

## **World Englishes and Cross-Cultural Communication**

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### **Abstract**

This study was designed to examine the differences between two world Englishes in an effort to add to the body of knowledge relative to world Englishes and cross-cultural communication. Specifically, select grammatical differences between a group of Filipino English language teachers and a Standard American English were examined. Differences between the grammars of the two English varieties included article use, collocations, pluralization of mass nouns, question formation, and verb tense. Proceeding from the premise that cross-cultural communication can be problematic due to the differences between world Englishes, in this case, grammar, this study showed differences in grammar between the two Englishes that could result in miscommunication.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural communication, English language, world Englishes, English grammar, varieties of English

### **Introduction**

English language teaching in the Philippines has become very popular in Asia (McGeown, 2012, Strother, 2015). Instead of traveling to more expensive locations, people such as Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese are turning toward Filipinos to develop their English language skills (Chavez, 2014, Hicap, 2009, Maruko, 2013, McGeown, 2012). Among these English-language-seeking travelers are South Koreans who make up a large part of the English language classrooms in the Philippines (Hicap, 2009). However, for the past several years, many South Koreans have been staying home and taking English classes online with Filipino English language teachers (FELTs) perhaps in part, because (i) travel has become less of an option due to economic constraints (Mundy, 2016) and (ii) due to an increase in crime related to Koreans in the Philippines (Diola, 2014; Palatino, 2014). As a result of this demand for not only classroom English language teachers, but also for online English language teachers, there is a high demand for qualified FELTs who can engage their learners and facilitate improved English skills.

Although, Filipino is the Filipinos' mother tongue (L1), Filipinos have a reputation in Asia as having developed an English (L2) more oriented toward American English (AE) (McGeown, 2012, p. 1), the preferred version for South Koreans (Jung, 2010, p. 149; Strother 2015). Nevertheless, the Filipino English is a cultural English, one of many World Englishes (WE) peculiar to

cultures around the world who have developed their own version of English as an L2 to suit their local needs (Yoshikawa, 2008, p. 225). Therefore, as can be expected, there will be some challenges and even miscommunication between the English of one culture and that of another (Essossomo, 2015, p. 99; Gilsdorf 2002, p. 365, Jung, 2010, p. 145; Kilickaya, 2009, p. 36; Tweedie & De Almeida, n.d., p. 3; World Englishes, n.d., p. 35; Yoshikawa, 2008, p. 219).

As a personnel manager and teacher trainer consultant in a medium-sized online English language center in the Philippines with on average 50-70 FELTs that cater to Korean, English language students, I have regular and continued contact with FELTs. One of the main reasons for assuming this role was my background having been born and raised in the U.S.A., and one who speaks American English. An additional consideration is that I have been immersed in the Filipino culture for nearly 18 years, thus would be able to interact readily with people in the workplace. Among other duties, I conduct quality assurance observations and in-house proficiency training in teacher classroom performance as well as monitor their English proficiency oriented more toward a Standard American English (SAE) as per customer preference. The term SAE is a reference to an American form of English that is standard English, i.e. “that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated” (Merriam-webster.com 2017), as can be found in traditional grammar and pronunciation materials that refer to American English. An additional responsibility that I have is interviewing applicants and training new teachers how to perform their tasks. During interviews and in new teacher training, I listen for grammar use among other factors.

As a result, over a three-year period I have been exposed to approximately 200 teachers and teacher trainees and have encountered sometimes surprising variations of English between the two Englishes between this group and SAE which has caused some confusion for myself and that could, and at times does cause customer (student) complaints regarding teachers’ English skills. Thus, part of initial and ongoing teacher training involves English training in a Standard American English (SAE) grammar.

Minor grammar issues among teachers are not cause for concern as they are thought to be simple lapses, and can be addressed in training or in post-observation feedback. However, some deviations from a standard form of grammar tend to be more habitual than others, which is indicative of commonality among this specific group of FELTs, possibly FELTs outside of this group, and or perhaps Filipino English speakers in general. Since these are current or budding English language teachers catering to a customer base oriented toward an SAE version, it is good business for them to be more familiar with SAE and how they are presenting it to their students, either directly or indirectly (through modeling), as indeed, we cannot ignore form (DeCarrico, 2009, p. vii, Floris, 2014, p. 221; Genc & Bada, 2010, p. 147, Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014, p. 89; Pickering, 2006, pp. 8-9; Swan, 2005, p.

ix; Yoshikawa, 2008, pp. 219-220; Young & Walsh, 2010, p. 132; Van den Doel, 2007, p. 33).

