THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE AND EXPLICIT PHONOLOGICAL INSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH VARIETIES ON GELT LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

The Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) approach plays an essential role in English as a lingua franca. Previous GELT studies only examined the influence of Global English exposure on learners' attitudes in the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles. This study added explicit instruction on phonological features in addition to a variety of exposures to enhance listening proficiency. The participants were 88 first-year students majoring in Applied English at a central Taiwanese university, assigned either to an exposure or an experimental group. Both groups were exposed to English Received Pronunciation, Singaporean English, Japanese English, Standard American English, and Taiwanese English. In addition, the experimental group received explicit instruction on the first three varieties mentioned above. Pre- and post-listening comprehension tests and multiple-choice accent identification tests were quantitatively collected for comparisons. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to qualitatively elaborate on their performances and the effects of phonological instruction. The results showed that a variety of exposures with additional phonological explanations significantly increased their overall listening scores and raised their phonological awareness.

Key Words: Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT), explicit instruction, listening comprehension

INTRODUCTION

English is used as a lingua franca in three specific circles. The Inner Circle refers to countries where English is the primary language. The Outer Circle includes the countries with some colonial history. The Expanding Circle encompasses countries where English is a foreign language (Kachru, 1985). The standard learning models teach Inner Circle English to non-native English speakers (NNESs), whose utterances are obviously influenced by their first language (L1) with its own unique phonological features. This results in a wide variety of English accents. Since NNESs outnumber native English speakers (NESs) by three or four fold, learners have a high possibility of encountering diverse accents. Thus, the issue of mutual intelligibility comes to the forefront (Canagarajah, 2006; Galloway & Rose, 2014; Jenkins, 2015). Comprehension difficulties occur when various accents mingle (Seargeant, 2012). Consequently, English Language Teaching (ELT) must pay attention to native Standard forms and diverse NNESs.

Reithofer (2020) points out that accent familiarity is a crucial intelligibility factor. Kang, Thomson, and Moran (2019), and Munro, Derwing, and Morton (2006) studied the intelligibility correlation among different L1 learners. Some NNES learners may even think their L1 influenced accents are more intelligible than those of other speakers. Listening comprehension is the first step toward successful communication. Therefore, exposure to various accents and pronunciations is essential for mutual understanding. Pedagogically, Rose and Galloway (2019) recommended the GELT with various accents. But there is a lack of explicit instruction for listening comprehension in the Outer and Expanding Circles.

The present study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of teaching interventions for the purpose of improving listening comprehension and phonological awareness from the GELT perspective. In all, 88 participants were exposed to five English accents and pronunciations including Standard American English (SAE), English Received Pronunciation (ERP), Singaporean English (SGE), Japanese English (JPE), and Taiwanese English (TWE). The Department of Applied English only offers one class per year.

Therefore, of the 88 participants, 45 in the year 2020 class were assigned to the exposure group and the other 43 in the year 2021 class to the experimental group. In addition to accent exposure, the experimental group learned the phonological features of ERP, SGE, and JPE. The reason for the selection of ERP was that it is in the Inner Circle. Even though both ERP and SAE are considered Standard English, the latter is more commonly taught in Taiwan. ERP was thus a perfect candidate to study. High-stakes tests such as IELTS and TOEIC embrace both ERP and SAE in their listening comprehension subtests. Because American and British English typically represent the Inner Circle, Australian and New Zealand English were excluded to keep the project to a manageable scope. SGE was chosen for being in the Outer Circle and for its unique linguistic features. Taiwan and Singapore are both in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and have good business relations (Huang & Zhu, 2012). JPE was selected because it belongs to the Expanding Circle. Japan also maintains a close relationship with Taiwan (Wilkins, 2012). According to the Taiwan Tourism Bureau database, Japan and Singapore provided two of the highest numbers of inbound visitors to Taiwan in 2023. It is foreseeable that in Taiwan, a considerable number of interactions between foreign visitors and local residents will depend on the use of English as the lingua franca.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of explicit instruction on the listening comprehension performance of the given accents. We designed the pre- and post-listening comprehension tests as well as the pre- and post-accent-identification tests to compare the outcomes quantitatively. Semi-structured interviews were further conducted to qualitatively elaborate on the results to examine factors such as speech rate and unfamiliarity. The research questions were as follows:

1. Did participants in the experimental group perform better on listening comprehension than the exposure group? If yes, to what extent? What factors influenced the results of the listening tests?
2. Were there any differences in accent identification between the two groups? To what extent did the explicit phonological

instruction help the experimental group grasp the segmental and suprasegmental characteristics of ERP, SGE, and JPE?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effects of GELT on Learners' Attitude

Global Englishes (GE) is the process of globalization that results in the spread and utilization of English in diverse forms (Pennycook, 2007). GE highlights the diversity of the English language in both classrooms and real life (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Lu & Buripakdi, 2020; Lin, 2022). Based on the importance of mutual understanding and communication for ELT, Galloway (2011) advocates the GELT approach of promoting multi-lingualist respect and English variety exposure.

Previous studies focused on exposing learners to the plurality of Englishes to prepare for complex accent encounters (Boonsuk, Ambele & McKinley, 2021; Chen, 2022; Galloway & Rose, 2014; Fang & Ren, 2018; Jindapitak, Teo & Savski, 2022). Galloway and Rose (2014) conducted a study with 108 Japanese university students, who were exposed to GE by the utilization of listening journals. The 1,092 journal reflections revealed that the students had opportunities to hear a wide range of speakers, with 367 from the Inner, 186 from the Outer, and 459 from the Expanding Circles. The results showed increased GE awareness and general openness to different English varieties at the end of the courses even though NESs were initially preferred.

