What Is English in the Light of Its Global Use? Exploring Students' Concepts of English

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Abstract: Today, English can be called a truly global language, as it is used in diverse sociocultural contexts. With research paradigms such as World Englishes and English as a lingua franca which investigate these uses, the concept of English has changed from a monolithic understanding with target norms and target culture mainly related to anglophone references to views in which English becomes multiple and more complex. Changing conceptions of what English is in the light of its global uses raise the question of what exactly should be taught and how. The question of what constitutes English ultimately is an ontological one: It underlines the importance of becoming aware of what English means to different people in different contexts, particularly in educational settings. In this contribution, I firstly elaborate on the changing meanings of English in connection with its global uses. For this, I focus on World Englishes and English as a lingua franca as vital research paradigms and their conceptions of English. I then outline these conceptions within an ontological framework which accounts for different senses of language and English. In a next step, I relate the changing senses of English to implications for English language teaching. In the second part of the contribution, I provide insights into my own research related to student conceptions of English: With the help of a constructivist grounded theory framework, I explored how they view English and what constitutes English for them. My results revealed that for students, using and encountering English inside the classroom was different from how they conceptualized English outside the classroom. This difference in student perceptions raises the question of to what extent English is appropriately represented in the school setting – and, thus, in the current canon of language teaching. Based on my results, I provide some practical suggestions for the classroom to bridge the gap by using conceptions of English from the paradigms World Englishes and English as a lingua franca.

Keywords: Global Englishes; English as a lingua franca; English language teaching; language ontologies; constructivist grounded theory
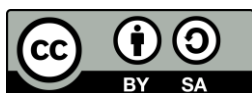
1   Introduction: English as a globally used language

Today, English can be called a '(truly) global language' (Crystal, 2012a, 2012b; Gallo-way & Rose, 2015; McKenzie, 2010; Seargeant, 2009). It has become a globally used language because of a constellation of intertwined historical and political reasons (see e.g. Culpeper, 2015, or Gramley, 2012, for more detail). These reasons are linked to processes of colonialization and globalization which caused a rise in the economic and political power of English-speaking countries and are hence a major factor of establishing English as a "prestige language" (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 3).

There were nearly 1.5 billion speakers of English in 2022. Less than a third of these speakers have English as their first language (Eberhard et al., 2022). Even though it might be difficult to define who counts as a 'speaker of English' in terms of proficiency (Schreier et al., 2020), we can still say that those speakers of English who use English as their second or as a foreign language outnumber speakers who have English as their first language (see also Jenkins, 2015a; Schneider, 2020). Today, English can be described as the internet's universal language (Richter, 2022) and it is the most widely studied foreign language in the European Union (Eurostat. The Statistical Office of the European Union, 2021).

1.1   Global uses and new paradigms

The global uses of English by different kinds of speakers gave rise to a number of related research paradigms, which investigate the use of English in diverse sociocultural contexts. They share the endeavor to move towards an understanding of English which regards it as pluricentric and plurilithic rather than modeling its use based on monocentric views in which standard varieties of Britain or the United States serve as the ultimate yardstick (Bolton, 2006). In such views, other uses of English are compared to such dominant varieties in a rather deficit-oriented approach.

World Englishes (WE) marked the beginning of a shift in thinking towards an understanding of English as multiple entities existing in their own right. The work connected to this paradigm has greatly affected research and theorizing, as research in WE has always questioned and continues to question entrenched dichotomies between standard and non-standard uses as well as native and non-native speakers of English. Kachru's Three Circles Model (1985, 1992) is one of the most widely known models which illustrates a shift in thinking when it comes to legitimacy of different uses of English. It consists of three concentric circles which describe the types of global uses of English (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive overview of Kachru's three circle model (see also e.g. Jenkins, 2015a; Schneider, 2017).

Circle name	Description	Sample countries
Inner Circle (norm providing)	Countries in which English is the native language of the majority of the speakers	UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
Outer Circle (norm developing)	Countries in which English takes on institutional/official roles, as it is the case in many postcolonial settings	India, Nigeria, Singapore
Expanding Circle (norm dependent)	Countries in which English is rather used as a foreign language and does not play any official role(s)	Germany, China, Japan, Italy

Despite recent developments in the field and a move away from rigid (geographic) boundaries (Buschfeld, 2020, 2021), WE as a research paradigm mainly is concerned with exploring how the Outer Circle as norm developing is no longer dependent on normative yardsticks set up by the Inner Circle varieties of English (Buschfeld & Kautzsch, 2017; Schneider, 2017).

