

Gatekeepers of the Standard? Exploring Teacher Cognition and Ideological Conflict Toward Non-Native Accents in the ELF Era

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Abstract: *This study investigates the pragmatic-ideological rupture within the Indonesian English Language Teaching (ELT) landscape, where the functional necessity of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contradicts a persistent ideological lag toward native-speakerism. Employing a single-case study design at a private university in East Java, the research triangulates perspectives from English pronunciation teachers (n=5), undergraduate students (n=90), and the general public (n=5). Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a stimulated recall protocol featuring AI-generated non-native accent stimuli. Findings reveal a profound listener-speaker dissonance. While participants affectively value linguistic diversity in others, students harbor deep accent anxiety and a somatic burden regarding their own regional identities (e.g., the medok stigma). Cognitively, although the nativeness principle is intellectually rejected in favor of intelligibility, a prestige bias persists among students who view local accents as lacking symbolic capital. Teachers and the general public demonstrate affective resilience by viewing accents as indicators of professional authority and identity. The study finds that digital media and professional demands encourage flexibility but do not remove the drive for perfection. The researchers call for a shift from eliminating accents to supporting them, recommending a pedagogy based on Critical Language Awareness to empower multilingual voices in today's global environment.*

Keywords: *EFL speaking; gendered participation; learner investment; pesantren education; sociocultural mediation; tutor questioning*

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary landscape of English pronunciation instruction is currently fractured by a theoretical rupture where the pragmatic necessity of international communication directly contradicts a deeply rooted ideological lag toward native-speakerism. Although the global proliferation of English has ostensibly redirected pronunciation priorities from accent imitation to mutual intelligibility and pragmatic effectiveness (Munro & Derwing, 2011; Choi, 2025), both practitioners and learners continue to adhere to traditional native-speaker norms. This conflict is especially pronounced in non-native environments, where communicative success is often evaluated based on accent authenticity rather than message comprehensibility (Jenkins et al., 2011). As a result, classrooms frequently experience cognitive dissonance, as the practical demands of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) confront established perceptions of linguistic correctness and prestige.

This conflict is especially clear in how teachers act as gatekeepers of an idealized language standard. Many teachers say they support linguistic diversity, but in practice, they often correct students to match native-speaker norms (Sifakis, 2019). Such orientations often transform the classroom into a performance stage that reinforces a deficit view of the learner's voice (Fang, 2017). However, existing research has predominantly examined accent attitudes in isolation, treating the perspectives of teachers and students as disconnected phenomena (Murphy, 2014). A critical research gap remains in understanding the multi-layered relationship and potential misalignment between teachers, students, and the general public who use English for non-instructional, practical purposes.

Limited research has systematically examined how non-native teachers address the internal challenge of guiding students toward phonetic perfection that the teachers themselves may lack (Zoghbor, 2018). In Indonesia, this phonological tension is intensified by regional stigmas, which are described as the somatic reality of an embodied struggle against standardized norms (Holliday, 2006). Indonesian learners often encounter an authenticity paradox, caught between established local identities and aspirational global selves (Tamaševičius, 2016).

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by offering a multi-perspective examination of accent attitudes across three distinct stakeholder groups: English pronunciation teachers, students, and the general public within an outer or expanding circle context. While prior research has primarily analyzed classroom attitudes in isolation, this study provides a novel contribution by bridging pedagogical perceptions with the real-world communication dynamics of everyday English users. By contrasting institutional expectations against practical, non-instructional demands, the research

illuminates how language ideologies function across different societal levels. Ultimately, this study offers a theoretical and practical foundation for moving teacher education beyond native-speaker gatekeeping toward an inclusive pedagogy grounded in the intelligibility principle. To guide this investigation, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the prevailing attitudes and ideological conflicts regarding non-native English accents among pronunciation teachers, university students, and the general public in Indonesia?
2. How do the language ideologies of teachers and students align or misalign with the practical communication expectations of non-instructional English users?
3. In what ways can teacher education frameworks integrate the Intelligibility Principle to resolve the authenticity paradox in non-native English instruction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

ELF, the Lingua Franca Core, and the Intelligibility Principle

The theoretical rupture observed in pronunciation classrooms is further exacerbated by the emergence of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), defined as any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice (Seidlhofer, 2005). The ELF paradigm shifts the ultimate objective of pronunciation instruction away from formal, accent less imitation (the Nateness Principle) toward functional, mutual intelligibility and pragmatic effectiveness (the Intelligibility Principle) in intercultural encounters (Jenkins et al., 2011; (Choi, 2025).