Fang and Ren (2018) designed a course for approximately 50 high-intermediate English learners at a Chinese university to raise their awareness of English diversity. The data were collected via 12 semi-structured interviews and 13 reflective journals. The course reversed the students' attitude toward native-oriented English ideology. The students were no longer embarrassed by their own accent and developed an awareness of English diversities with positive perceptions of GE.

Boonsuk, Ambele and McKinley (2021) introduced GE to 20 Thai EFL university students. The data included semi-structured interviews

and weekly reflective journals. The course covered several themes, including English in a global context, the early spread of English around the world, standard English ideology, ELF, and linguistic imperialism. The results showed a positive shift in the participants' attitude toward GE, with students treating other varieties as equally as acceptable as SAE and ERP.

Chen (2022) challenged students' adherence to the NESs model and fostered their awareness of GE. The 24-week instructional intervention focused on intercultural communication and GE orientation, including activities of video-based writing, online forums, and face-to-face interactions. The researcher applied explanatory and sequential methods on the 32 freshmen. In the post-test questionnaires and interviews, the students embraced GE and no longer perceived American and British English as the only legitimate varieties.

Jindapitak, Teo, and Savski (2022) involved 22 undergraduate students in a nine-week GE program. They aimed to activate the awareness of English pluricentricity with GE speakers through sociolinguistic and sociopolitical discussions. Interviews and written reflections were used for data collection. The results demonstrated that the students developed respectful attitudes toward GE in addition to an elevated awareness.

The aforementioned studies illustrate that GE exposure can "help students move beyond preconceived notions of standard language and challenge deeply ingrained native speaker norms" (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p.17). However, while these studies explored the attitudes and perceptions of GE exposure, they did not examine the correlation between exposure and listening comprehension. Hence, exposure along with instructional implementation deserve further investigation.

GELT Listening Activities

Yang (2012) encouraged English teachers to raise phonological awareness to prepare learners for international exchanges, and researchers have investigated the correlation of GELT to listening comprehension in the past few years (Bamroongkit & Aowsakorn, 2021; Hamada & Suzuki, 2020). Hamada and Suzuki (2020) employed a shadowing technique for GE acclimation, which involved

a paced, immediate vocalization of auditory stimuli. For that study, 96 Japanese university students were divided into three groups: a shadowing with script group, a shadowing only group, and an exposure group. Five NNESs with different L1s recorded the passages for the practice sessions. Only American, Chinese, and Italian English accents were chosen in the 75-word dictation for the pre- and post-tests. The findings indicated those in the shadowing with scripts group enhanced their perception skills and improved their non-native accent comprehension significantly.

Bamroongkit and Aowsakorn (2021) explored the online GE listening materials of eight Asian English varieties (Thai, Japanese, Singaporean, etc.) using metacognitive strategies. Eight-unit exercises with various tasks were used for the self-assessment of listening comprehension. In that study, 30 participants in a Thai university participated over a total of three semesters. Pre- and post-listening comprehension tests were compared and evaluated. The results indicated that the materials significantly improved their listening abilities. The students also noticed that the accents and speed affected their listening comprehension.

These two studies shifted attention from attitude to listening comprehension with the GELT approach. However, the focuses were on the shadowing technique and metacognitive strategies, without instructional interventions. Specific instruction on segmental and suprasegmental features based on GELT remain scant.

Explicit Teaching to Improve Listening Comprehension

Explicit teaching refers to specific language information directly delivered to the learners. Previous studies correlated learners' raised sound feature awareness and prosodic differences to their improved listening comprehension.

Because of the variations between the Inner and the Outer Circles, Yang (2012) recommended an accent-plus lesson plan integrated with contrastive analysis to raise the learners' ethno-sensitivity toward English varieties. British, American, and Indian English were used in Yang's study with their phonological rules via the videos of a British and an Indian speaker. The lessons helped the learners make educated

guesses of the ethnic origins of their future interlocutors, enabling them to employ appropriate discourse practices. Yang's follow-up study (2013) indicated that the learning activities in 2012 helped the learners understand the differences between Indian and American English. The 2013 study demonstrated an unbiased transition toward Indian English and the recognition of the accent. Their average listening comprehension scores improved, but not significantly.

Yenkimaleki and Heuven (2016) studied the effects of prosodic feature instruction on listening comprehension. The experimental group, which included Farsi–English interpreter trainees, received explicit instruction on English prosodic features, while the control group did not. The pre-tests indicated that the students in both groups were on the same English level. In the post-test, only the experimental group had significantly increased their listening comprehension, confirming the positive effects of explicit teaching. Yenkimaleki (2018) reported the same results, but with three groups: control, implicit, and explicit groups. The implicit group received no instruction on prosodic features but had feedback from recasts. Only the explicit group received specific instruction. The audio inputs in 2016 and 2018 were both Inner Circle English.

Tsang (2020) explored the effectiveness of explicit instruction in phonology and songs with Inner Circle varieties. In that study, 92 Hong Kong students were randomly assigned to four groups: Control, Phonology, Songs, and Phonology + Songs. Only the last group had lectures on English phonology (including fundamentals of the International Phonetic Alphabet and features of connected speech such as linking types) and exercises on English songs (song listening with fill-in-the-lyrics exercises and comprehension worksheets). The results demonstrated that the combination of phonological instruction and songs augmented the learner's L2 listening abilities. Explicit instruction on phonological rules such as syllable contraction, segmental insertion and deletion effectively increased the ESL learners' listening comprehension.