English as a lingua franca (ELF) as a second independent research paradigm investigates the uses of English in multilingual lingua franca settings. In such settings, English essentially becomes a contact language for people who choose to communicate in English and who do not share any other language(s) (Jenkins, 2015b; Mauranen, 2018). Following the footsteps of WE, researchers tried to establish the English in ELF as a clearly identifiable variety with characteristic features of its own (see e.g. Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2004) in the early stages of the paradigm. In its current stage (Jenkins, 2015b), instead of a distinct variety of English, ELF is regarded as a communicative mode in which interlocutors involved in a particular lingua franca communicative setting actively (co-)construct meaning in interaction. They do so without necessarily sticking to anglophone reference norms, but rather focus on processes of accommodation and negotiation (Baker, 2018; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Ishikawa, 2021; Schaller-Schwaner & Kirkpatrick, 2020).

1.2 An ontological framework: from monolithic to pluricentric and plurilithic

With research paradigms such as WE and ELF causing a shift to viewing English as consisting of a multitude of uses in numerous contexts rather than regarding it as exclusively connected to Inner Circle uses and anglophone cultural contexts, ontological questions of what can be regarded as English become more prevalent (Seargeant, 2012, p. 1). Ontology in the philosophical sense is a part of metaphysics in which "we puzzle and wonder about what exists and what existing things are like, in their most fundamental features and interrelationships" (Koons & Pickavance, 2015, p. 1). Particularly in connection with educational contexts

> "[e]xamining and being explicit about what we […] think English is – our ontologies of English – and how these ontologies underpin our educational ideologies and professional practices, should be an essential component of research in the discipline." (Hall & Wicaksono, 2020, p. 3)

Hall (2013) and Hall et al. (2017) distinguish four broad domains which all relate to the concept of language in an ontological sense:

- the *cognitive domain* in which language is viewed as a cognitive resource stored in the human brain/mind;
- the *expressive domain* in which language is externally manifested;
- the *social domain* in which language is a social construct and/or process;
- the *notional domain* in which language is viewed as an idealized system (Hall et al., 2017, pp. 90–91).

These four main domains are then further divided into different senses of language (see Table 2 on the next page).

Table 2: Different senses of language (based on Hall et al., 2017, p. 91)

Domain	Sense	Language as
Cognitive	The language capacity	A property of the species
	I-language	System(s) in the mind/brain of an individual
Expressive	E-language	(Bodies of) expressed utterances, texts, structures
	Speech, writing, sign	Physical manifestations of expressions
Social	Languaging	Social act(s)
	N-language	Named system(s)
Notional	Idealized I-language	Idealization(s) from individual minds/brains
	P-language	Ideal system(s) independent of cognition and use

The cognitive domain of this classification describes the inner representation of language as a cognitive entity (*I-language*). As a cognitive entity existing in the mind of the user, language in this sense is not directly accessible. The cognitive resources become perceptible for others and oneself as a part of *E-language*, as they externally manifest themselves in different modes, such as speech, writing, or sign. In the social domain, language emerges as social act(s) in *languaging*. Regarding language(s) as named systems, which are often based on nation states in the sense of *N-language*, can also be seen as a social act of constructing languages. Within this sense, languages become named systems which can be clearly separated from each other. With idealized *I-language* and *P-language* senses, the notional domain is connected to viewing language(s) as idealized systems which can exist independently of cognition and use.

In the light of the many global uses of English, Hall (2020) relates the domains and senses listed in Table 1 to the concept of *English* (see Figure 1).
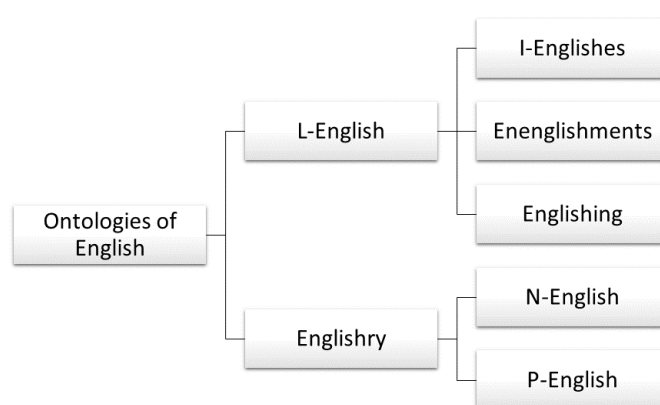

Figure 1: Overview of ontologies of English based on Hall (2020)

Hall generally distinguishes between *L-English* and *Englishry*: L-English can be understood as "[…] the linguistic resources, processes, and products that have developed in the minds and behaviors of a set of people" (Hall, 2020, p. 24). English exists "as a set of instantiations of the language capacity" (Hall, 2020, p. 22) as people share common

features of their I-languages that enable them to communicate in what they would rec-ognize as English. Hall (2020, p. 23) calls the common features of I-languages which people use to communicate in English *I-Englishes*. I-Englishes manifest themselves as *Enenglishments* from cognitive resources and are used in the social act of *Englishing*.