The operationalization of this paradigm is heavily grounded in Jennifer Jenkins' framework of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC). The LFC isolates specific phonological features that are empirically verified as crucial for maintaining mutual intelligibility in non-native to non-native interactions. These core features include the maintenance of most consonant sounds, appropriate vowel length contrasts, and the correct placement of nuclear stress (Zoghbor, 2018) . Conversely, features traditionally obsessed over in structuralist classrooms, such as the production of dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) or the mimicry of native-like intonation contours, are categorized as non-core, as their variation does not result in communication breakdowns (Doel et al., 2018)

Despite the structural utility of the LFC, a systemic monolingual fallacy continues to dominate language pedagogy (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Recent studies in *Applied Linguistics* reveal that practitioners frequently treat deviations from standard Inner Circle phonology as systemic deficits rather than natural linguistic variations born out of contact (Sifakis, 2019). This resistance is rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of the highly adaptive, collaborative nature of ELF communication, where speakers continually deploy

interactional strategies, rephrasing, and phonological negotiation to bridge gaps (Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024; Rose et al., 2021).

While existing literature has extensively cataloged the structural components of the LFC, a critical research gap remains regarding how practitioners reconcile the theoretical efficiency of the Intelligibility Principle with the strict, native-centric assessment matrices mandated by their institutions. This study explicitly addresses this gap by investigating the cognitive friction that occurs when teachers are forced to act as gatekeepers of an ideological standard while trying to foster the functional intelligibility required by the global market.

The Tripartite Model of Accent Attitudes and Social Insecurity

To analyze how these institutional and theoretical tensions affect individual language users, this study utilizes the classical **Tripartite Model of Attitudes**, which conceptualizes attitude as a complex psychological construct comprising three interconnected dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Effendi et al., 2025). The **affective dimension** encompasses the instinctive and emotional responses, as well as visceral evaluations, triggered by exposure to an accent. The **cognitive dimension** involves rationalized beliefs, intellectual judgments of linguistic correctness, and stereotypical associations assigned to particular linguistic varieties. Meanwhile, the **behavioral dimension** reflects language users' actual or intended communicative actions, including accommodation strategies, mimicry, or protective social withdrawal (Karakaş, 2019)..

In recent Global Englishes scholarship, this tripartite structure has been utilized to unpack the deeply entrenched nature of native-speakerism. Affectively, L2 learners frequently display an intense attachment to Anglo-American varieties, fueled by global media soft power and an aspirational desire for global mobility (Nguyen & Hamid, 2019). However, cognitive evaluations among bilingual listeners with high sociolinguistic awareness are becoming increasingly flexible, with many recognizing that non-native variation does not correlate with lower intelligence or reduced professional proficiency (Xue & Noels, 2025).

This divergence between emotional attachment and intellectual rationale creates a profound psychological phenomenon termed listener-speaker dissonance. As recent studies, multilingual individuals often extend linguistic legitimacy and accent tolerance to other non-native speakers while strictly denying it to themselves (Tamaševičius, 2016). Behaviorally, this dissonance manifests either as exhaustive, anxious attempts to mimic standard native phonology or as protective self-silencing, where learners withdraw from high-stakes interactions due to extreme accent-based apprehension (Chavalala, 2025).

This study contributes directly to this theoretical domain by utilizing the Tripartite Model as an analytical matrix to decode the mismatched attitudinal layers across teachers, students, and the public. It moves beyond descriptive attitude profiling by systematically tracking how cognitive shifts toward ELF are continuously undermined by deep-seated affective anxieties.

Teacher Cognition, Identity, and the Gatekeeping Conflict

At the center of this ideological crossfire sits the concept of teacher cognition, which encompasses the hidden, complex frame of knowledge, beliefs, and values that continuously shape what language teachers do in the classroom (Çetin et al., 2023). In pronunciation instruction, teacher cognition is rarely a reflection of pure linguistic theory; rather, it is an arena of conflict where institutional mandates, personal language learning histories, and societal expectations collide (Wong, 2018). Non-native English teachers (NNETs) operating in Expanding Circle contexts are particularly vulnerable to this cognitive conflict, as they must navigate the internal crisis of guiding students toward a phonetic perfection that they themselves may not embody (Sugandi et al., 2026)

This kind of internal conflict is closely connected to the idea of symbolic capital in sociolinguistics (Rahman et al., 2025). In traditional educational settings, having a standard native accent is seen as a valuable asset that gives people more authority and career opportunities. NNETs with regional accents often feel a persistent sense of linguistic insecurity, believing their own voices are not good enough (Zacharias, 2019). To make up for this, many educators take on a strict gatekeeping role, strongly enforcing Inner Circle standards and punishing non-native features to maintain their institution's reputation (Sifakis, 2019).

However, recent critical pedagogy literature from high-impact journals argues for a radical reconfiguration of teacher identity. Scholars suggest that an ELF-aware teacher cognition can transform the NNET's regional accent from a professional liability into a powerful site of pedagogical capital and multilingual authority (Deng et al., 2023; Tajeddin et al., 2019). By explicitly rejecting the role of ideological gatekeeper and adopting a facilitator model, the instructor can demonstrate to students that a speaker can maintain their local regional identity while remaining highly intelligible on the global stage (Chavalala, 2025).