The ubiquity of English and ELF communication has prompted scholars such as Jenkins, Galloway, and Rose to promote the diverse exposures of GE to L2 learners. Listening is a crucial part of communication. Khaghaninejad and Maleki (2015) suggested that the

introduction of segmental and suprasegmental features would effectively improve listening comprehension. These features could be developed by explicit phonological instruction (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007). However, few studies have been conducted with explicit segmental and suprasegmental instruction in GELT. This study aimed to explore the effects of explicit phonological instruction on GE listening comprehension.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study with convenience sampling was conducted in two school years because the Department of Applied English only offers one class per year. There were 45 students in the exposure group and 43 students in the experimental group. All 88 participants, who signed written consent forms voluntarily, were 18-year-old first-year students from a university in central Taiwan. There were 35 females (77.8%) and 10 males (22.2%) in the exposure group, and 35 females (81.4%) and eight males (18.6%) in the experimental group. None had lived in English-speaking countries, and their average number of years learning English was 10. All had English proficiency at the intermediate B1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Course Design

All participants attended the three-credit course taught by the corresponding author. The students in year 2020 were the exposure group, and those in 2021 were the experimental group. The exposure group only listened to the five English varieties. The experimental group additionally received explicit instruction of the phonological characteristics of British (ERP), Singaporean (SGE), and Japanese (JPE) Englishes. The phonological features of American (SAE) and Taiwanese (TWE) Englishes were not specifically taught because SAE is the main teaching model in Taiwan and the course adopted "Interchange 3, 5th Edition" as the main material, along with other

online SAE resources. The participants communicated naturally in TWE in class. All participants took listening comprehension and multiple-choice identification pre-tests in the first week as a baseline. The results of these pre-tests were not disclosed to the participants.

Online English resources, such as BBC Learning English, CNA News, and NHK World were used as supplements. These supplementary materials were at the B1–B2 level and the clips were six minutes in length. The topics covered environmental protection, COVID-19, and a summer festival in Japan. Both the main and supplementary materials were tested in the midterm and final examinations for reinforcement.

For the experimental group, explicit instruction on ERP, SGE, and JPE accent/pronunciation characteristics were introduced from the fourth to the seventeenth week. In the second week, the participants watched a video called, "Why has English developed as a world language?" The first unit in the third week was on SAE listening input. Beginning in the fourth week, the students were guided on the phonological variations of each variety compared to SAE to raise their awareness. Each lecture lasted 100 minutes. ERP segmental (consonants/vowels) and suprasegmental features (word stress) shown in Table 1 were first introduced. SGE phonological characteristics were next taught. Table 2 lists the SGE segmental features and the discourse particles that affect the intonation of sentences. A native Japanese associate professor with an American PhD in the Department of Japanese at another Taiwanese university presented the phonological characteristics of JPE (Table 3).

People from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds started to interact with both groups on Google Meet because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These individual speakers were selected by the corresponding author based on their cultural and English circles. A native English speaker with a Postgraduate Diploma in Education spoke about his personal experiences in North America and the U.K., including his views on GE and its application to English education in Taiwan. A Singaporean speaker presented functions of English and social business contexts in Singapore. Two Japanese English teachers in Japan introduced Japanese culture. Each session lasted 50 minutes and was conducted entirely in English.

Table 1

Phonological Features of British ERP (Roach, P., 2004; 2009)

Phonological rule	Examples	Phonetic realization	
		SAE	**ERP**
ERP /t/ remains as [tʰ] while in SAE /t/ becomes [ɾ] when it is the initial of an unstressed syllable preceded by a stressed syllable	water letter butter	['wɔɾɚ] ['lɛɾɚ] ['bʌɾɚ]	['wɔtʰə] ['lɛtʰə] ['bʌtʰə]
Elision of SAE /t/ after /n/ while ERP /t/ remains as [tʰ]	interview winter	['ɪnɚ-vju] ['wɪnɚ]	['ɪntəvju] ['wɪntə]
Palatalized [t] of ERP before diphthong /ju/	Tuesday	['tjuzde]	['tʃuːzde]
R-ending vowels realize as non-rhotic [ə] and [ɜ], diphthongs, and triphthongs	**ERP**		
	Non-rhotics: teacher, bird	['titʃə], [bɜd]	
	Diphthongs: car, hear, air, poor, four	[kɑə], [hɪə], [ɛə], [pʊə], [fɔə]	
	Triphthongs: cure, liar, our	[kjʊə], [laɪə], [aʊə]	
The phonetic realization of the letter 'a' as [æ] and [ɑ]	[æ]: man, math, can, hand	[mæn], [mæθ], [kæn], [hænd]	
	[ɑ]: dance, class, task, ask	[dɑns], [klɑs], [tɑsk], [ɑsk]	
		SAE	**ERP**
The phonetic realization of the diphthongs [əʊ] compared to [oʊ] in SAE	go, no, show, boat, don't	[goʊ] [noʊ] [ʃoʊ] [boʊt] [doʊnt]	[gəʊ] [nəʊ] [ʃəʊ] [bəʊt] [dəʊnt]
The difference of word stress between SAE and ERP	address	['ædres]	[ə'dres]
	adult	[ə'dʌlt]	['ædʌlt]
The difference of word stress between SAE and ERP	brochure	[brəʊ'ʃʊr]	['brəʊʃə(r)]
	debris	[də'briː]	['debriː]
	garage	[gə'rɑːʒ]	['gærɑːʒ]
	laboratory	['læbrətɔːri]	[lə'bɒrətəri]

Table 2

Phonological Features of SGE (Leimgruber, 2013)

