



Challenges/constraints in teaching today's English in Vietnam: Teachers' voices

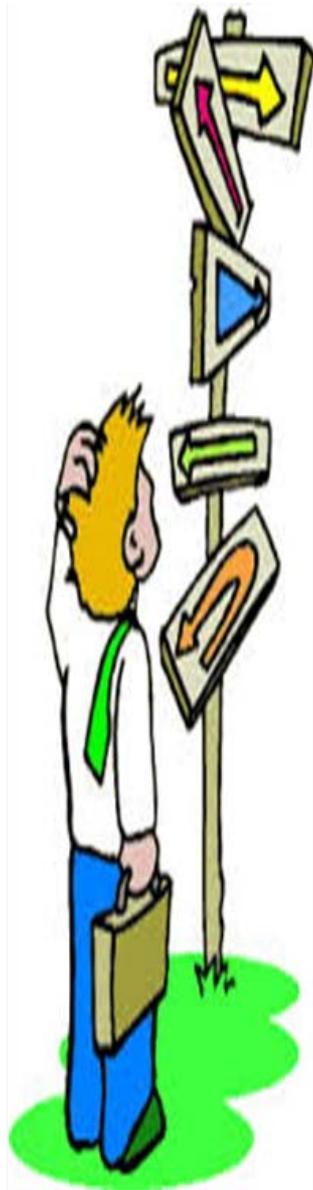
By Dr. Ngan Le Hai Phan

Binh Dinh College, Quy Nhon

August 10-11, 2017

8th Annual International Conference on TESOL

SEAMEO RETRACT, HCMC, Vietnam.



What are the possible challenges and constraints with which Vietnamese ELT teachers are confronted in teaching English today?

Outline

1. Background
2. Research questions
3. Literature Review
4. Methodology
5. Findings
6. Discussion & Implications

Background

Demographic change:

Over 80% of communication in English today is between the so-called 'non-native speakers' of English

Current status of English

Geographic change:

Official or special status in more than 88 countries and territories around the world with over 2,000,000,000 speakers

Structural change:

More and more varieties of English (World Englishes) are being developed (e.g. Chinese English)

The paradigm of EIL

The recognition of equal validity and dignity of all varieties of English

Critical revisiting

Teaching models

- Lingua franca model (Kirkpatrick, 2006) or international variety of English (Matsuda, 2012).
- Speakers' own variety of English (Matsuda, 2012).
- An established variety of English (Matsuda, 2012).