By analyzing the narratives of pronunciation teachers alongside those of their students, this study illuminates the precise cognitive and ideological mechanisms through which language educators exercise gatekeeping in everyday instruction. Specifically, this investigation examines how teacher cognition operates as a regulatory filter that either reinforces native-speakerism gatekeeping or opens pathways toward pedagogical

liberation in the ELF era. In doing so, the study uncovers the subtle ways educators navigate their dual roles, balancing institutional pressures to function as gatekeepers of traditional linguistic norms against their emerging identities as facilitators of localized, intelligible voices. Ultimately, this multi-perspective approach provides a grounded account of how gatekeeping practices can be restructured to resolve internal ideological conflicts and foster a more inclusive paradigm in global English pronunciation.

METHOD

This study employed a single-case study design to investigate the theoretical rupture between ELF principles and teacher cognition within a real-life, bounded context. The case is defined by the institutional and sociocultural environment of a private university in Malang, East Java, which serves as a critical linguistic crossroads in Indonesia. This site was chosen because it has many students from Eastern Indonesia, including groups from Madura, Nusa Tenggara (NTT), and Papua. These students show the real-life situation of the Expanding Circle, where there is strong phonological difference from standard norms. The study mainly used qualitative methods to understand the participants’ experiences but also included a descriptive quantitative part (N=90) to show general attitudes among the students. This triangulated approach ensured that the findings were grounded in both broad statistical trends and deep, contextually rich narratives.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

A stratified purposive sampling strategy was utilized to capture three distinct linguistic ecosystems, ensuring a comprehensive view of accent attitudes across different societal layers. The first cohort comprised five English Pronunciation teachers, specialized faculty members with 9 to over 30 years of experience who have navigated the struggle of teaching phonology without extensive overseas exposure in Inner Circle countries.

Table 1.
Demographic Information of Teacher Participants

Code	Gender	Educational Background	Years of Teaching Experience	Native Language	Other Languages Spoken	Overseas Experience (Inner Circle)
T1	Female	M.Ed. in English Education	> 15 years	Javanese	Indonesian, English	None
T2	Male	M.A. in Applied Linguistics	10 years	Javanese	Indonesian, English	None
T3	Male	M.Ed in Applied Linguistics and	> 30 years	Madurese	Indonesian, English	None

		Ph.D in Islamic Study				
T4	Female	M.Ed. in English Language Teaching	± 20 years	Javanese	Indonesian, English	None
T5	Female	M.Ed. in English Language Teaching	9 years	Javanese	Indonesian, English	None

The second cohort consisted of six students selected from the initial survey pool (N=90) based on regional linguistic background and proficiency levels, specifically contrasting Javanese students with those from Eastern Indonesia to explore how L1 interference shapes accent anxiety. The survey pool ($N = 90$) represented a broad linguistic spectrum including native speakers of Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese, Banjar, Dayak, and Eastern Indonesian languages. From this pool, six focal student participants (S1–S6, aged 18–22; Beginners to Intermediates) were selected for semi-structured interviews using a stratified purposive sampling strategy based on regional background and proficiency levels to contrast the dominant Javanese cohort with Eastern Indonesian students (e.g., Manggarai and Sumbanese speakers).

Table 2.
Demographic Information of Student Participants for Interview

Code	Gender	Age	Regional Background	Primary Language	English Proficiency Level	Overseas Experience (Inner Circle)
S1	Female	21	East Nusa Tenggara	Manggarai language	Intermediate	None
S2	Female	22	East Nusa Tenggara	Sumbanese	Beginner	None
S3	Female	21	East Java	Javanese	Beginner	None
S4	Female	21	East Java	Javanese	Intermediate	None
S5	Female	21	East Nusa Tenggara	Sumbanese	Beginner	None
S6	Female	18	East Java	Bahasa Indonesia	Intermediate	None

The third group served as an ecological control group, representing five members of the general public engaged in the domestic, professional, and mobile spheres of English use. The group consisted of someone in an intercultural marriage, two freelancers working for Singapore-based foundations, and businesspeople with a lot of international travel experience. According to (Seidlhofer, 2005) framework, these participants are considered expert ELF users because they have managed high-pressure situations where professional

skills matter more than sounding like a native speaker. Including this diverse group helps the study use a maximum variation framework, making it possible to compare the academic anxiety of students with the practical resilience of the general public.

Table 3.