Phonological rule	Examples	Phonetic realization
Interdentals 'th' [θ] and [ð] realized as dentals [t], [d] and labiodentals [f], [v]	'th' precede vowels: healthy, weather	/ˈhɛlθɪ/ → [ˈhɛltɪ] /ˈwɛðɚ/ → [ˈwɛdɚ]
	'th' as syllable final position: health, bathe	/hɛlθ/ → [hɛlf] /beð/ → [bev]
Approximant 'l' [l] realized as [ɲ], [ɤ], and sometimes deleted	'l' is preceded by 'n': only, mainly	/ˈonlɪ/ → [ˈoɲɪ] /ˈmenlɪ/ → [ˈmɛɲɪ]
	'l' as syllable final: sell, nail, Paul	/sɛl/ → [sɛɤ] /nel/ → [neɤ] /pɔl/ → [pɔ]
Voiceless plosives realized as voiced plosives and glottal stop [ʔ]	'plosives' as syllable initials: pin, tin, key	/pɪn/ → [bɪn] /tɪn/ → [dɪn] /ki/ → [gi]
	'plosives' as syllable finals: pub, good, mug	/pʌb/ → [baʔ] /gʊd/ → [guʔ] /mʌg/ → [maʔ]
Vowel variations	pit, sat, box, cup	/pɪt/ → [pit] /sæt/ → [sɛt] /bɑks/ → [baks] /kʌp/ → [kap]
Rhotic vowels realized as diphthongs	car, hear, care	/kɑɹ/ → [kaə] /hɪɹ/ → [hɪə] /kɛɹ/ → [kɛə]
Sentence-final discourse particles	lor, meh, ma, hah, lah	The particles not only carry semantic meanings but make the ending intonation of a sentence rising.

Table 3

Phonological Features of JPE (Ohata, 2004)

Phonological rule	Example	Phonetic realization
Merge of English vowels and realized as (C)V (nasal as one syllable) syllable structure by implementing vowel insertion	[i], [ɪ] → [i] [e], [ɛ], [æ] → [e] [æ], [ʌ], [ɑ] → [ɑ] [ɔ], [ɑ], [o] → [o] [ʊ], [u] → [ɯ]	pick, peak: [pikɯ] say, sad, said: [se], [sedo] apple, bus, box: [apɯlɯ], [basɯ], [bakɯsɯ] boat, bought: [boto] book, food: [bʊkɯ], [fɯdo]
Interdentals 'th' [θ] and [ð] realized as alveolars [s], [z]	thank, they	/θæŋk/ → [sæŋkɯ] /ðe/ → [ze]
Labiodentals [f], [v] realized as bilabial [ɸ], [b]	father, violin	/ˈfaðɚ/ → [ˈɸazɚ] /ˌvaɪəˈlɪn/ → [ˌbaɪoˈlɪn]
Merge of English [l] and [ɹ] realized as [l]	right, rain	/ɹaɪt/ → [laɪto] /ɹen/ → [len]

Instruments

To study the efficiency of exposure and explicit instruction on listening comprehension and phonological awareness, the pre- and post-test scores of listening comprehension as well as the pre- and post-test percentages of multiple-choice identification tests were tallied quantitatively.

Five pairs of speakers from the U.K, U.S., Singapore, Taiwan, and Japan recorded dialogues from the TOEIC Official Preparation Guide (published by Educational Testing Service), so the listening comprehension tests covered English varieties from all three circles. Each variety consisted of four dialogues with two to three questions for each dialogue. There were 10 total test questions for each variety (50 for all five varieties). All 10 speakers had at least bachelor's degrees. The non-native speakers' English proficiency was at the

CEFR B2 level. The participants were blindly tested without any details of the listening materials. One example of the listening test is as follows:

1. Where does the conversation most likely take place?
    (A) in a clothing store
    (B) in a furniture factory
    (C) in a restaurant
    (D) in a dry-cleaning shop

2. What is the problem?
    (A) Some merchandise has been lost.
    (B) Some clothing is the wrong size.
    (C) An item is damaged.
    (D) An order has not arrived.

3. What does the man offer to do?
    (A) issue a refund
    (B) reduce a price
    (C) speak to a manager
    (D) check the inventory

The first section of the multiple-choice identification test collected the participants' demographic information, such as gender, age, years of English learning, and whether they had any experience living in a native English-speaking country. In the second part, six choices, including ERP, SAE, SGE, TWE, JPE, and an unknown, were listed as the choices for the recorded accent/pronunciation identification (Appendix A). Five speakers different from those in the Google Meet interactions recorded five more English passages from "Interchange 2," so the participants could not guess the variety from the speakers' acoustic features in their memories. The levels of the passages were lower than "Interchange 3", so the participants could potentially identify the accent from the phonological features instead of relying on their understanding of the passages.

Each speaker for the listening comprehension and accent identification tests spoke at their individually natural speeds and

maintained the phonological characteristics of their English varieties.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the winter breaks of 2021 and 2022. The interviews allowed the participants to elaborate on their opinions in depth (Denscombe, 2014). Only six from the exposure (two males and four females) and seven (two males and five females) from the experimental group participated in the private semi-structured interviews, though all were invited. Each interview lasted 20–30 minutes and was recorded in Google Meet due to the pandemic.

Procedures

The scores of the pre- and post-listening comprehension tests plus their pre- and post-identification tests were compiled. The participants listened to the dialogues recorded by the five pairs and chose the most appropriate answers to demonstrate their understanding and their subjective choices of accent/pronunciation from the pre-recorded passages. The same listening comprehension and accent-identification tests were used for the pre- and post-tests and for both groups. The pre-tests were conducted in the first week and the post-tests in the final 18th week. The scores of the pre- and post-listening comprehension tests and the pre- and post- accent identification tests from these two groups were compared. The participants were not provided with the answer keys after the pre-tests.