Englishry as the second set of entity types is connected to processes of identity for-mation, mainly on the nation level (Hall, 2020, p. 25). In this sense, N-English as a named system is oftentimes understood as a single, standardized form and usually asso-ciated with "Standard English". In connection with the sense of the notional domain (see Table 1), *P-English* is assumed to constitute a system which "[…] hold[s] at the level of unified communities of users" (Hall, 2020, p. 27), thus existing as an abstract entity which is completely independent from actual uses. Concerns about language decay il-lustrate how a seemingly existing abstract norm is taken by some to judge innovations in language use:

> "It's immeasurable, but unquestionably there is more written communication nowadays than there ever has been. Consequently, we don't handle language with care anymore. Beyond 'literally', there is a load of other peeves one encounters in modern communication, verbal and written. Each of them could be taken as another sign of endemic decay. The word whose mishandling I, on my part, feel sorriest for is 'historic'" (Sutherland, 2013, para. 2).

In this example, Sutherland (2013) is concerned about language decay in English. He uses an abstract norm (P-English) he has in mind to evaluate emerging innovations and developments in language use.

When considering the different senses of language and English, we can recognize the different meanings of English in WE and ELF (see Section 1.1). Earlier monolithic no-tions of English viewed English as a fixed entity in connection with Inner Circle varieties as the only legitimate uses of English. This limited concept of N-English then creates such rigid dichotomies of native and non-native or standard and non-standard.

Efforts in WE to establish varieties (mainly but not exclusively) from postcolonial Outer Circle contexts in their own right entailed establishing the legitimacy of N-Eng-lishes existing alongside each other. With its focus on newly emerging standards with multiple centers, WE as a paradigm can rather be connected to *pluricentric* notions of language and English (see also Hall et al., 2013).

Recent developments in the ELF paradigm with their focus on ELF communicative encounters as a communication mode highlight the social component of Englishing and language as emerging in interaction. Such views can be connected to *plurilithic* notions of language which denote the "non-monolithic reality" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 5) of named languages. Such notions move away from national and universal framings of language and English. Instead, they emphasize the roles of local experiences and goals at play when it comes to individuals' language use (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Pennycook, 2007, 2009).

1.3 Rethinking English in English language teaching

Pluricentric and plurilithic views as a part of a changing concept of English have also affected thoughts of what teaching *English* should entail (see e.g. Bayyurt & Akcan, 2015; Callies et al., 2022; Galloway, 2017; Kachru, 2006; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Sha-rifian, 2009). Changing conceptions of English language teaching (ELT) mainly involve questioning the connection between *target culture*, *target language*, and Inner Circle countries as a part of monolithic notions of English. With an extension of what "English speaking" essentially means (Matsuda, 2020), pluricentric notions of English thus raise the question of alternative models besides traditional standardized Inner Circle varieties for certain contexts (Kachru, 2006; Le Phan, 2020; Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006). Hence, students should be exposed to a number of varieties and cultural contexts to reflect the sociolinguistic reality of the many uses of English today (Marlina, 2017, 2018). The

questions thus raised in this debate concern the linguistic canon to which English language teaching orientates and, therefore, connect directly to the main theme of the present collected issue on *Canons for 21st-century Teaching* (see Sauer et al., pp. 1–12 in this issue).

Pluricentric notions in ELF include Jenkin's Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000, 2008a, 2008b) for pronunciation features to ensure successful communication and Seidlhofer's initial list of potential characteristic lexico-grammatical features of ELF (Seidlhofer, 2004). Based on empirical classroom investigations, Jenkins established a list of core pronunciation features which seem to be essential to successfully get meaning across in ELF communicative situations. Seidlhofer focused on potential regularities in lexico-grammatical features occurring in ELF communicative encounters.

In the light of enabling students to take part in discourses in which English is used, such features could serve as "minimal requirements" to enable students to communicate in lingua franca encounters. This particularly applies to weaker students as well as students who do not put much emphasis on English in their everyday lives (Zehne, 2019, 2022).

Plurilithic views of the emergent nature of language and English, in contrast, do not focus on establishing alternative models for orientation in ELT per se. The traditional, underlying, rather implicit models are mostly based on Inner Circle, standardized varieties which serve as a guideline for ELT in institutionalized settings in the sense of P-English, e.g. to determine what might be correct or incorrect in terms of students' language use. Plurilithic views rather raise the question of how students can approach these implicit models in educational settings (Bruthiaux, 2010; Kohn, 2020; Matsuda, 2020). It is thus important to think about how to engage students in *how* they are made aware of these models, to what extent they can be enabled to actively reflect on them, as well as how they encounter English and these models.

