasize that such exposure enhances listening comprehension, improves the recognition of accent-specific features, and builds learners' confidence in understanding unfamiliar speech patterns.

In addition, contrastive instruction that explicitly highlights differences in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures between varieties strengthens learners' metalinguistic awareness. By analyzing forms such as *color/colour*, *gas/petrol*, or rhotic versus non-rhotic pronunciation, learners gain a deeper understanding of systematic variation and the functional significance of differences across varieties. Integrating these strategies with intelligibility-focused practices ensures that learners prioritize clear communication and adaptability over rigid imitation of a single standard, fostering practical skills for real-world interactions. Collectively, these approaches support not only linguistic competence but also cognitive flexibility, sociolinguistic awareness, and affective confidence, creating a more holistic and effective framework for pluralistic English instruction.

7.4 Learner Engagement and Attitudes

Teachers should actively and explicitly address learners' attitudes toward linguistic variation and work to reduce the influence of native-speaker bias in the classroom. Learners often enter EFL contexts with the belief that British or American English represents the "correct" or most prestigious form, which can limit their engagement with other varieties and create anxiety about using English in authentic settings (Seidlhofer, 2011). By creating awareness

that multiple English varieties are both legitimate and intelligible, educators can foster positive learner attitudes, encourage experimentation, and build confidence in communication across diverse contexts.

Practical strategies for achieving this include integrating activities that expose learners to authentic examples from a range of English-speaking regions, discussing real-world communication scenarios that involve diverse accents, and providing opportunities for role-play and collaborative tasks that require negotiation of meaning. Exposure to international media, such as news clips, podcasts, and online videos, can further reinforce the idea that intelligibility and effective communication matter more than strict adherence to a single native-speaker norm. Through these deliberate instructional practices, teachers can promote inclusivity, intercultural sensitivity, and learner autonomy, ultimately supporting the development of communicative competence in pluralistic English contexts.

7.5 Technology Integration

Technology provides a flexible and highly effective means of supporting pluralistic approaches to teaching English. Digital platforms, AI-based pronunciation tools, speech recognition software, and online corpora enable learners to access authentic materials from a wide range of English varieties, including British, American, and other regional forms (Jenkins, 2015). By interacting with these resources, learners can practice listening, pronunciation, and production in a controlled yet realistic environment, gaining exposure to diverse accents, lexical items, and grammatical patterns that may not be available in traditional classroom materials.

Incorporating technology into instruction allows for personalized learning, where learners can progress at their own pace, repeat activities as needed, and focus on areas requiring additional practice. AI-powered tools and interactive platforms provide immediate, automated feedback, enabling learners to self-correct and monitor their own progress while reinforcing metalinguistic awareness. Technology also helps overcome limitations of classroom resources, offering access to authentic language use from around the world, which is particularly valuable in EFL contexts where exposure to non-native speakers and multiple varieties may be limited. By integrating these tools thoughtfully into the curriculum, educators can enhance learner engagement, support differentiated instruction, and promote the development of communicative competence, sociolinguistic awareness, and confidence across multiple English varieties.

8. Future Research Directions

Despite growing interest in teaching multiple English varieties, several gaps remain in the literature. Addressing these gaps can advance both theoretical understanding and practical application in EFL contexts.

8.1 Longitudinal Studies

Most existing research on teaching multiple English varieties has focused on short-term interventions, cross-sectional designs, or limited classroom observations, leaving the long-term effects of pluralistic English instruction largely unexplored. While evidence demonstrates immediate improvements in listening comprehension, pronunciation, and metalinguistic awareness, it remains unclear whether these benefits are sustained over time or how learners transfer their skills to authentic communication in diverse contexts (Jenkins, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2007). Future research should therefore employ longitudinal study designs to track learners' development across extended periods, examining not only linguistic outcomes such as accent recognition, pronunciation accuracy, and comprehension but also cognitive, affective, and sociolinguistic dimensions of learning.

Longitudinal investigations can provide insight into how learners consolidate exposure to multiple varieties, adapt to different English-speaking interlocutors, and develop flexibility and confidence in real-world communication. Such studies would also help identify factors that influence retention and transfer, including instructional methods, frequency and quality of exposure, and learner characteristics. By evaluating outcomes over time, longitudinal research can inform the design of more effective, sustainable, and context-sensitive instructional approaches, supporting evidence-based curriculum development and teacher training in EFL settings. Ultimately, this line of inquiry is essential for understanding how pluralistic English instruction contributes to the long-term development of communicative competence in global contexts.

8.2 Experimental and Comparative Research

Few studies to date employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs that systematically compare the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches to teaching multiple English varieties. Most research has relied on descriptive, observational, or qualitative methods, leaving gaps in our understanding of which strategies yield the strongest outcomes across diverse learner populations and instructional contexts (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Conducting comparative studies that evaluate single-standard, contrastive, exposure-based, and intelligibility-focused approaches could provide valuable insights into their relative efficacy and inform evidence-based instructional design.

Experimental and quasi-experimental research can also examine how the integration of technology-assisted pronunciation tools, such as AI-based feedback platforms, speech recognition software, or online corpora, affects learners' accent recognition, production accuracy, and listening comprehension. By systematically manipulating instructional variables and measuring outcomes, such studies can clarify which combinations of pedagogical approaches and technological interventions most effectively support linguistic, cognitive, and affective development. These insights would allow educators to make informed decisions regarding curriculum design, classroom activities, and resource allocation, ensuring that pluralistic English instruction is both pedagogically sound and contextually appropriate. Ultimately, comparative experimental research is essential for establishing evidence-based best practices in teaching multiple English varieties and for optimizing learner outcomes in EFL classrooms.