Qualitative data of 13 semi-structured interviews from both groups were analyzed for triangulation. The interviews happened during the winter vacation, as the students would be able to provide the freshest impressions and most valid responses immediately after the courses. All interviewees were informed of their scores in each variety and elaborated on why they performed better on certain varieties. The experimental group further explained the segmental and suprasegmental characteristics that they learned. They were allowed to respond in Mandarin. The interviews were transcribed later. The first question was asked in both groups, while the second was only asked in the experimental group. The two questions were:
1. What were the reasons that made you perform better on a certain variety than the others?

2. What phonological features of the three English varieties did you learn from the course?

Data Analysis

The 50 listening comprehension questions were worth two points each, for a total of 100 points. Because there were five varieties and ten questions for each, in order to compare the scores of each variety with overall scores, we extrapolated them to be 100 points. SPSS 25 was run to determine paired-samples t-tests for intra-group comparisons. Independent sample t-tests were performed to compare the results between the exposure and experimental groups. Regarding accent identification, the percentages of individual correctness on ERP, SGE, and JPE before and after the course are presented as bar charts.

All interviewees double-checked their interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy and consistency. The interviewees' responses were grouped with the use of thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns/themes within data (p.79)." The themes were chosen by counting the frequencies of topics mentioned in the semi-structured interviews.

RESULTS

The Effectiveness of GELT on Listening Comprehension

In the exposure group, the average score rose slightly from 55.02 to 56.44 but without significance ($t = 1.85, p = 0.07$). Even though the average scores of overall and each variety were higher, only improvement in the TWE listening comprehension score was significant ($t = 2.56, p = 0.01$).

Table 4

The Effectiveness of Variety Exposure and Explicit Instruction on Listening Comprehension

Accent	Group	Pre		Post			
		Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	***t***	***p***
Overall	Exposure	55.02	5.92	56.44	5.66	1.85	0.07
	Experimental	55.07	7.04	59.40	8.89	3.68	**0.001**
ERP	Exposure	57.33	10.31	59.78	8.39	1.81	0.08
	Experimental	57.44	12.74	63.02	14.56	2.18	**0.04**
SGE	Exposure	42.22	9.51	42.44	10.26	1.51	0.88
	Experimental	43.72	13.28	44.65	14.53	0.39	0.70
TWE	Exposure	54	11.95	57.56	13.34	2.56	**0.01**
	Experimental	55.35	12.79	61.16	14.83	2.40	**0.02**
SAE	Exposure	50.89	10.00	52.67	11.56	1.07	0.29
	Experimental	47.91	14.07	51.86	18.29	1.19	0.24
JPE	Exposure	68.89	11.12	69.56	10.65	0.72	0.47
	Experimental	70.93	11.51	76.28	12.15	2.44	**0.02**

The average score of the experimental group, on the other hand, improved significantly from the pre-test (55.07) to the post-test (59.40) overall ($t = 3.68$, $p = 0.001$). Explicit teaching on ERP and JPE increased the listening comprehension scores, with statistically significant intra-group improvements from the pre- to post-tests (ERP: $t = 2.18$, $p = 0.04$; JPE: $t = 2.44$, $p = 0.02$). For SGE, the mean post-test score improved slightly over the pre-test score, but not significantly ($t = 0.39$, $p = 0.7$). As for TWE and SAE, the mean scores improved from the pre- to post-tests without explicit instruction on

their phonological characteristics. The results were statistically significant for TWE ($t = 2.4$. $p = 0.02$) but not for SAE ($t = 1.19$, $p = 0.24$). The average scores of the post-test from all five varieties were higher than those of the pre-test in both groups, but this was especially true in the experimental group.

Figure 1

Group Listening Comprehension Score Comparison
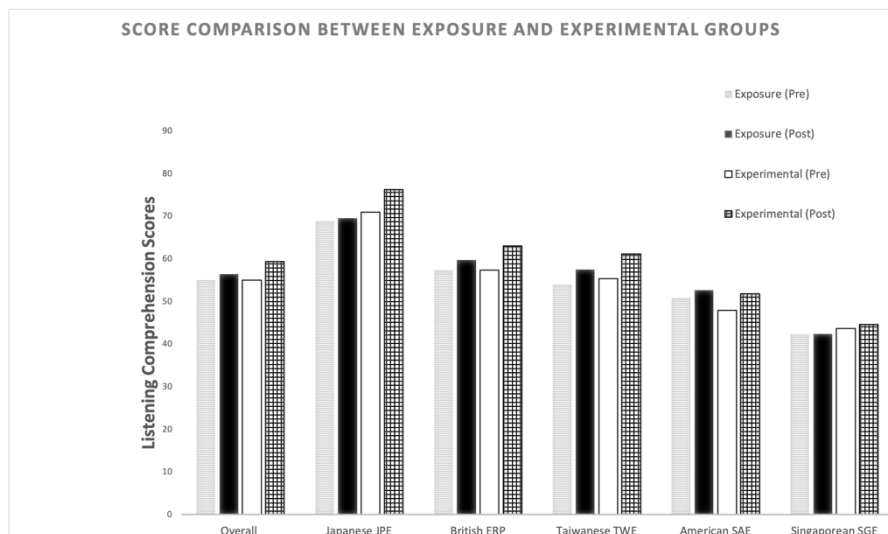
The average listening comprehension scores of both groups displayed a trend in descending order: JPE > ERP > TWE > SAE > SGE (Figure 1). This phenomenon can be explained with qualitative data. The exposure and experimental groups performed the best when listening to JPE. All interviewees from both groups expressed that among the five varieties, the speed of JPE was the slowest (3.91 syllables/second in Table 5). We used the PRAAT script to automatically calculate the speech rate (number of syllables/ speaking time without pauses) of the five varieties (De Jong & Wempe, 2009).