In Kohn's (e.g. Kohn, 2015, 2018a, 2018b, 2020) social constructivist view, such a learner's perspective is prevalent. How learners perceive English and what they would like to do with (their) English play central roles in his *My English* approach. In the light of constructivism, students should be given the chance in the classroom to explore and construct their version of English, also in terms of what they regard as appropriate and desirable for themselves.

Despite efforts to integrate these views in ELT, a so-called conceptual gap (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 137) remains. Paradigms such as WE and ELF regard English as multiple and complex while for learners, Inner Circle, anglophone yardsticks are prevalent. This in turn can potentially cause problems to use and understand English as a part of its sociocultural reality outside the classroom, as for instance Bieswanger (2008) notes:

> "The conversation failed because their interlocutors did not speak the type of standardized English they had themselves learned in secondary school, but used a variety they considered 'strange'. […] many years of English foreign language education in secondary school had not prepared these speakers for the sociolinguistic reality in an increasingly globalized world and had failed to create any kind of awareness of the considerable regional variation in the use of English" (Bieswanger, 2008, pp. 28–29; see also Bieswanger, 2022).

On the one hand, learners need to be exposed to a range of uses of English instead of an exclusive focus on standardized Inner Circle varieties and cultural references to equip them for the reality outside the classroom (Jindapitak et al., 2022; Schildhauer et al., 2020, 2022; Schulte & Schildhauer, 2020). They also need to be enabled to reflect on their prevalent language ideologies and attitudes. On the other hand, learners also need to experience language and English more specifically as a dynamic tool for communication in which they can use the linguistic and cultural resources they have at their disposal (see also Cook, 2006, 2007).

Despite arguing for taking into account changing conceptions of English as a part of WE and ELF paradigms when teaching it, conceptions of English in the school context

have hardly been explored (Hall et al., 2017). Particularly students' views on English have only been marginally investigated – even less so for the German context.[1] With a shift in what "English" entails initiated by WE and ELF paradigms and resulting claims for change in ELT, exploring what English means to students on an ontological level becomes an important factor of re-evaluating what English should be in the classroom – and, thus, constitutes a contribution to the ongoing canon debate.

2   A glimpse at student concepts of English

2.1   Summary of research framework

With the lack of empirical investigations specifically in the German secondary school context, the following research questions guided an investigation of stakeholder conceptions of English:

(1) Which conceptualizations of English do various stakeholders (students, teachers, curricula/educational standards) in a German ELT context have?

(2) How do these conceptualizations relate to concepts of English and language a) in ELF and WE as well as b) within more traditional, monolithic notions?

(3) What are the implications for ELT from 1) and 2)?

To explore my questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews with more than 70 students as well as seven teachers from three different schools from June 2018 to March 2020. I designed interview guidelines with different sets of questions for student as well as teacher interviews. Because of the complexity of my original interview data, I particularly focus on the students' perspectives for this contribution. The student interview guideline contained questions about the type(s) of N-English(es) students would encounter, how they engaged in Englishing themselves, how they perceived their own Enenglishments, and which types of N-Englishes they used as models for their own Enenglishments (see also Table 3).

Table 3: Sample questions from student interview guideline and their connection to different aspects of ontologies of English.

Aspect of the interview guideline	*Sample question*
Types of N-English(es) students encounter	Wo begegnet dir Englisch in deinem Alltag?
Engaging in Englishing	Wo benutzt du Englisch in deinem Alltag? In welchen Situationen sprecht ihr/sprichst du Englisch im Unterricht? Wie ist das für dich?
Perception of their own Enenglishments	Wie bist du mit deinem Englisch zufrieden? Was denkst du, kannst du schon gut? Woran möchtest du arbeiten?
N-Englishes as models for their own Enenglishments	Was ist für dich „gutes Englisch"?

A constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) served as the overarching methodological framework of the project. Through the coding procedures involved in constructivist grounded theory (see Charmaz, 2014), I was able to work out a model which integrated student, teacher, and curricular notions of English as well as the relations of these notions.

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[1] The only exceptions to my knowledge are Grau (2009), Kruse (2016), and Meer et al. (2021).