The purpose of this paper is to examine commonly observed differences in English grammar between two varieties of English in order to identify differences in grammar that may create the potential for miscommunication in a cross-variety setting. In a broader scope, this paper will present communication in general between two WEs and the potential for misunderstanding that may arise as a result of the grammatical differences. Finally, this paper will address the WE stage and the concern for each culture to have their own variation while at the same time retaining the ability to communicate outside of their English community— cross-cultural English communication. This research proceeds from the assumption that cross-cultural communication can be problematic due to the differences between WEs. Toward that end, the grammar being used between two varieties of Englishes is being examined in this study to determine if this is accurate.

## **Methodology**

This research can be classified as an auto-ethnographic qualitative study limited to my three-year experience interacting face-to-face with a combined total of approximately 200 applicants, trainees, and teachers, within the environment of the online English language center I consult with. I collectively refer to these individuals as the U-Group throughout the remainder of this paper. Common differences which have led at times to confusion between myself and the U-Group and have potential for miscommunication beyond the teacher-training and English-language-teaching environment are encountered on a weekly basis by way of: teacher-applicant interviews, in teacher-applicant writing, in new-teacher training conversations, in new-teacher training, in new-teacher teaching observations, complaints made by Korean language students (young and old), teacher quality assurance observations and spot checks, my own interactions with all categories, and teacher weekly writing assignments (one-paragraph each on a specific topic), and finally, my own observations and reflections.

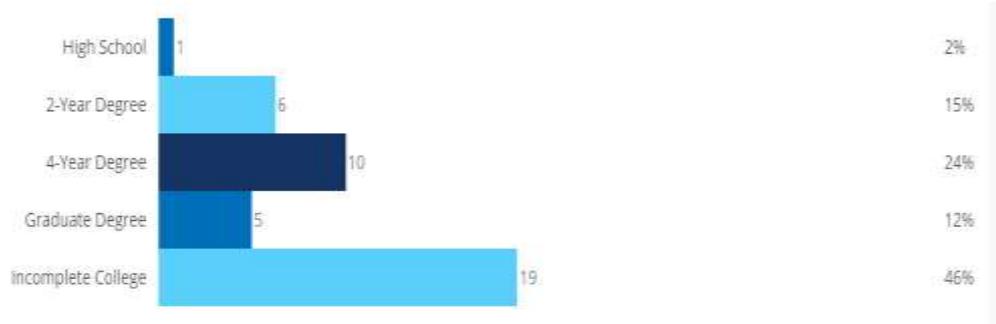
## ***Demographics***

The U-Group, predominantly female, represents various ages, ethnic backgrounds, city sizes, and educational backgrounds whose English levels are defined at or around the Intermediate-Mid to Advanced-Mid levels as per the ACTFL English Proficiency Guidelines 2012 which are used as a reference during teacher interviews and training. The approximate demographics of the U-Group (based on a survey of the 50 current teachers conducted at the time of this study) are broken down into Figures 1–5 and are representative of the demographics of the larger group.