Table 5

The Speech Rate of the Listening Comprehension Tests

Speech Rate (syllable/second)	SAE	ERP	SGE	TWE	JPE
	4.86	4.81	4.58	4.36	3.91

Seven out of the 13 interviewees stated that they frequently watched Japanese animations and YouTube videos. Five of them had experience in language exchange programs with Japanese high schools before attending the university. These channels gave them pre-exposure to JPE.

> *I like to watch Japanese animations. When listening to Japanese people speaking English, I notice that they speak more slowly than native English speakers. The slow pace helps me comprehend JPE better. (Yolanda)*

Five out of the 13 interviewees stated that they had had native British teachers and seven of them watched British sitcoms/films. Furthermore, nine interviewees noticed that the pace of ERP was slower than that of SAE in the tests, so they could comprehend ERP better. Four interviewees from the experimental group stated that even though they knew there were differences between ERP and SAE prior to the course, they could not pinpoint the dissimilarities. The lecture on ERP nevertheless helped them understand the characteristics of that British accent and pronunciation. All interviewees from the experimental group agreed that explicit teaching raised their awareness of the phonological characteristics of JPE and ERP.

Interestingly, both groups obtained higher mean scores of TWE than those of SAE and SGE, even though none received explicit instruction on TWE. Nine out of the 13 interviewees stated that although Taiwanese students learned SAE in their usual classrooms, TWE used fewer linking sounds and was spoken more slowly than SAE. Three interviewees mentioned that, because Americans spoke with constantly rolled tongues, the speed of SAE was perceived as much faster than that of TWE. Data in Table 5 confirmed their observations.

Surprisingly, even though SAE is the teaching model for ELT in Taiwan, the average scores of both groups were the second lowest. The majority (11/13) of the interviewees stated that among the five varieties, Americans spoke the fastest in the testing materials, making it difficult to comprehend. They also pointed out that some characteristics of SAE sound faster than those in other varieties, causing comprehension difficulties. Nine interviewees noticed that linking sounds appeared in SAE frequently, while 11 interviewees observed that the alveolar flap, tap, and elision were typical characteristics in SAE. Seemingly, the connecting words caused extra challenges.

Americans speak very fast and they link words together. The word "writer" /t/ is not pronounced as [th]; instead, it is [ɾ]. (Cindy)

The lowest average scores happened in SGE. Seven of the 13 interviewees stated that Singaporeans spoke English fast. Nine interviewees mentioned that this was their first exposure to SGE.

Before the class, I had never had the chance to listen to SGE. I found that SGE was not only fast but also "funny." Some words sounded different from what I knew. I think these are the reasons I can't understand SGE well. (Joe)

Table 6

Independent Sample -Test for the Difference in the Mean Post-test Scores of the Exposure and Experimental Groups

Post-Test		Mean	SD	t	p-value
Overall	Exposure	57.20	6.27	2.30	0.03
	Experimental	61.32	10.00		
ERP	Exposure	59.78	8.39	1.27	0.20
	Experimental	63.02	14.56		
SGE	Exposure	42.44	10.26	0.82	0.41
	Experimental	44.65	14.53		
JPE	Exposure	69.56	10.65	2.76	0.01
	Experimental	76.28	12.15		

Table 6 demonstrates that the overall mean scores of the experimental group were substantially higher than that of the exposure group. And the scores of overall and JPE improved significantly from the exposure to the experimental group (Overall: $t = 2.30$, $p = 0.03$; JPE: $t = 2.76$, $p = 0.01$). Even the mean scores of ERP and SGE also increased, though insignificantly. The pedagogical intervention had a positive effect.

In summary, exposure seemed to be beneficial to listening comprehension but exposure together with explicit instruction raised the scores, illustrating the positive effects on all varieties especially JPE. Interviewees of both groups stated that the fast speech rate and unfamiliarity were detrimental to listening comprehension. Explicit instruction was crucial to their understanding in the experimental group.

Identification of ERP, SGE, JPE and Explicit Instruction on their Characteristics

Figure 2 presents the percentages of correct accent recognition of ERP, SGE, JPE before and after the course. Interactions with guest speakers and supplementary materials were helpful to the participants

on the identification test. The explicit instruction proved especially advantageous for distinguishing SGE and JPE.

Figure 2

Pre- and Post-Identification Test Percentages in ERP, SGE, and JPE
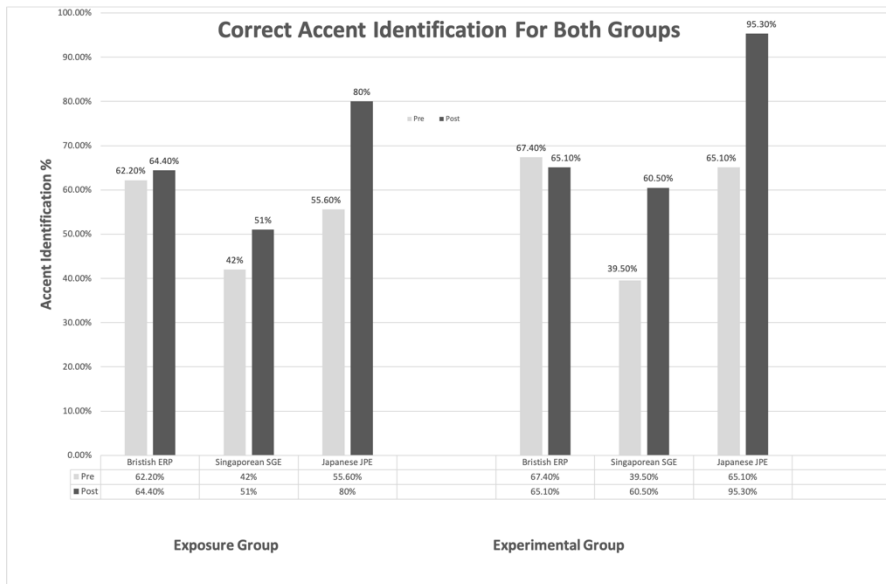
The percentages of ERP identification between the pre- and post-tests did not change much in either group. In the exposure group, 28 out of 45 (62.2%) participants correctly recognized ERP in the pre-test and 29 out of 45 (64.4%) in the post-test. As for the experimental group, 29 out of 43 (67.4%) participants correctly recognized the variety in the pre-test and 28 out of 43 (65.1%) in the post-test. At least 60% of the participants from both groups correctly identified the accent, but the experimental group performed slightly better than the exposure group.