Demographic Information of General Public Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Native Language	Other Languages Spoken	Occupation	Overseas Experience (Inner Circle)
R1	Female	37	Javanese	Indonesian, English	Housewife	Ohio (US)
R2	Female	28	Javanese	Indonesian, English	Freelancer	None
R3	Female	31	Javanese	Indonesian, English	Freelancer	None
R4	Male	52	Javanese	Indonesian, English, Chinese	Businessman	Canada, Los Angeles, California (US), and Sidney (Australia)
R5	Female	35	Javanese	Indonesian, English	Teacher	None

Data Collection Instruments and Stimuli

To elicit real-time attitudinal processing rather than abstract opinions, the primary stimulus instrument comprised seven distinct AI-generated auditory recordings representing a spectrum of non-native English accents: Malaysian, Singaporean, Indian, South Korean, Chinese, Thai, and Egyptian varieties. The selection of these specific accents was informed by Indonesian tourism data from 2021–2023, reflecting intra-Asian mobility, regional economic integration, and trade networks critical for Indonesian graduates entering the ASEAN labor market. Generated via ElevenLabs.io using a standardized 30-second script describing impressions of Indonesia, this tool ensured absolute technical standardization of pitch, volume, and speech rate, isolating phonological accents as the sole variable. To establish the construct validity and acoustic trustworthiness of these stimuli, the script was phonetically standardized using a uniform lexical set, and the AI-generated outputs were evaluated for regional authenticity, naturalness, and intelligibility by expert phoneticians prior to deployment. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted with a non-participant cohort of three students and one teacher to refine the stimulus prompt timing and recall protocols.

To capture broader attitudinal trends across the student body, a Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to the full survey pool of 90 undergraduate English Department students ($N = 90$) at the host university in Malang, East Java, representing diverse first-language (L1) backgrounds including Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese, Banjar,

Dayak, and various Eastern Indonesian languages such as Wewewa, Bima, Ende, Manggarai, and Sumbanese. The questionnaire measured affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions adapted from established attitude frameworks. To ensure construct validity and psychometric reliability, the questionnaire underwent a pilot study with 20 students prior to full deployment, resulting in refinements to simplify complex sociolinguistic terminology (e.g., replacing terms like "lingua franca" with accessible phrasing). Quantitative survey items were evaluated using SPSS via Corrected Item-Total Correlation ($r > 0.30$) and Cronbach's Alpha, yielding an overall acceptable reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.612$). High internal consistency was demonstrated in the cognitive dimension ($\alpha = 0.784$), followed by the behavioral ($\alpha = 0.634$) and affective ($\alpha = 0.610$) dimensions, where lower item-total correlations reflected a theoretically meaningful listener-speaker gap between abstract cognitive acceptance and personal affective anxiety.

To gain a deeper, qualitative understanding of the survey trends and real-time reactions to the audio stimuli, semi-structured interviews were conducted across three participant groups: 5 English pronunciation teachers, 6 focal students purposively sampled from the survey pool, and 5 members of the general public. The interviews utilized a Stimulated Recall Protocol where participants listened to the seven audio clips before answering open-ended probes mapped onto the tripartite attitude model. Qualitative trustworthiness and rigor were maintained following Lincoln and Guba's framework. Credibility was established through data triangulation across the three distinct participant cohorts, method triangulation combining quantitative ratings with qualitative interviews, and member checking by returning transcript summaries to participants to verify interpretive accuracy. Transferability was secured by providing thick descriptions of the multilingual Malang private university environment and sampling matrices, while dependability was ensured through decision trails systematically documenting coding steps and thematic categorization.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in this study was carried out to explicitly address each of the three research questions through complementary statistical and thematic procedures. Quantitative data from the Likert-scale questionnaire administered to the student survey pool ($N = 90$) were analyzed using SPSS software to generate descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. This quantitative baseline provided contextual breadth to map general student attitudinal patterns across affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions.

For the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews and Stimulated Recall Protocols across all three participant cohorts (5 teachers, 6 focal students, and 5 general public participants), the study employed manual Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. This process involved (1) familiarization through repeated transcript reading and listening to stimulus responses; (2) initial manual coding; (3) organizing codes into predetermined, theory-driven themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining subthemes; and (6) producing a cohesive narrative supported by representative excerpts.

To systematically address Research Question 1 (RQ1), which explores prevailing attitudes and ideological conflicts across all three stakeholder groups, qualitative transcripts and survey items were coded deductively against the tripartite attitude model (Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive). Transcripts were systematically evaluated for expressions of accent anxiety, preferences for specific regional varieties, and underlying native-speakerist or ELF ideologies held by teachers, students, and the general public.

To resolve Research Question 2 (RQ2), concerning alignments and misalignments between academic stakeholders and real-world English users, the analysis conducted a cross-case comparative synthesis. Thematic codes from teachers and students regarding classroom gatekeeping, accent corrections, and academic standards were systematically contrasted against codes from the general public regarding professional intelligibility, workplace resilience, and functional communication. This comparative mapping highlighted key areas where institutional expectations clashed or aligned with non-instructional communication demands.