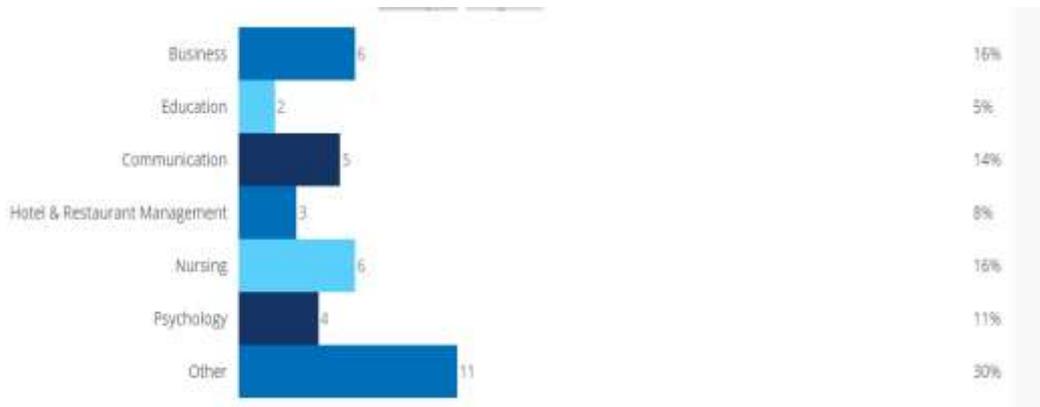
*Figure 1.* Teacher Ethnic Backgrounds

A total of 40 U-Group members responded to the survey on ethnic backgrounds. Figure 1 shows that the majority of teachers (29) are from a Tagalog ethnic background which encompasses the area of Luzon. Cebuano, Ilocano, Bikol, Waray, and Other backgrounds are represented, but minimally (1), while Bisaya and Ilongo are represented at somewhat higher levels: (2) and (4) respectively.



*Figure 2.* Teacher Education Levels

A total of 41 U-Group members responded to the survey on highest education levels attained. Figure 2 shows that the majority of teachers have not completed college degrees (19), while others have completed 2-year (6), 4-year (10), and graduate degrees (5).



*Figure 3. Number of Teacher Education Majors*

A total of 37 U-Group members responded to the survey on education majors. Figure 3 shows a variety of educational pursuits including business (6), education (2), communication (5), hotel & restaurant management (3), nursing (6), psychology (4), and others (11).



*Figure 4. Teacher Age Ranges*

A total of 46 U-Group members responded to the survey on age ranges. Figure 4 shows that the majority of teachers are between the ages of 18-25 (21), while others represent the ages of 26-30 (9), 31-35 (9), 36-40 (4), 41-45 (2), and 50+ (1).



*Figure 5. Teacher City Backgrounds*

A total of 40 U-Group members responded to the survey on city backgrounds. Figure 5 shows the majority of teachers grew up in rural environments (21) apart from more modernized and or 'Englishified' areas. The remaining members came from large cities (8) and medium-sized cities (11).

### ***Terminology***

The terms cross-cultural communication, cross-variety communication, and cross-community will be used interchangeably in this paper to indicate communication in English taking place outside of particular speech community.

The term variations can be a somewhat ambiguous and or relative term. As taken from the Merriam-Webster online Dictionary (Variation, 2016), it can be defined as: (i) a change in the form, position, condition, or amount of something, and (ii) something that is similar to something else but different in some way. For purposes of this study, variations will refer to instances where the grammar used by the U-Group conflicts with Standard American English.

Standard American English grammar was cross-checked using an academic reference (De Carrico, 2009) a reference on practical English usage (Swan, 2005), and a linguistic reference (Radford, 2009). With regard to checking collocation differences in terms of phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, noun phrases, and or preposition use, my preference was for the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) a collocation database run by Brigham-Young University, Utah, USA, which would have provided specific percentages of collocation use. However, due to technical issues that prevented me from being able to utilize the website. Consequently, I had no other recourse but to utilize free online collocation dictionaries such as [ozdic.com](http://www.ozdic.com), Cambridge Dictionary ([dictionary.cambridge.org/](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/)), and [prowritingaid.com](http://www.prowritingaid.com). Terms, definitions, and countability were checked utilizing three online lexicons: Longman dictionary (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/>), Collins Dictionary (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/>), and Dictionary.com.

Specific grammatical functions were categorized into such categories as tense and pluralization of mass nouns (Higgins, 2003: 627, Sykes, 2015, p. 36), where the researchers asked question to teachers (Higgins 2003) and certain groups in Britain (Sykes, 2015) as to what each group considered to be acceptable English. Additional functions not found in the researches but which surfaced in this study included article use, collocations, contractions, and question formation. This study differs from previous studies in that previous studies surveyed respondents on what they thought was correct or incorrect in terms of usage. However, this study examines the differences between two specific Englishes.

The term common can also be a somewhat ambiguous and or relative term. As can be noted from the Merriam-Webster online Dictionary

(Common, 2016), (1) it can mean “belonging to or shared by two or more people or groups”, (2) it can mean “done by many people”, and (3) it can mean “occurring or appearing frequently: not rare”. For purposes of this study, the term common will refer to frequent grammar usage variations encountered with the U-Group in the process of a normal work day.