In terms of illustrating phonological features of ERP, all interviewees from the experimental group noticed the differences in the segmental and suprasegmental features. For segmental features, they remarked that most of the consonants of ERP were the same as SAE except /ɹ/ and /t/. Four interviewees noticed the loss of /ɹ/ as a

unique feature.

> *The /ɹ/ in ERP is different. For example, the word car, ERP does not have the rhotic feature like SAE does. (Tiffany)*

Five of them noticed that /t/ was articulated differently in ERP and SAE, including t-flapping and elision.

> *The British pronounce the /t/ in the word "water" differently from the Americans. The former articulated the /t/ clearly but the latter spoke fast so it sounded like "wader." (Jason)*

> *The /t/ sound in the word "interview" is clearly pronounced by the British. However, Americans say the word without a clear /t/. It's more like "innerview." (Yolanda)*

An interviewee noticed palatalization, pointing out that /t/ did not sound like regular /t/ in some words.

> *The letter "t" in "Tuesday" doesn't sound like /t/; instead, it's /ˈtʃuːz.deɪ/. (Yolanda)*

In terms of vowels, "a" and "o" were specifically singled out by three and two interviewees respectively. They noticed that the words "water" and "ask" sound different from what they knew in SAE. The phonemes of "o" and "oa" in "hot" and "boat" were also differently articulated in ERP. With regards to suprasegmental features, two interviewees noticed the different stresses of ERP.

> *Some words of ERP have different stress, such as "laboratory." (Tony)*

The percentage of SGE correct identification rose from 19/45 (42%) to 23/45 (51%) in the exposure group. There was an obvious spike from the pre- to the post-identification test in the experimental group. The explicit instruction on the characteristics of SGE raised the correctness from 17/43 (39.5%) in the pre-test to 26/43 (60.5%) in the post-test. All interviewees recalled that SGE contained elements from

Minnan, Mandarin Chinese, and Malay. Code switching is also a common phenomenon. Six interviewees noticed discourse particles were frequently used in SGE when they interacted with the Singaporean speaker. Three interviewees noticed two consonantal difficulties in voiced/voiceless bilabial plosives of /b/ and /p/, and alveolar plosives /d/ and /t/. The interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ were replaced by /t/ and /d/. One of them also noticed that Singaporeans had difficulty with long and short vowels such as /i/ and /ɪ/.

> *I heard the guest speaker saying "bink" instead of "pink" and "time" became "dime." (Kelly)*

The participants performed surprisingly the best on JPE after a single semester of study. Both groups could correctly recognize JPE. In the exposure group, the percentage of correct identification rose from 25/45 (55.6%) to 36/45 (80%). In the experimental group, the participants improved from 28/43 (65.1%) to 41/43 (95.3%). All interviewees from the experimental group noticed that the JPE uniqueness of syllable structure and vowel insertion caused the slowest speech rate among the five varieties.

> *Japanese pronounced friend as "huliendo," desk as "desuku" because they inserted a vowel after a consonant leading to a slower speech rate. (Cindy)*

Six interviewees observed that some consonants, such as labiodental fricatives /f/, /v/, interdental fricatives /θ/, /ð/, were replaced by the glottal fricative /h/ and bilabial plosive /b/ as well as the alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/. One interviewee reported that the rounded vowel /u/ sounded different from Standard English, as there is no tense/lax difference in the Japanese five-vowel system. Four interviewees further explained that these sounds did not exist in Japanese. This phonological replacement happened due to the influence of the mother tongue. These implications provided clues to the participants for distinguishing JPE.

When Japanese speakers introduced the local food, I noticed the way they pronounced the word food sounded like /hudo/ and the /u/ did not sound like a rounded /u/. I remembered the professor taught us Japanese /ɯ/ was flat and the lips were extended. (Jason)

In addition to accent identification improvement with targeted exposure, the experimental group with the explicit instruction on segmental and suprasegmental features may have learned to further distinguish the ERP, SGE, and JPE phonological characteristics.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study revealed that exposing learners to different accents of English was not sufficient, yet exposure plus explicit phonological instruction could increase learners' listening comprehension scores.

The speech rate might have affected learners' comprehension abilities, which was consistent with previous studies (Matsuura, Chiba, Mahoney & Rilling, 2014; Orikasa, 2016). The qualitative data revealed that the speedy delivery of listening texts, linking, and omission of sounds resulted in the insignificant improvement in SAE. The American speakers had a faster speech pace than any other variety in this study (Table 5). SAE was assumed to be the most well-known English variety to Taiwanese and thus not explicitly taught. Surprisingly, that was not the case. In hindsight, it should also have been explicitly taught. As for SGE, more than half of the interviewees felt that Singaporeans also spoke fast. That explained why SGE scored the lowest in both pre- and post-tests and no significant improvements were observed between the exposure and experimental groups. The result coincided with Matsuura et al. (2014) who found that a slowed rate in the Outer Circle facilitated listening comprehension. On the opposite spectrum, the highest average score happened in JPE, as the participants considered JPE the slowest with less linking sounds. The experimental group not only improved their listening comprehension significantly but recognized the slower speed caused by the uniqueness of vowel insertion. Similarly, TWE has a syllable-timed rhythm (Kobayashi, 2020). Even though SAE has been the model in

English education, Taiwanese do not or cannot speak English as fast as Americans. Therefore, all participants found it easier to understand TWE than SAE.