To answer Research Question 3 (RQ3), regarding how teacher education frameworks can integrate the Intelligibility Principle to resolve the authenticity paradox, the analytical procedure synthesized emergent findings into actionable pedagogical implications. By triangulating survey ratings with qualitative narratives of teacher coping mechanisms and student identity struggles, the coding process identified specific pedagogical practices where rigid accent gatekeeping could be transformed into intelligibility-focused accommodation strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Affective Dimension: Listener-Speaker Dissonance and Somatic Reality

The investigation of attitudes toward non-native speaker (NNS) accents across the three participant groups, namely teachers, students, and the general public uncovered a landscape defined by what may be termed pragmatic-ideological dissonance. While the qualitative data provided depth, the quantitative baseline for the student cohort (N=90)

established the foundational trends of this study. As shown in Table 1, there is a statistically significant rejection of the native-speaker myth at a cognitive level, yet this is contrasted by moderate levels of affective anxiety and behavioral mimicry.

Table 4.

Student Attitudes Toward Pronunciation Norms (N=90)

Dimension	Item Description	Mean (M)	SD
Affective	I feel comfortable listening to diverse NNS accents.	3.67	0.82
	I feel anxious about my own English accent (<i>medok</i>).	2.89	1.05
Cognitive	A non-native accent indicates lower intelligence. (R)	3.58	1.10
	An accent signifies a lack of language proficiency. (R)	2.48	0.88
Behavioral	Students should work to sound like native speakers.	2.40	0.95
	I try to mimic British/American accents when speaking.	2.65	0.91

The affective domain is characterized by a profound listener-speaker dissonance, a psychological state where participants grant linguistic legitimacy to others while simultaneously denying it to themselves. Table 1 shows that students are highly receptive as listeners ($M=3.67$), which points to an openness influenced by global communication. Yet, interviews found that this comfort disappears when students become speakers, often turning into what some call accented shame. This feeling is especially strong for students from Eastern Indonesia, who said their local accents feel like a physical burden, making their throats tighten or making them hesitant to speak in formal situations.

This emotional struggle arises from the fear of being labelled *medok*, a local term referring to a strong, unrefined regional accent. For these students, the accent represents more than a manner of speaking. It is perceived as an embodied deficit that generates significant anxiety ($M=2.89$). The intensity of this anxiety varies by context. Students reported feeling at ease when communicating with peers in ELF settings, yet experienced increased heart rates and a sense of paralysis when interacting with perceived gatekeepers, such as senior lecturers or native speakers. In these moments, students feel like permanent imposters, perpetually measured against an idealized Inner Circle ghost that dictates who is allowed to sound professional.

In sharp contrast, the English pronunciation teachers ($n = 5$) and the general public ($n = 5$) have largely migrated toward a narrative of affective resilience. For the teachers, the local accent has been reframed from a teaching failure into a site of professional curiosity. Teacher 3 (T3) argued that a unique accent represents a rich identity that should be celebrated rather than erased. This group has successfully de-coupled their self-worth from native-speaker mimicry, moving toward a state of emotional maturity where clarity is

the only metric of success. This shift suggests that affective liberation is a developmental process facilitated by professional experience and repeated exposure to successful non-native communication.

Similarly, the general public cohort demonstrated a pragmatic emotionality. Unlike the students who view accents through a lens of academic perfection, the public sees them through a lens of functional interest. For the businesspeople and travelers in this study, a unique accent is often viewed as a marker of global mobility. However, a small subset of the public still exhibits ideological erasure, where they consciously avoid non-native speakers in favor of standard voices. This indicates that while the majority are moving toward ELF acceptance, a lingering prestige bias remains a powerful force in the broader societal emotional landscape.

Ultimately, the affective findings highlight that the standard functions as a psychological gatekeeper. Even when participants say they support linguistic diversity, they often still feel attached to the prestige of Inner Circle accents. This conflict can make learners feel ashamed and less willing to communicate. Teacher education should go further than just teaching phonology and also address the emotional challenges that come with having a regional accent. As long as the *medok* stigma exists, learners will struggle between wanting to connect globally and fearing ridicule from their local community.

The Behavioral Dimension: Pragmatic Accommodation vs. Self-Silencing

The study shows a clear move away from trying to sound like native speakers and toward more practical communication strategies. This is supported by survey results, where the statement that students should work to sound like native speakers had the lowest average score ($M=2.40$). Instead of focusing on perfect pronunciation, participants said they preferred to develop skills for effective interaction. This involves a range of active accommodation strategies such as the conscious slowing of speech rate, strategic pausing, and the use of compensatory gestures. For the general public, particularly those in international business, speaking slowly and clearly was described not as a sign of weakness, but as a power move designed to ensure that the professional message remains uncompromised by phonetic noise.

Teachers in this study have also undergone a behavioral transition from ideological gatekeepers to pedagogical facilitators. In the classroom, this approach appears as selective intervention, where teachers only correct pronunciation if it causes real confusion. One teacher explained that they no longer correct the Javanese /th/ sound or the *medok* intonation unless the listener seems confused. This change shows a move away from trying to eliminate accents and instead focuses on making sure everyone understands

each other. By putting the main message first, teachers support students' multilingual identities and show how English works as a global language.