## Results

It is important to note at the beginning of this discussion that this paper does not approach the subject from the perspective of prescriptive grammar– what should or should not be used as grammar. As DeCarrico (2000, pp. ix-x) rightly expresses “[n]o value judgments are made using terms 'good', 'bad', 'correct' or 'incorrect.’” Though some English cultures are creating their own reference sources (Sykes, 2015, p. 34), to my knowledge there is no Filipino-English reference source with which one can ascertain the exact meanings of the U-Group members in the previous samples. However, through training, interaction, and interviews, the meaning of the U-Group members’ English was ascertained. When matched against SAE references, variations can be seen between the two Englishes. While time and space limit my development of each item presented in the results, a select few of the more salient results can be developed here.

The following common variations between the U-Group’s usage of English grammar compared to SAE and as compared to the reference sources surfaced during evaluation of the data (Table 1). It is important to note, that these are representative examples of repeat variations in grammatical function between the two Englishes, not isolated incidences.

Table 1

*Examples of Common Grammar Variations between U-Group English and SAE*

RefNo.	Recurring U-Group English	Grammatical Function	SAE Equivalent
1	You have to take a medicine every day. Have you been to forest? Have you seen frog? Please read model answer. Today is holiday in Korea. Can you do a magic? I think it is about the same sex marriage. There's a grass.	Article Use	You have to take medicine every day. Have you ever been to a forest? Have you ever seen a frog? Please read the model answer. Today is a holiday in Korea. Can you do magic? I think it is about same sex marriage? There's grass. I was sure that there will be

	I was sure that there will be a trouble...		trouble.
2	I was lonely and envious with other kids... They don't care about with other people Despite of The paragraph tackles about English learners' different perspectives on learning English. I never lose hope on someone or something. I commit a mistake What happened to your weekend? Good luck to your date. I am interested to that position. Ability to work on high stress situations.	Collocations	I was lonely and envious of the other kids... They didn't care about other people. Despite c. The paragraph tackles English learners' different perspectives on learning English. I never lose hope in someone or something I made a mistake How was your weekend? Good luck on your date. I am interested in that position.  Ability to work in high stress situations.
3	It + was (It's) There + was (There's) He/She + was (He's/She's)	Contractions	It was There was He/She was
4	Homeworks Paperworks Seatworks Staffs Advices Grammars Stuffs	Pluralization of Mass Nouns	Homework Paperwork Seatwork Staff Advice Grammar Stuff
5	What is your favorite animal do you like? What do you think are they doing? How does your house look like? Do you like to have a pet? What do you think are these? You think where are	Question Formation	What is your favorite animal? What do you think they are doing? What does your house look like? Would you like to have a pet? What do you think these are? Where do you think they

	they?		are?
6	<p>Every time I talk to you I really felt happy.  Drinking water right after you woke up is good.  [Deleted]  I will going to show you a picture ...  I did not consider the consequences of my actions. [meant to indicate a habit]  My friends usually say that whenever I asked them...  My greatest accomplishment is when I had my job  [Speaking of a current situation – current employment]  You kept returning my questions [Referring to now].</p>	Verb Tense	<p>Every time I talk to you I feel happy.  Drinking water right after you wake up is good.  [Deleted]  I am going to show you a picture.  I do not consider the consequences of my actions.  My friends usually say that whenever I ask them...  My greatest accomplishment is when I got my job [here]  You keep returning my questions.</p>

Table 1 shows six areas of common grammar variations between the U-Group members' English and SAE in terms of article use, collocations, contractions, pluralization of mass nouns, question formation, and verb tense.