2.2 Student internal conceptions of English

2.2.1 Fixed model vs. communicative tool

Students' highly individual internal conceptions of English could be placed on a context dependent continuum from a *fixed referential model* to a *flexible communicative tool*. Students thus had an individual, fixed model in mind, e.g. when evaluating their own English or that of others. However, this model was not always as prevalent depending on the context in which they used and encountered English. Students viewed English as a tool they used to communicate with other people outside the classroom. Making yourself understood and being able to understand others was considered an important element of this type of conceptualization of English:

> *Wenn der andere mich versteht und mir darauf die Antwort gibt, die ich wissen wollte. Wenn ich, wenn der zahlen soll, und ich ihm sage, was es kostet, und er mir dann Geld gibt, dann ist das schon, reicht mir das schon.* (D26, ll. 88–90)

> *[...] aber ich denke, wenn jemand versteht, was gesagt wird, und auch darauf antworten kann und das Sinn ergibt, dann reicht mir das erst einmal schon mit kompetentes Englisch sprechen.* (D86, ll. 284–286)

> *Hauptsache, er kann das Englische benutzen, er weiß, mit der englischen Sprache umzugehen. Und kann die in unterschiedlichen Situationen abrufen.* (D16, ll. 248–250)

Despite the focus on getting your message across and thus using English as a communicative tool, students also expressed their desire to use what they called "proper English" in different settings. The desire to speak "properly" applied to settings outside the classroom (*„Auf jeden Fall, dass man sich ausdrücken kann, dass man seine Wünsche, seine Argumente vernünftig darstellen kann. Dass man sich auch differenziert ausdrückt, dass man Sätze vernünftig verknüpfen kann, auch andere Satzanfänge findet."* D31, ll. 181–183) as well as inside the classroom (*„Ich würde sagen, im Unterricht ist man eher darauf bedacht so, das richtig zu sagen. Also, (...) so sprachlich auch irgendwie korrekt."* D24, ll. 128–129).

What students regarded as "proper" was dependent on their respective fixed referential model which they used as guiding normative frameworks. These frameworks were mainly connected to issues of pronunciation and accent. There was considerable individual variation in student perceptions of pronunciation models, as for instance some students expressed a desire to not sound German (*„Aber für mich ist es einfach wichtig, weil ich es gerne habe, dass man es nicht erkennt, dass ich quasi aus Deutschland bin."* D15, ll. 173–175), while others did not mind retaining a German accent for their English (*„Aber an sich hat es mich jetzt nicht so sehr gestört, dass ich irgendwie einen Akzent habe oder so."* D70, ll. 215–216). Additionally, the concepts of British and American English were mentioned by students to model concepts such as "real" and "proper" English as well as to evaluate the type(s) of English they would encounter inside and outside the classroom. Here, students also displayed variation in which models they used as yardsticks. For some students, "British English" was the target norm (*„Ja, also das Englisch, was die eigentlich auch in England sprechen."* SI in D61, l. 160), while others used "American English" as their referential model (*„Ja, also für mich klingt das amerikanische Englisch auch besser, also für mich klingt es immer so wie nach dem richtigen Englisch [...]."* SII in D61, ll. 257–258). The concept of the native speaker served as another yardstick for students to evaluate their own English competence and their goals (*„Ja, das ist so mein Ziel, dass ich mich richtig mit Leuten unterhalten kann, die gebürtig Englisch sprechen."* D68, ll. 254–256).

2.2.2 School English

Students used their internal normative conception of English to make sense of English in their *Lebenswelten*. Students had different perceptions of English inside and outside the classroom in the sense that *encountering* and *using* English inside the classroom and outside the classroom entailed different things for them. This ultimately resulted in the concept of "School English" (see also Le Foll, 2021).

While there was a clear difference between English inside and outside the classroom for all students, their views on using "School English" as a yardstick for their own language learning displayed two main tendencies. Some students did not regard "School English" as desirable and thought it was not "real" English as experienced outside the classroom (*„Also ich fände es wichtiger, wenn wir mehr lernen, von diesem Schulenglisch wegzukommen, und eher dieses wirkliche Englisch fließend sprechen können."* D23, ll. 96–98). Other students thought of English inside the classroom as "real English" and a desired target for them to learn (*„Ja, ich würde sagen, hier ist es so halt richtiges Englisch, kann man halt schon sagen."* SII in D69, ll. 373–374).

2.2.3 Using English

Regardless of whether they viewed "School English" as desirable or not, students described the type of English (use) in class as more formal and involving a greater focus on correctness (*„Das ist schon, schon anders im Englischunterricht. Da spricht man mehr, also etwas formeller."* D71, ll. 226–227). Students stressed that the more formal environment led them to think more about what they wanted to say and how they wanted to say it in class. This meant that they needed more time to think about what to say and thus to prepare their contributions (*„Und deswegen muss man auch erstmal überlegen, ein bisschen. Ja, wie kann ich das halt formulieren, was ich so sagen möchte? Und diese Zeit zum Nachdenken brauche ich persönlich für mich."* D21, ll. 63–65). With taking a long time to prepare contributions, using English inside the classroom was not considered having an actual conversation and became part of a rather artificial setting. For students, it felt as if they were forced to contribute in the classroom, since they wanted to conform to the overall framework set up by their teachers and curricular guidelines in this artificial setting (*„Also das ist dann halt immer so, also es hört sich komisch an, aber man ist irgendwie so gezwungen, Englisch zu reden […]."* D14, ll. 24–26).