8.3 Underrepresented Contexts

Existing research on teaching multiple English varieties is heavily concentrated in European, Asian, and certain Middle Eastern contexts, leaving other regions, such as North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Latin America, significantly underexplored. These underrepresented areas often present unique sociocultural, linguistic, and educational circumstances that can influence the effectiveness of pluralistic English instruction. For example, learners' exposure to English may be limited primarily to one dominant variety through textbooks, media, or institutional policy, and sociocultural attitudes toward language variation may differ from those observed in more extensively studied regions.

Investigating pluralistic English teaching in these contexts can provide valuable insights into how local factors, such as curriculum design, teacher preparedness, classroom resources, and learners' prior exposure to English, affect learning outcomes (Matsuda, 2012). Such research would also highlight region-specific challenges and opportunities, including strategies for managing limited materials, addressing native-speaker bias, and integrating technology effectively. By expanding empirical studies to these underrepresented areas, scholars can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the global applicability of pluralistic approaches, inform context-sensitive curriculum and pedagogical design, and ensure that teaching practices are responsive to the diverse needs of learners across different EFL settings.

8.4 Learner-Centered Perspectives

Most research on teaching multiple English varieties has predominantly focused on teacher-led instruction, classroom strategies, and curriculum design, while learners' own

perspectives, attitudes, and strategies remain underexplored. Understanding how learners perceive, process, and manage exposure to multiple varieties is critical for designing instruction that is both effective and responsive to their needs (Seidlhofer, 2011). Future research should investigate learners' attitudes toward accent diversity, their motivation to engage with different English varieties, and the strategies they employ to navigate differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Such studies could examine how learners perceive intelligibility, how exposure to multiple varieties influences their sense of linguistic identity, and how confident they feel using diverse English forms in academic, professional, and social contexts.

Exploring learners' perspectives can provide valuable insights for instructional design, highlighting which approaches foster engagement, reduce anxiety, and support positive attitudes toward pluralistic English. By incorporating learners' experiences, educators can tailor exposure, contrastive instruction, and intelligibility-focused activities to better meet student needs, ensuring that teaching practices are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and aligned with learners' cognitive and affective development. A learner-centered focus thus complements teacher-led approaches, enhancing the overall effectiveness of pluralistic English instruction and contributing to more equitable and meaningful learning outcomes.

8.5 Technology-Enhanced Learning

Digital platforms, AI-based feedback tools, speech recognition software, and online corpora offer promising opportunities for enhancing the teaching of multiple English varieties. These technologies allow learners to access authentic speech from diverse English-speaking regions, practice pronunciation and listening skills at their own pace, and receive immediate feedback on their performance. Despite their potential, empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of technology-assisted instruction for pluralistic English learning remains limited. Few studies have systematically measured outcomes such as accent recognition, pronunciation accuracy, listening comprehension, or learner confidence when using these digital tools.

Future research should explore how technology can support learner autonomy and individualized practice, enabling students to focus on areas that require additional attention while fostering engagement with multiple varieties. Investigations could examine the extent to which AI-based platforms and online corpora enhance exposure to authentic English, reinforce metalinguistic awareness, and promote intelligibility-focused learning. Moreover, research should consider how technology can complement traditional classroom approaches, integrate with contrastive and exposure-based strategies, and address challenges such as

cognitive load and learner motivation (Jenkins, 2015; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). By systematically assessing the impact of these tools, future studies can provide evidence-based guidance for integrating technology effectively into pluralistic English instruction, supporting both teachers and learners in achieving communicative competence across diverse linguistic contexts.

9. CONCLUSION

This systematic review has demonstrated that teaching multiple English varieties, including British, American, and other regional forms, offers substantial and multifaceted benefits for EFL learners. Exposure to diverse varieties not only enhances listening comprehension and pronunciation awareness but also promotes metalinguistic flexibility, enabling learners to analyze and navigate linguistic variation systematically. In addition, learners gain affective advantages, such as increased confidence, reduced anxiety about "sounding native," and more positive attitudes toward non-native forms. Importantly, pluralistic instruction also fosters sociolinguistic understanding and intercultural competence, preparing learners to engage effectively with speakers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in global communication contexts.

At the same time, several persistent challenges must be addressed to implement pluralistic approaches successfully. Structural limitations such as rigid curricula, standardized assessment systems, and the predominance of single-standard teaching materials can constrain classroom practice. Teachers may lack the training, confidence, or strategies to integrate multiple varieties effectively, and learners may hold entrenched preferences for native-speaker norms, further limiting engagement and inclusivity. Overcoming these obstacles requires careful curriculum design that systematically integrates multiple varieties, targeted professional development for teachers to enhance pedagogical competence, and the strategic use of technology and authentic materials to provide meaningful exposure to global English.

Ultimately, the findings underscore a necessary shift from prescriptive, single-standard instruction toward flexible, learner-centered, and evidence-based pedagogical models. Embracing linguistic diversity and incorporating inclusive instructional strategies allow educators to equip learners with the skills, knowledge, and confidence required to communicate effectively in a multilingual and multicultural world. By doing so, pluralistic English instruction not only strengthens linguistic competence but also cultivates the

cognitive, affective, and sociocultural capacities necessary for success in contemporary global contexts.

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