### *Article use*

Reference no. 1, Article Use, shows the differences between U-Group members' English and SAE in terms of missing or added articles where there would not ordinarily be in SAE. For example, U-Group members used articles with typical SAE mass count nouns such as in Items:

- 1.a. a medicine
- 1.f. a magic
- 1.g. the same sex marriage
- 1.h. a grass
- 1.i. a trouble

While omitting articles typically used in SAE for countable nouns such as Items:

- 1.b. [a/the] forest,
- 1.c. [a/the] frog
- 1.d. [a] model answer
- 1.e. [a] holiday

In and of itself, article usage may be considered a minor grammatical issue. However, when compounded with additional differences, the potential for miscommunication between these two Englishes is a reasonable assumption. For example, in Item 1.a., the statement is, “You have to take a medicine every day.” The conflict between the U-Group English and the SAE may be the question of what medicine the U-Group member is referring to. Whereas, the U-Group member was referring to medicine in general in the SAE, “You have to take medicine every day,” the SAE user may understand “a medicine” to mean a particular medicine. The context would likely aid in communication; however, it would constitute a breakdown in communication initially.

### *Collocations*

Reference no. 2, Collocations, shows differences between the two Englishes in terms of collocations. The U-Group examples of collocations were checked against free online collocation dictionaries such as [ozdic.com](http://ozdic.com), Cambridge Dictionary ([dictionary.cambridge.org/](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/)), and [prowritingaid.com](http://prowritingaid.com) for the same collocations in SAE. The following results were yielded:

- Item 2.a. envious with: No results were found.
- Item 2.b. despite of: No results were found.
- Item 2.c. tackles about: No results found.
- Item 2.d. hope on: No results found.
- Item 2.e. commit [a] mistake: No results found.
- Item 2.h. interested to: No results found.
- Items: 2.f. What happened to your weekend, 2.g. good luck to your date, and 2.i. work on high stress situations, were not checked with a collocation dictionary as they do contain collocations that are used in SAE.

Collocations refer to word combinations and were triple-checked against SAE references. For example: Item 2.f. What happened ‘to’ your weekend, implies that the weekend was somehow a disaster by use of the preposition to, e.g. What happened ‘to’ your car? implies something negative happened to it), whereas the U-Group member is expressing a question about how the student’s weekend was if using SAE. A second example comes from Item 2.g. good luck to your date, which implies that the member is wishing good luck toward the student’s date (the person), giving the impression in SAE that the student himself is somewhat of a terrible date (with similar negative

connotations as referenced in Item 2.f. above), whereas based on my observations of these settings, the member is expressing a kind comment that the date would be a good one for the student.

A final example from the Collocations category from Item 2.i. [The ability to] work on high stress situations, is certainly understandable in SAE from the context of a job interview. However, from a perspective of collocation in SAE, it implies the speaker has some ability to perform maintenance upon stressful situations (work on n.d., work on somebody/something 2016) much like the expressions work on your car, work on a dance move, work on a report, etc., carry a similar idea in SAE. The thought wanting to be expressed from the U-Group member in SAE, is that she has the ability to function (with)in stressful situations. Based on these examples, it is reasonable to assume that collocation use does have the potential for miscommunication between these two Englishes. The context would likely aid in communication; however, it would constitute a breakdown in communication initially. Cross-cultural communication between users from both varieties of English may become problematic in terms of collocations when uncertainty arises between intended meanings.

### ***Contractions***

Reference no. 3, Contractions, shows differences between U-Group English and SAE in terms of forming contractions. Examples from the U-Group include Items:

- 3.a. It + was (e.g. It's)
- 3.b. There + was (e.g. There's)
- 3.c. He/She+ was (e.g. He's/She's).

However, contracting was with pronouns does not fall under SAE (Swan 2009: 121). Examples from the U-Group include using the past form of be-verbs to form contractions. Examples such as It + was (e.g. It's), There + was (e.g. There's), and He/She+ was (e.g. He's/She's) were discovered. Cross-cultural communication between users from both varieties of English can breakdown when uncertainty arises between intended references to past or present.

### ***Pluralization of mass nouns***

Reference no. 4, Pluralization of Mass Nouns, shows differences between Englishes in terms of pluralizing mass nouns which are not commonly pluralized in SAE. However, when cross-checked with SAE lexicons: Longman dictionary (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/>), Collins Dictionary (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/>), and Dictionary.com, the following results were yielded:

Item 4.a. Homeworks: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun homework.

Item 4.b. Paperworks: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun paperwork.

Item 4.c. Seatworks: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun seatwork.

Item 4.d. Staffs: 2 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun staff.

Item 4.e. Advices: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun advice.

Item 4.f. Grammars: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun grammar.

Item 4.g. Stuffs: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun stuff.