As opposed to the rather restricted environment inside the classroom, some students stated they were able to speak more freely outside the classroom (*„Also allgemein finde ich, Englisch im Alltag zu sprechen, ist auf jeden Fall einfacher und auch sehr viel freier."* D14, ll. 84–85). This involved putting less emphasis on correctness for them (*„Also man guckt nicht so darauf, ob man jetzt Fehler in der Sprache macht oder so."* D73, ll. 60–61). Outside the classroom, students focused on getting their message across. This also involved the use of communication strategies, such as paraphrasing (*„Ich umschreibe die immer ganz gut, dann versteht man das, aber das dauert dann halt immer so lange, wenn man irgendwas umschreibt."* D68, ll. 248–250) or using gestures (*„Ich habe probiert, das mit den Händen irgendwie nachzumachen oder so. Zum Beispiel. […] Ich weiß gar nicht mehr, was das war, aber ich habe das probiert, mit den Händen nachzumachen."* SII in D55, ll. 192–193). English outside the classroom was seen as a convenient way to communicate with others. Additionally, in this view, students felt more confident and competent when using English outside the classroom (*„Also es, ich kann ja eigentlich relativ gut Englisch sprechen, wenn es jetzt nicht so um Unterrichtssachen unbedingt gehen muss, sondern so Smalltalk-mäßig."* D26, ll. 78–80).

However, using English outside the classroom caused some students to feel rather insecure because of the complexity and flexibility of using English outside a school setting. In this view, the classroom with its predictable structures and shared learner experiences became a safe environment in which they felt more comfortable to use English

(*„Weil du mit Schülern in einem Raum bist, die auch nicht jetzt, wo die Muttersprache auch nicht unbedingt Englisch ist. Und dann ist es so ein bisschen beruhigender."* D72, ll. 53–54).

2.2.4 Encountering English

Many students encountered English in a wide range of situations outside the classroom, such as talking to friends or relatives from abroad, as well as being approached by people on the street (*„Auch in der Stadt, zum Beispiel, werde ich ganz oft auf Englisch angesprochen zum Beispiel. Also zum Beispiel am Hauptbahnhof, wenn die nach dem Weg fragen."* D22, ll. 38–40). Students also encountered English through a variety of media outside the classroom, such as movies, books, and social media.

Encounters with English in class mainly involved English-speaking countries and what students thought seemed to be the related culture(s) (*„So im Englischunterricht darüber zu reden, wie es halt in anderen Ländern wirklich abläuft. Wo wirklich nur Englisch gesprochen wird."* SII in D61, ll. 52–54). Some students also thought that there was a repetitive pattern of English encounters inside the classroom in terms of addressing the same topics in different grades (*„Ja, in Englisch reden wir gefühlt jedes Jahr immer mal wieder über Indien, über die USA, über Großbritannien."* D19, ll. 4–5). Media such as audio files and movies also played a role for letting students experience English inside the classroom. Students encountered English through their peers, too. For some students, the types of English that were implemented in class were the only encounters with the language they experienced (*„Aber, also jetzt in Deutschland und im wirklich alltäglichen Alltag, so, was wir jeden Tag hier machen, da eigentlich eher nur im Englischunterricht halt."* SII in D32, ll. 86–88).

Students' internal construction of normativity was highly individual. It ranged from creating their fixed referential model in terms of "correctness" or "desirable targets" to acknowledging English as a variable and flexible tool for communication. How they placed English on their individual continuum of fixed referential model and flexible communicative tool was dependent on the contexts in which students encountered and used English.

Based on their internal normative conceptions, students made sense of their external *Lebenswelten*. For students, English inside the classroom was a space of its own with more formal features and patterns determined by a framework set up by teachers and the curricula. This space of its own also affected how students used English and how they evaluated their competence inside the classroom. The students' normative frameworks determined how they viewed "School English": While some of them regarded it as a desirable target, others took the English they experienced outside the classroom as the yardstick. Depending on their internal frameworks, the classroom or outside the classroom could either become a safe space for students or cause them to feel pressured to conform and perform well. For some students, English was not part of their *Lebenswelten*. This meant that they would only use and encounter English inside the classroom.

3 Bringing inside and outside the classroom closer together: implications for classroom practice

Considering how inside and outside the classroom dimensions of using and encountering English were so clearly divided for students, Seidlhofer's conceptual gap (2001) still seems to remain. To some extent, students encountered and used English outside the classroom in a way that is more in line with pluricentric and plurilithic conceptions prevalent in WE and ELF paradigms. At the same time, English inside the classroom still seemed to largely rely on monolithic referential models. This resulted in tensions between inside and outside the classroom dimensions and led students to mention the label

"School English" for the types of English they encountered in the school setting. Implementing pluricentric and plurilithic notions from WE and ELF paradigms in the classroom could thus help to bridge the gap in student perceptions of encountering and using English.