However, a secondary and more concerning behavioral pattern emerged among students: protective self-silencing. When faced with unfamiliar non-native accents such as the Egyptian or Indian stimuli used in the study, many students reported a tendency to withdraw from the interaction entirely. This behavior is not caused by a lack of interest, but by cognitive overload. Because students are so focused on achieving their own perfect pronunciation, they have little mental energy left to negotiate the phonological friction of others. This self-silencing acts as a defense mechanism to avoid the perceived shame of a communication breakdown. It reveals that while ELF is theoretically supported, the behavioral capacity to engage with linguistic "others" is still fragile and easily disrupted by a lack of confidence.

The behavioral engagement of the general public offers a critical ecological control to this academic anxiety. For those working in professional ELF settings, the behavioral response to a difficult accent is negotiation rather than withdrawal. Public participants talked about working together to understand each other, often by rephrasing or asking for clarification to close any gaps. While students often view misunderstandings as their own mistake, people outside of school see them as a normal part of professional life. This shows there is a big difference between how students and adults handle mistakes. In school, students learn to avoid errors, but in the real world, people learn to handle differences and adapt.

In conclusion, the behavioral dimension reflects a struggle between accommodation and avoidance. The pragmatic turn is successfully occurring among expert users (teachers and public), who have learned that the standard is a myth that can be behaviorally ignored in favor of function. However, for the learners (students), the behavior remains performative and anxious. They are caught between the behavioral requirements of the classroom which still often rewards native-likeness and the requirements of the global market, which rewards clarity. This finding suggests that pronunciation pedagogy must move beyond drills and toward interactional training that rewards the behavioral ability to negotiate meaning across different accents.

The Cognitive Dimension: The Reconfiguration of Standard

Cognitively, the research demonstrates a significant paradigm shift where correctness is being redefined through the lens of the intelligibility principle. Participants across all groups cognitively rejected the native speaker myth, with students strongly disagreeing with the idea that a non-native accent indicates lower intelligence ($M = 3.58$) or poor proficiency ($M = 2.48$). This indicates that at a rational, intellectual level, the

Inner Circle is no longer viewed as the sole owner of the English language. Instead, the standard is cognitively viewed as a functional baseline, a set of rules that exist to ensure we can understand one another, rather than a cultural club that one must join through mimicry.

However, a cognitive lag persists regarding the concept of symbolic capital. While teachers and the general public argue that a clear Indonesian accent is professionally acceptable, students remain cognitively uncertain. They show a preference for prestige, thinking that even if their accent is clear, it does not have the same market value as British or American English. This creates a conflict: students accept ELF as a theory but still see Standard English as the key to top professional roles. They feel their local accent works well enough but is less respected socially. This split shows that their shift to fully embracing ELF is not finished, and the idea of the native speaker still influences how they judge professional success.

Teachers have started to see accents as a sign of authority. They believe that a non-native teacher who has worked hard to learn English brings more teaching experience than a native speaker who never had to learn the language. This change in thinking is important because it questions the usual hierarchy in the English Language Teaching (ELT) field. By valuing the journey of non-native speakers, these teachers are offering a new idea of professionalism based on skill and empathy, not on where someone was born. This finding highlights the role of the teacher as an ideological agent who has the power to redefine the standard for the next generation.

The general public's cognitive evaluations are even more pragmatic, often ignoring the accent entirely in favor of content. For the businesspeople in this study, the standard is not a set of sounds, but a set of professional outcomes. They cognitively associate a good accent with clear logic and persuasive delivery, regardless of the speaker's regional origin. This suggests that in the real world, the cognitive focus has already moved past the native-speakerism that still dominates academic discourse. The public has cognitively de-colonized their view of English, seeing it as an Asian Lingua Franca that belongs to the user, not the provider.

Ultimately, the cognitive dimension reveals a split consciousness within the Indonesian ELT landscape. While the Nativeness Principle is cognitively dead in theory, it is still haunting the practice. The standard is no longer viewed as a goal to reach, but it still serves as a reference point. This research shows that to close this cognitive gap, teacher education should directly address Critical Language Awareness (CLA). Students should be encouraged to see their regional identities as valid and valuable contributions to the global conversation, not as shortcomings or mistakes. Shifting from gatekeeping to facilitation is a major change in thinking, and it needs to start in the classroom.

Discussion

The Pragmatic-Ideological Rupture: Reconceptualizing the Listener-Speaker Gap

The most significant theoretical contribution of this study is the identification of a pragmatic-ideological rupture, a psychological state where the functional necessity of ELF conflicts with deep-seated native-speakerism ideologies. While participants demonstrate a robust capacity for receptive multilingualism, this tolerance is remarkably unidirectional. This finding shows that the standard is no longer a barrier to understand others, but it still strongly affects how people see themselves. This supports (Jenkins et al., 2011) main ideas and matches recent evidence that L2 speakers often hold a double standard, accepting legitimacy in others but not in themselves (Ghane & Razmi, 2023; Tajeddin et al., 2019). The nativeness principle still acts as a psychological gatekeeper, even when communication is successful (Choi, 2025). Institutional actors, particularly classroom instructors, function as primary academic gatekeepers who enforce idealization of Inner Circle norms, effectively blocking non-native speech patterns from gaining legitimate status within formal assessment matrices.