Of itself, pluralization of mass nouns may also be considered a minor grammatical issue. However, when compounded with additional differences, the potential for miscommunication between these two Englishes is a reasonable assumption. For example, the use of “advices” in Item 4.e. can be misconstrued by the SAE listener to be a different word because the SAE user would not normally expect to hear “advice” in a pluralized form. Therefore, it is possible that “She gave me some advices” would initially be misunderstood as possibly, “She gave me \_\_\_s.” There would need to be a period of clarification between both users as a result which would impede smooth communication.

### *Question formation*

Reference no. 5, Question Formation, shows differences between the two Englishes with respect to question formation. For example, in Items:

5.a. What is your favorite animal do you like?

5.b. What do you think are they doing?

5.e. What do you think are these?

In the category of Question Formation, we can see two potential questions in one in Items 5.a, 5.b., and 5.g. (e.g. What is...? + What... do...?). This varies with SAE question formation rules where one question per statement is grammatical. In the remaining examples from the U-Group members, we see variation in question-word use (i.e. the use of how than what in 5.c. How does your house look like?). Use of how is a request for more detail, whereas what is a request for general information without limited choices (Swan 2005, p. 611). In 5.d. Do you like to have a pet? we can see a variance between U-Group use of auxiliary verb ‘do’ and SAE use of ‘would’

in a similar situation, ‘would’ being less direct than ‘do’ (Swan 2005, p. 436). In 5.f. *You think where are they?* we can see a variance between U-Group English and SAE in terms of fronting or the head phrase. Additionally, among U-Group members, there seems to be an extra future inflection in comments referencing immediate future activities: 6.d. *I will going to show you a picture, which varies with the singular use of inflection in SAE (e.g. I am going to... or I will...)*. The data clearly shows that there are differences between the two Englishes.

Of themselves, question formation differences may not be problematic in cross-cultural communication as SAE users do not always follow their own grammar rules in terms of question formation. However, the possibility of compounding one category upon another can create potential confusion in cross-variety communication.

### ***Verb tense***

Reference no. 6, *Verb Tense*, shows differences between U-Group English and SAE in terms of their use of verb tense.

- 6.a. Every time I talk to you I really felt happy.
- 6.b. Drinking water right after you woke up is good.
- 6.c. [Deleted]
- 6.e. I did not consider the consequences of my actions [meant to indicate a habit].
- 6.f. My friends usually say that whenever I asked them...
- 6.g. My greatest accomplishment is when I had my job [Speaking of a current situation– current employment].
- 6.h. You kept returning my questions [Referring to now].

However, when examined in light of SAE grammar rules of usage, we discover some differences in how U-Group English tense usage differs from that of SAE. We can see within the sentences of the U-Group members a shifting between past and present references that conflicts with the SAE continuity of tense. For example, in 6.a. “Every time I talk to you I really felt happy.” (SAE: “Every time I talk to you I feel happy.”), we see frequency and present tense references (“every time... talk”) in conflict with the past form (felt) to indicate a present and recurring truth; in 6.g. “My greatest accomplishment is when I had my job.” (SAE: “My greatest accomplishment is when I got my job.”), we see conflict between the use of the present be-verb (is) to represent a past reference (an accomplishment) and the past be-verb (had) to indicate accomplishment. Cross-cultural communication between users from both varieties of English can become problematic in terms of verb tense when uncertainty arises between skewed references to past or present.

### *Potential for misunderstandings*

In a broader sense, this research reveals the potential for miscommunication between users of varieties of English. Much of misunderstandings between peoples can be cleared up within context; however, there are some that defy context and create potential for misunderstandings. As Gilsdorf (2002, p. 366) points out, “For business and other international purposes, a core of English has to remain understandable to all English users” and “[f]or business’s purposes, much depends on a core of language remaining intelligible to all speakers of English... No one would like to be in the position of being the sole remaining speaker of a really, really, really correct English” (p. 372).

She is having a headache, she had a headache, or she has a headache? Which meaning is being conveyed in an environment where communication is taking place between two Englishes? The FELTs conflation with the contractions in SAE combining past with pronouns has great potential for misunderstanding. For example, if a U-Group FELT said, “She’s going to resign”, there may be some doubt in one’s mind of whether the idea was that she ‘was’ going to resign or that she plans to resign. A weak example, agreed, however, it illustrates a potentially more complicated issue. Can we forsake precision in English in order to accommodate all in cross-variety communications? For the sake of offending other speakers of English shall we create an environment where interpretation is necessary between English speakers from different communities? Each member carries their own meaning and nuance if left without parameters.