3.1 Encountering English through audio-visual texts

Audio-visual texts have been introduced as a promising way to implement encounters with a wide range of Englishes inside the classroom[2] (Hehner, 2022; Schildhauer et al., 2020, 2022; Schulte & Schildhauer, 2020; Westphal, 2022). Particularly, the use of listening journals could help to extend the traditional canon and carefully introduce students to a wide range of uses of English from Outer (more pluricentric) and Expanding Circle (more plurilithic) contexts and to let them reflect on their own perceptions to reduce the risk of stereotypical perceptions and attitudes (Galloway & Rose, 2014; Zehne, 2021). In connection with relevant topics that need to be addressed in class, students can work on their listening journals by engaging with a pre-determined number of audio-visual texts per week. A webpage created by the teacher can be used as a resource for audio-visual material.[3] Here, students can find a range of texts divided by topic and level of difficulty. They could also be enabled to add their own texts if they are suitable. While and after engaging with the material, students fill out a journal page to reflect on the content and the language used in the material. Reflection prompts on the journal page could include:

- Please explain why you chose this particular video.
- Please summarize what the video is about.
- To what extent is the video easy or difficult to understand? Please explain.
- What did you notice while listening to the speaker(s) (e.g. word choice, pronunciation, speed)? Please explain. (See also Zehne, 2021.)

With listening journals, the types of Englishes students encounter outside the classroom can be brought into the classroom They provide the potential to expand the concepts of English for inside the classroom dimension for students and thus to narrow the gap between the two dimensions. Listening journals also offer ways to let students carefully reflect on how they encounter such pluricentric and plurilithic types of Englishes with their own normative conceptions.

3.2 Using English with a focus on communication strategies in playful settings

Some students made use of certain communication strategies when using English as a communicative tool outside the classroom. To bridge the gap between inside and outside the classroom settings for *using* English, communication strategies as a key aspect of successfully communicating in English in a range of settings (Björkman, 2011, 2014; Hanamoto, 2016; Kaur, 2010, 2011, 2012; Kennedy, 2017) can be practiced in the classroom. Playful settings and games can be utilized to let students practice the use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, using gestures, active listening, as well as using other linguistic resources to get the message across (Schildhauer et al., 2020; Zehne, 2019).

Depending on the grade and classroom setting, playful settings can vary in length and complexity. Games such as *Charades* or *Taboo* can be played as warm-ups at the beginning of the lesson to introduce and practice words and phrases which are relevant for a

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[2] Additionally, there seem to be some changes underway in connection with the curricular framework, as Nigeria as an Outer Circle country was added to the *Abitur* requirements (see e.g. MSW NRW, 2019).

[3] I created the following webpage as an example to illustrate the basic idea of working with a listening journal in class: https://listening.video.blog/

particular unit. Figure 2 depicts a selection of sample Taboo cards which can be distributed to students at the beginning of the lesson.

Taboo Game
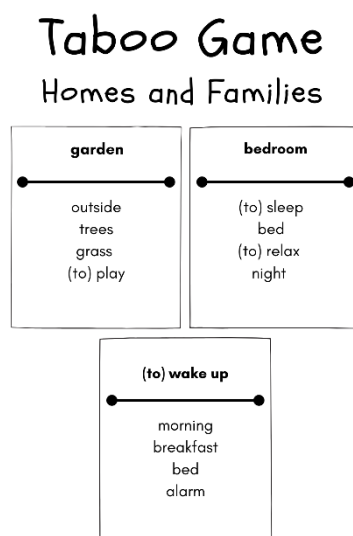## Homes and Families

garden	**bedroom**
•——————•	•——————•
outside	(to) sleep
trees	bed
grass	(to) relax
(to) play	night

(to) wake up

•——————•

morning
breakfast
bed
alarm

Figure 2: Sample Taboo cards for the topic homes and families to practice paraphrasing

Students walk around the classroom to find a partner, explain their word without using the other terms on their card, let their partner guess the word, switch cards, and look for the next partner. The basic idea of Taboo to create situations in which students need to paraphrase certain terms or expressions can also be transferred to more complex communicative settings, such as role plays. Here, role cards could contain words and phrases the students are not allowed to use (see Figure 3).

Role Play Card: Booking a Hotel Room

Guest

Please imagine: You would like to book a room in the Sunshine Hotel in Rome, Italy.