Teaching cultures

- Global culture/local for intercultural communication

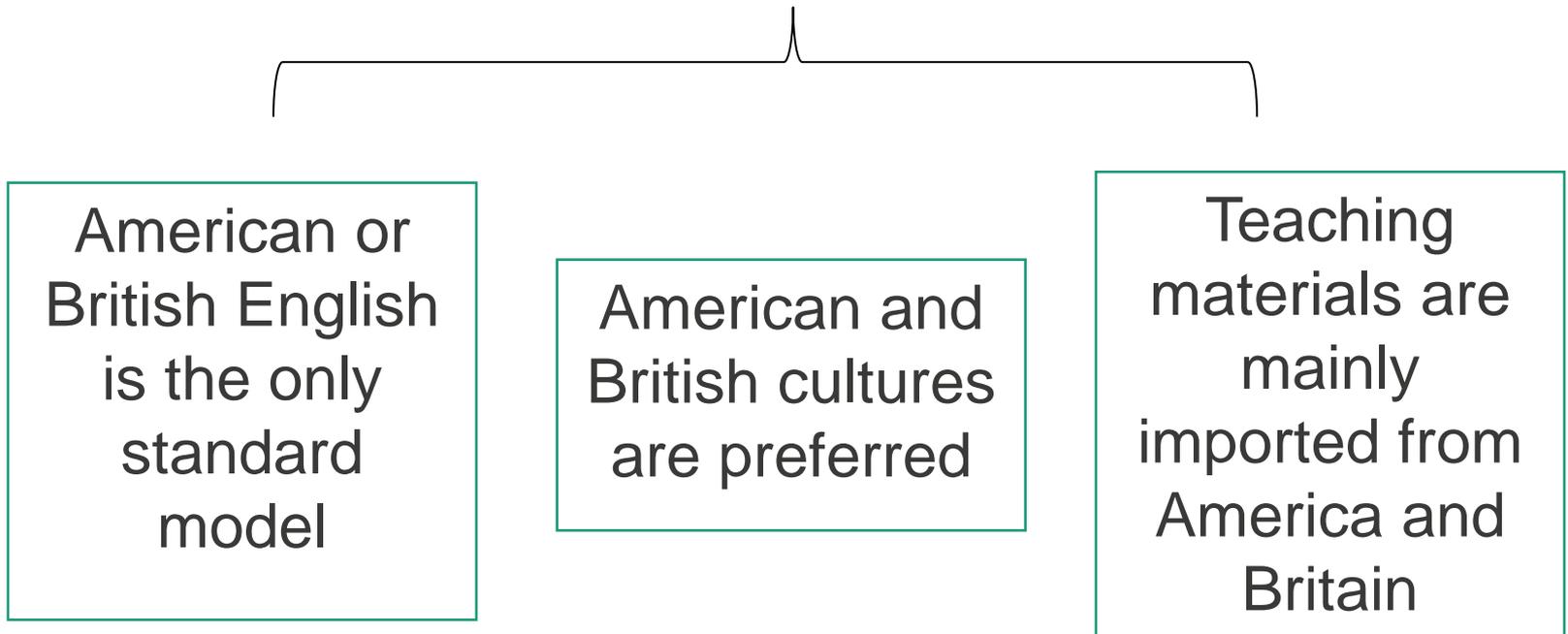
Teaching materials

- In-country/domestic materials
- Adapted imported materials
- Co-written materials and locally written materials

English language teaching in Vietnam

- National Foreign Language Project 2008 - 2020

Communicative language teaching (CLT) since 1990s



Gap in teaching today's English in Vietnam

- Native speaker communicative competence
- Problems in communication skills

Research Question

1. What do the participants think of the current status of English?
2. What can be the possible challenges and constraints to teach English today in Vietnam?

Methodology

- Research approach: qualitative study
- Research methodology: individual interviews
- Research participants: 21 Vietnamese ELT teachers

Participants & Locations



Individual interviews	Number of participants	Female	Male	Age	Teaching experience
In the south	5	3	2	31 → 63	7 → 29
In the central	7	5	2	23 → 33	1 → 5
In the north	9	9	0	29 → 42	7 → 20
Total	21	17 (81%)	4 (19%)	23 → 63	1 → 29

Data coding & analysis

Data	Analysis	Tech. aids
In-depth Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Translation of the data• Coding• Inductive analysis	NVIVO10



Themes development

Findings-Reflections on the current status of English

The spread of English

- English has spread globally as an international language.
- The number of non-native speakers of English is increasing fast.

The diversity of English

- English is a language with variation.
- English has its different varieties.

Data in quotes

- Lect3: English has been used widely... English used in each country has **changed accordingly**...I have talked to Singaporean or Thai people; I have noticed the changes in pronunciation and words...
- Lect9: English is not only English but also **a language with variations**.
- Lect10: There are some differences in English, like we **have varieties of English in every country**, like Vietnamese English, Singaporean English... it makes English different from each other...[sic]
- Lect18: English is **no longer used by native speakers** but also by all the peoples in the world. When used this way, we must **accept the fact that English is changed** as speakers inject the features of their mother tongues into English.

Findings- Possible challenges for instructional change

Teachers' limited capacity to teach current English

The exam-orientated curriculum

Limited teaching facilities and teaching materials

Lack of supportive environments for English language practice

Lect1: “The diversity of English **poses challenges for teachers as it is impossible to know all the varieties to teach**. We feel that we lose face when our students seem to know more than we do”.

- Lect2: I find varieties of English **quite hard to understand or update** because I have never learned them formally. That's why I just prefer American and British English.
- Lect13: “ We teach students to talk, listen...but in exams, they have to do written exams... So our purpose is to make sure they can pass exams and go to university”.
- Lect16: “My students don't have **environment to practise English**. They just **learn English in classrooms**. They don't have chances to expose themselves [sic]. They are quite bookish...”
- Lect20: “I use textbooks from Cambridge and Oxford. They do not **include varieties of English**”.
- Lect14: **Limited facilities**, lots of students in one class and the rooms are very small. The desks are fixed...hard for students to move around. We have one lab but in **poor condition**... and we don't like it.

Discussion & Implications

Implications for updating current teaching practice in response to the changes in the use of English

A variety of English examinations reflecting the diversity of English- both oral and written - to be conducted

The diversity of teaching materials reflecting the diversity of English

Revisit of existing curricula

References

- Ahn, H. (2015). Awareness of and attitudes to Asian Englishes: A study of English teachers in South Korea. *Asian Englishes* 17(2), 132-151.
- Galloway, N. & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing global Englishes*. Routledge.
- Honna, N. & Takeshita, Y. (2014). English as an International Language and three challenges issues in English language teaching in Japn. In Marlina, R. & Giri R.A. (Eds) *The Pedagogy of English as an International Language: Perspectives from Scholars, Teachers, and Students* (pp.65-77). Springer International Publishing.
- Sharifian, F. (Ed.) (2009). *English as an International Language: Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Ton, N. N. H., & Pham, H. H. (2010). Vietnamese teachers' and students' perceptions of global English. *Language Education in Asia*, 1(1), 48-61.



Thank you for your attention!