Having a standard form of English between Englishes is not a case of one being better than others but that one language has been accepted (Swan 2005, p. 288). As in the case of the U-Group, the customer desires an SAE, and it is that variety of English that the business provides. Thus, businesses, ESL academies, academic environments, and governments can decide which variety of English works best for their purposes. If for local communication, the local variety would suffice. However, if for communication outside of the local environment, a standard form or better, an agreed-upon form would be more practical. Swan (2005, p. xx) sums it up well by expressing, “Dialect forms are not, therefore, incorrect in themselves. They are, however, out of place in styles where only the standard language is normally used.”

This research shows conflicting results with Floris’ (2014, p. 221) comments, “...in many cases, the language acquires distinct local characteristics, while still retaining the main grammatical structures of the ‘original.’” As such, a new English is used among the U-Group members that conflicts with the SAE they are required to teach. This may or may not be the result of “limited linguistic competence” as Hamid, Zhu, and Baldauf (2014, p. 78) point out. Within their own speech community, the English variety works, but what about outside the community?

So, “How can we distinguish between errors in the SLA sense and varietal features in the WE sense” (Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014, p. 78).

World Englishes are used within the culture. If it works for the people of that culture than it is accepted (Smith, 1992, p. 75 cited in World Englishes, n.d., p. 35). If, someone from a different variety of English entered the cultural domain using their own variety of English, as we can see from the example given in this research, there would be the potential for misunderstandings and miscommunication. Therefore, to enter the speech community, one would find it much more expeditious to learn the differences between English A and English B. I therefore find it obvious and am rather unclear why until now so much has been written on this particular topic of accepting the variety of English from each speech culture. It just makes sense! Nevertheless, the question that repeatedly arises is how will a single variety of English work in cross-cultural communications, the idea behind this research.

Hamid, Zhu, and Baldauf (2014), had a commendable research method of asking TESOL teachers to evaluate grammar and lexis deviations from SE as acceptable or not in terms of the need for error correction (Swan, 2005, p. xx). In fact, the very premise behind their research required the utilization of a standard form of English in order to conduct the research (Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014, Abstract). However, in the area of WEs and cross-cultural communication the point is missed: within the WE culture only the speech community members are qualified to determine correct or incorrect usage. But, how about outside? Among the U-Group members, where past and present conflict with SAE, will it be perfectly understandable in cross-cultural settings? How far would it play out? For example, is she taking medicine, has she taken medicine, or does she take medicine?

Here is where Swan (2005, p. ix) makes an important distinction in writing that "[i]f someone makes too many mistakes in a foreign language, he or she can be difficult to understand, so a reasonable level of correctness is important" (Swan 2005, p. ix). Using English within an English speech community ought not to be an "anything goes" approach, as (DeCarrico 2000, p. xx) points out since "certain forms are viewed as uneducated or perhaps even vulgar." Jung (2010, Abstract) suggests that English learners learn "common varieties of English used between native speakers and non-native speakers (NSs-NNSs) and between two non-native speakers (NNSs-NNSs)." However, this suggestion may come across as a lot of work for people who simply want to function within a global community and is in conflict with Sykes (2015, p. 34) who suggests that "Whilst autonomy in setting standards and norms is important for the development of World Englishes, for English to be an international language there must be certain standards and norms common to all of its varieties and acceptable to all its users." Swan (2005, p. 290) also supports this thinking by suggesting, "For most learners, the best model is one or other of the two main standard varieties: British or American English... they are both used and understood worldwide. "Swan's point is evidenced in the common use of standardized English tests such as the IELTS, the TOEIC, TOEFL, OPI, and the like that use a standard form of English (usually British or American English) is used to "determine if a non-native

speaker is capable of functioning or surviving in the English-speaking culture they desire to function in” (Smith, 2016, p. 47). A study conducted by Young & Walsh (2010, p. 128) also exemplifies the idea that there is in some form a need for cross-cultural English. As a matter of fact, their study would not have been possible without standardization. Tweedie and De Almeida (n.d., p. 1) support this idea by writing:

Just because speakers of World Englishes are speaking the same language does not make them mutually intelligible. Obviously, if the speakers are from different circles, e.g. a Kiwi and a Turk, then the likelihood of successful communication is not guaranteed. Even speakers from the same circle, e.g. an American and an Australian, can have difficulty understanding each other due to the influence of the verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal components of communication.