In the Indonesian context, this rupture is intensified by the symbolic capital (Rahman et al., 2025) assigned to specific phonetic varieties. Within the high-stakes academic environment of the Expanding Circle, students cognitively perceive their regional accents as a form of linguistic poverty that hinders professional mobility. Recent scholarship confirms that this linguistic insecurity is a global phenomenon where non-native speakers feel like permanent imposters regardless of their actual proficiency (Deng et al., 2023; Islam & Hashim, 2020). Consequently, the transition to an ELF paradigm is not merely a pedagogical shift but a socioeconomic struggle against entrenched hierarchies of power maintained by traditional institutional gatekeepers that favor Anglo-American norms (Chandio et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the listener-speaker gap identifies a critical flaw in traditional communicative language teaching. Current models often assume that increased exposure to linguistic diversity naturally leads to increased self-confidence; however, our findings suggest that exposure may only enhance receptive tolerance without dismantling productive perfectionism. This aligns with the affective-cognitive dissonance explored by Karakaş (2019) and Effendi et al. (2025), where students intellectually support Global Englishes yet remain affectively tethered to the standard. This suggests that the emotional weight of sounding local outweighs the rational goal of being understood, a sentiment echoed in recent studies on accent-based social anxiety (Xue & Noels, 2025).

This dissonance indicates that the Indonesian ELT landscape is currently in a state of ideological lag. While the pragmatic requirements of the global labor market have shifted toward functional intelligibility (Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024), institutional mechanisms

including assessment rubrics, remain rooted in an antiquated, monolithic view of English. This mismatch creates a shame-based barrier where the fear of appearing *medok* prevents authentic engagement. To dismantle these rigid gatekeeping practices, teacher education frameworks must undergo a transformative shift. Rather than acting as punitive gatekeepers enforcing native-speaker mimicry, teachers must transition into language facilitators who explicitly address the emotional and ideological dimensions of accent, fostering a facilitation mindset over norm enforcement (Sifakis, 2019; Chavalala, 2025).

The Digital Hierarchy of Accents: Beyond the Three Circles

The second theoretical theme emerges from the digital hierarchy of accents, which challenges the traditional geographical boundaries of Kachru's Three Circles model. In the era of digital immersion, familiarity with an accent is no longer determined by colonial history, but by the consumption of global pop culture. Our findings indicate a shift in accent prestige where digital media acts as a selective filter, elevating certain non-native varieties, specifically East Asian Englishes to a status of aesthetic desirability while leaving traditional varieties marginalized. This suggests that prestige is increasingly derived from digital soft power rather than traditional linguistic standards (Tajeddin et al., 2019; Tamaševičius, 2016). In this digital ecosystem, social media algorithms and global content creators serve as new, informal gatekeepers of accent prestige, redefining which non-native varieties are deemed trendy or socially acceptable.

This digital reconfiguration creates a new aspirational paradigm for L2 learners. While traditional native-speakerism prioritized British or American norms, the digital native now navigates a marketplace of global voices. However, this does not necessarily lead to linguistic liberation; instead, it fosters a new form of digital perfectionism (Nguyen & Hamid, 2019). While social platforms bypass legacy institutional gatekeepers, they establish alternative digital gatekeepers that enforce aestheticized, polished speech norms. Students compare their regional identities to the polished, non-local voices they consume on platforms like TikTok and YouTube, leading to what has been termed mediated linguistic identity (Boonsuk & Fang, 2022). This highlights that the digital sphere provides both a site for diversification and a new arena for the reproduction of linguistic hierarchies.

Moreover, digital sphere immersion facilitates a receptive flexibility that was previously unattainable in EFL contexts. Regularly hearing different L2 accents helps reduce problems with processing fluency (Boduch-Grabka & Lev-Ari, 2021). As students listen to content with a range of accents, they naturally learn how to understand non-standard pronunciation, which is an important skill in today's global context (Ghane &

Razmi, 2023). Still, since this exposure is usually passive, it does not give students the interactive skills they need for important professional negotiations. This emphasizes the need for a curriculum that transitions students from being passive consumers of diversity to active negotiators of meaning.

The implications for the Expanding Circle are profound. If digital media is the primary driver of attitudinal change, the role of the teacher must shift from being a model provider to an exposure curator. Instead of serving as gatekeepers who exclude non-standard accents, educators must become exposure curators who intentionally incorporate diverse digital voices (Islam & Hashim, 2020). However, this must be accompanied by a critical deconstruction of the digital hierarchy itself, ensuring students do not simply replace one unattainable standard with another. As Nguyen and Hamid (2019) argue, the goal of modern pedagogy should be critical multilingualism, where regional identity is viewed as the primary site of legitimacy in the ASEAN context.