➢ Your stay is from Monday to Sunday, one person in a single room
➢ Please find out about:
  o The price
  o Whether breakfast is included
  o Additional activities and tours
  o Nearby restaurants/bars
  o A city map
  o Check out times
  o A taxi to the airport

Please remember: You are not allowed to use the following words: (to) cost, (to) book, single room, breakfast, city map, check out, luggage, transportation.

Please remember: You can use the support cards with useful sentences for help.

Figure 3: Sample role playing card with instructions to simulate the use of paraphrasing in a more complex communicative setting in the classroom

The game *Guess My Loanword* can help students to become aware of their multilingual repertoire. Students should experience the use of all of their linguistic resources to get meaning across in the classroom. Here, students can think of either a) an English loanword from any language they speak or b) a loanword from any language they speak which is used in English. They then also walk around the classroom to find a partner, say their loanword, and let the other student guess what it might mean. The *Telephone*

Game can be used to let students focus on active listening. For the game, the class is divided into two smaller groups which line up in the classroom. The teacher or a student starts the game by whispering a word or phrase to the last student in the line. The word or phrase is then passed on through the line. The first student in the line now has to name the word or phrase they understood.

With a focus on getting meaning across when using English, communication strategies constituted a part of students' communicative practices outside the classroom. Communication strategies can be considered a part of more plurilithic understandings of language (use), as they support moving away from monolithic notions of language in which communicating successfully follows a restricted set of resources to use. Implementing communication strategies as a part of more plurilithic understandings of language and English could thus possibly also contribute to reduce the gap of using English inside and outside the classroom for students.

3.3 Online exchanges as integrated experiences

Letting students experience ELF communicative situations via online exchanges has the potential to integrate encounters with different types of Englishes and the general experience of using one's own English beyond the classroom setting. Teachers can use webpages like ePals (https://www.epals.com/#/connections) to find other colleagues and classes which might not be exclusively from Inner Circle countries, but rather from other Expanding Circle contexts. In connection with the current topic dealt with in class, students could for instance

- discuss certain questions or prompts raised by the teachers,
- interview each other about individual opinions or experiences, and
- create a joint presentation.

Collaborations could range from short(er) exchanges with a specific thematic focus to long(er) projects, in which students repeatedly work with each other. Depending on the school's and the students' technical equipment, exchange and communication phases can either take place at school or at home. Learning diaries with specific prompts could help students to carefully reflect on how they experience communicative encounters during exchange phases. This also includes becoming aware of their very own use of English in these encounters and how they might perceive this use as similar to or different from regular English lessons. Depending on the respective grade, such prompts could include:

- How did you feel before the conversation with your partner?
- And how did you feel afterwards?
- How do you think did the conversation work out? Why do you think so?
- What surprised you about this conversation?
- How has English helped you to communicate with your partner?
- How was using English during the exchange different from or similar to using English in regular English lessons?

Reserved time slots in class can serve as a space for students to reflect on their communicative encounters regarding e.g. how they managed the conversation, how they perceived themselves using English, and which strategies they might have used.

Implementing encounters with and uses of English within pluricentric and plurilithic senses in combination with creating spaces for students to carefully reflect could thus perhaps help students to a) frame English outside the classroom as more legitimate in case they use School English as their yardstick or b) perceive their English lessons as more relevant if they think School English is undesirable.

4 Conclusion and outlook

The changing nature of *English* with its many uses around the globe is explored by research paradigms such as WE and ELF which involve a change in thinking from monolithic understandings of English to pluricentric and plurilithic notions. Using an ontological framework can help us to grasp the different senses of English for research as well as for educational settings: With changing conceptions of English, questions of *what* should be taught and *how* it should be taught have become more prevalent.

How English is conceptualized (as a part of ontologies) certainly affects what is or can be regarded as canonical for ELT, as English in ELT can no longer be viewed as a monolithic entity with mainly anglophone references. What constitutes English as a part of pluricentric and plurilithic notions needs to be taken into account in ELT. This also means that if the concept of English in ELT should reflect the reality of (the) language outside the classroom, students' experiences of using and encountering English outside the school setting should be integrated. However, with a clear divide between inside and outside for the students and the resulting concept of "School English", that currently does not seem to be the case.

I have suggested specific activities for the classroom which combine encountering and using English with pluricentric and plurilithic notions of English within WE and ELF:

- With listening journals, students can encounter different uses of English from Outer and Expanding Circle contexts.
- Playful approaches/games help them to practice communication strategies as a vital element of using English in variable communicative encounters.
- Online exchanges with students from other Outer or Expanding Circle contexts can serve as integrated experiences in which students encounter and use English.

The suggestions I proposed in this contribution currently remain on a theoretical level. Implementing them in actual teaching practice and exploring how students perceive them in connection with their conceptions of English could be a potential next step to reducing the conceptual gap.

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