### *Arguments that promote varieties of English tend to miss the point*

Often, the point appears to have been missed among the numerous papers that I have examined, that being, as previously stated and repeated: within the WE culture, it is fine to communicate with a localized variant of English. But, how about outside? Given the assumption that many language learners are learning English in order to function in or interact with specific English-speaking cultures (Smith, 2016, p. 47), would they be able to by using their own variety of English? Can one speaker use a verb from their English instead of using it as a noun common in SAE for example (Smith, 2016, p. 49) and be understood?

The concern is not related to the political aspect of the English language which some these days seem to be focusing on (Essossomo, 2015, p. 95, Floris, 2014, p. 221, Gray, 2003, p. 3, Pickering, 2006, p. 1, Wehbe, n.d., p. 1, World Englishes, n.d., p. 27), where English is viewed as a political, rather than communicative tool from the direction of some authors. Using the example from the U-Group, how could someone from an SAE community know with certainty that she’s refers to she is rather than she was without more effort to determine the meaning of the comment made by the U-Group member? We could turn it around to say the same for an SAE member communicating to a U-Group member. Could one’s words be taken at face value if members are communicating in English cross-culturally? Worse yet, would one speaker assume that the other means the same until perhaps an undesirable circumstance arises due to the lack of understanding? Sykes (2015, p. 43) I believe, has an amicable solution to the political aspect of WEs:

This awareness would give users of English the opportunity to make their own choices as to which English they use dependent upon their specific communicative needs. In this way, users of English could take pride in, and enjoy the diversity of, the language found in World

Englishes, while taking advantage of the unity of the language found in English as an International Language.

## **Conclusion**

This study was not meant as a criticism of one English in favor of another. Neither was this a search for perfect English, nor a suggestion that SAE speakers are perfect. Indeed, there is no perfect English among SAE speakers. However, it does shed light on the potential for misunderstandings between World Englishes and English varieties/dialects such as British English or American English in cross-communication settings. It has been reasonably demonstrated that there are indeed inconsistencies between varieties of Englishes that would, could, and do, lead to miscommunication or misunderstandings in a cross-cultural setting. It would be a stretch to say that an entire culture of English (i.e. World English) is represented by this sample of U-Group members. However, given the demographics, the representatives do present a limited range of intracultural English. Therefore, when we examine the common areas for potential miscommunication, one could argue that this is widespread throughout the Filipino culture. Of course, it makes sense for any culture to shape English to suit its needs within the context of their own culture. A separate question arises however as to why that might be necessary in a culture where English is not the mother tongue. The purpose of English as a global language is to communicate with entities outside of the culture. Once one goes outside of these English subcultures into cross-cultural communication, and in this case, teaching English language, there appears to be potential for confusion between interlocutors.

At what point will we lose understanding between English varieties? Shall we lose tense to avoid difficulties? Shall we use verbs as nouns to accommodate? Shall we remove /th/ because it is difficult? Where will it end? The point of English as a global language is to communicate more readily between non-English and L1 speaking cultures. How much energy does one want to exert to understand another person? In the efforts of being more sensitive to other cultures' Englishes, are we not shooting ourselves in the foot so to speak? I know my opinions and observations are not popular in today's EIL environment of being politically correct, but if we would use English as a tool for communication, wouldn't it make sense to have the right tool for the job in cross-cultural settings?

Finally, in an even greater sense, this study might become one piece of the puzzle to answer my own question: Does the phenomenon of World Englishes in cross-cultural settings actually promote enhanced communication between cultures or do these varieties of English engender confusion? It is my desire that this paper will be a step toward answering that question. Future researches could present cross-variety differences to a separate community of English users to determine their understanding of specific statements to in fact support or falsify my assumptions. Admittedly, this has been a crude

presentation of an immediate but potentially foreseeable concern.

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