The Medok Stigma and the Somatic Reality of Identity

The final theme, the *medok* stigma, addresses the localized struggle of the Indonesian learner, reframing the regional accent as a somatic reality. In the Javanese-dominant context, the *medok* accent is often weaponized as a marker of being unrefined or provincial. This confirms that English pronunciation is not a linguistic exercise but an act of identity management. Peer interactions and local societal norms act as powerful sociolinguistic gatekeepers, policing phonetic variance through peer ridicule and stigmatization. This aligns with the theory of investment, where learners choose to speak or remain silent based on how they believe their identity will be valued by the listener (Tajeddin et al., 2019).

This somatic burden manifests as a physical reluctance to engage in English, driven by a fear of ideological mockery (Effendi et al., 2025). When institutional and peer gatekeepers treat regional phonological transfer as a defect, the classroom becomes a site of symbolic violence. The fear of laughter leads to protective self-silencing, a strategy that prioritizes the preservation of face over the achievement of communicative goals (Karakaş, 2019). This highlights that accent anxiety is deeply intersectional, rooted in the social hierarchies of ethnicity and geography within Indonesia itself (Masrizal, 2013; Faruq, 2019).

To counter this stigma, there is a crucial need to reframe the regional accent as a marker of authority. Among the teacher cohort, we see the emergence of a resilient identity, where non-native speaker teachers challenge their historical role as punitive gatekeepers and instead view their accented journey as a source of pedagogical capital. This supports the movement for recognizing the strengths of non-native speaker teachers,

who are often better equipped to model the strategies needed for global communication (Deng et al., 2023; Wong, 2018). By explicitly valuing the *medok* accent as a sign of multilingual achievement, educators can shift students from a deficit mindset to an asset-based mindset (Sifakis, 2019).

Ultimately, dismantling the *medok* stigma requires an operationalization of accommodation (Seidlhofer, 2005). In ELF settings, functional communication succeeds when teachers dismantle traditional gatekeeping functions in favor of mutual accommodation and negotiation. This suggests a pedagogy of ownership, where students are taught that a clear Indonesian accent is a valid and professional variety of Global English (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Doel et al., 2018). By shifting the focus from sounding native to being understood as a global citizen, the Indonesian ELT system can begin to heal the somatic trauma of regional stigma. As Choi (2025) and (Tamaševičius, 2016) assert, the future of pronunciation pedagogy lies in fostering intelligibility and identity, ensuring learners have a voice that is both clear and authentically their own.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully investigated the pragmatic-ideological rupture within the Indonesian ELT landscape by mapping the multidimensional attitudes of teachers, students, and the general public toward non-native accents. The main research findings show a clear difference between how people receive and produce language. Although everyone has shifted their thinking and behaviour toward the intelligibility principle for communication, students still feel emotionally attached to native-speaker ideals. This gap between listeners and speakers appears in the *medok* stigma, where regional identities are seen as language shortcomings instead of signs of multilingual skill. The study further identifies that this ideological conflict is moderated by digital media immersion and professional imperatives, which have created a new digital hierarchy of accents that reconfigures traditional notions of linguistic prestige in the Expanding Circle. To bridge this rupture, curriculum developers and policymakers under *Kemendikbudristek* must transition to an Intelligibility-Driven ELF Curriculum by embedding the Lingua Franca Core into higher education assessment rubrics, integrating Global Englishes awareness modules into national Pre-service Teacher Education (*Program Pendidikan Profesi Guru* or PPG), curating diverse non-native ASEAN auditory materials, and instituting anti-linguicism policies to dismantle the *medok* stigma in classrooms.

To address these tensions, this research argues for a decisive paradigm shift in teacher education from eradication to facilitation. The pedagogical implications suggest that dismantling the ghost of the native speaker requires the operationalization of critical

language frameworks that enable teachers and learners to evaluate how language practices are bound up with power dynamics, prestige, and sociopolitical bias. By embedding these critical sociolinguistic frameworks into teacher training, educators are equipped to deconstruct deeply ingrained native-speakerism norms, recognize how the *medok* stigma perpetuates linguistic insecurity, and validate non-native varieties as legitimate expressions of identity. Implementing these frameworks alongside the decolonization of assessment rubrics serves to reward interactional competence over phonetic mimicry. Although this study only looks at one case, it offers strong theoretical support for Indonesian educators to move past being just ideological gatekeepers toward becoming facilitators of an inclusive English pedagogy. Future research should look at long-term changes as learners move from academic to professional ELF settings. In the end, this study finds that encouraging a sense of ownership in learning is key to helping Indonesian students see themselves as legitimate, clear, and professional users of English in today's global world.

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DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

In developing this work, the authors utilized Gemini to support information retrieval, along with DeepL (V.24.4.3) to enhance linguistic accuracy and readability. The authors have carefully reviewed, revised, and refined the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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