Unfamiliarity with accents and pronunciations could be another challenge for comprehension. A case in point is that the average scores of SGE improved insignificantly. Most of the participants did not find its phonological characteristics familiar. When processing an unfamiliar accent, listeners need more cognitive concentration (Munro & Derwing, 1995). Unlike SGE, 12 interviewees had prior exposure to ERP, while seven had listened to JPE online. Previous extensive exposure might have explained the higher scores of the two groups before receiving teaching interventions. However, thanks to the explicit phonological instruction, the experimental group enhanced their listening comprehension scores more significantly than their counterparts in the post-test. Congruent with Chang and Millett (2014), who suggested that abundant input should be provided and practiced for listening fluency, these input resources inside and outside of the classroom fostered the participants' listening abilities and familiarized them with the varieties. Interestingly, even though TWE was not specifically taught, both groups improved significantly between the pre- and post-tests. This was consistent with findings from Kang, Thomson and Moran (2019), as students found it easier to understand interlocutors sharing their mother tongue. Total teaching hours may have played an important role in the outcome as well. Khaghaninejad and Maleki (2015) proved that their learners had improved their listening comprehension through 42-hour explicit pronunciation instruction from the Inner Circle. This study embedded explicit instruction on ERP, SGE, and JPE in a GELT setting with 54 hours in one semester. Split among the three, the exposure times of each may not have been adequate. Additionally, the non-native speakers habitually embedded the segmental and suprasegmental features in their L1. Although the participants commenced to notice this phenomenon after one semester, the reinforcement seemed insufficient to warrant significant improvement. More time on exposure may have been needed.

Feeling incompetent could also play a role in the results. Matsumoto (2011) observed a "great wall" in NNESs and NESs ELF

interactions when the NNESs might feel linguistically inadequate. The reason for insignificant improvement in ERP from the exposure to the experimental group might be attributed to this "inferior factor." On the flip side, NNESs shared equal status of competence or confidence when communicating with other NNESs so that TWE and JPE presented equal audibility to these Taiwanese students.

After receiving direct phonological instruction on ERP, JPE, and SGE, the interviewees not only knew the features well but also learned to extrapolate. For instance, though the suprasegmental features such as intonation, pitch and rhythm were not explicitly taught, three interviewees noticed that those in ERP were different from their counterparts in SAE. There was a higher pitch in ERP than in SAE. One interviewee commented that "the British spoke in cadence with more rising and falling intonation, as if singing." These Applied English students had higher proficiency and more opportunities to spontaneously notice the dissimilarities between ERP and SAE.

Twenty-eight participants in the experimental group correctly identified ERP in the post-identification, which was one fewer than in the pre-identification. They could have confused the characteristics of ERP with SGE. According to Cavallaro, Ng, and Tan (2020), the phonological features of SGE are more similar to ERP than to SAE. Four interviewees noticed that the non-rhotic feature of ERP was also present in SGE (Tan, 2012). Consequently, the experimental group might have second-guessed what they heard and identified ERP as SGE.

The experimental group improved on the accent identifications of SGE and JPE more than the exposure group in terms of percentage scores. They knew that some consonants and vowels of SGE and JPE were dissimilar to native norms due to negative L1 transfer. As for suprasegmental features, one interviewee particularly stated that she heard rising intonation frequently, probably because of the discourse particles used in SGE. Two interviewees also stated that vowel insertion resulted in the absence of linking sounds in JPE. This can be attributed to the fact that Japanese is a mora-timed language. CV (consonant + vowel) is the most common syllable structure (Liu & Takeda, 2021). The experimental group benefited from the explicit instruction, as the training sharpened their phonological awareness.

The results have pedagogical implications in GELT. When teaching non-native English varieties, teachers should pay attention to speech rate, familiarity with accents and pronunciations, and sufficient exposure time. Matsuura et al. (2014) pointed out that accented English and speech rate were correlated with listening comprehension. A rapid speech rate was frequently regarded as a listening impediment by our interviewees. Hayati (2010) encouraged teachers to apply a slower speech rate. Sakai (2009) recommended repetition. Consequently, we suggest adjusting the speech rate and repeating the listening materials in a GELT class.

This study revealed that accent identification might not relate positively to listening proficiency, similar to Yang's finding (2013). Although the experimental group could identify SGE, their listening scores did not improve significantly. Yet for ERP, the listening score improved remarkably intra-group but not inter-group, though the pre- and post-identification tests did not seem different. For JPE, the identification and comprehension scores both increased dramatically. There may be tentative indications that accent exposure and explicit phonological instruction could significantly improve learners' listening comprehension aptitude in ELT, but further studies with rigorous experimental designs would be needed to test causal claims.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that exposure to diverse English accents and pronunciations may enhance learners' listening comprehension scores. Exposure plus explicit instruction on phonological features significantly increased their overall, ERP, and JPE intra-group listening scores. It is recommended that instructors pay attention to speech rate and listening time in order to help learners obtain the full benefits of such instruction.

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APPENDIX

Multiple-choice Accent Identification Test

1. Gender   □ male   □ female
2. Age   years old
3. How many years have you learned English?   years
4. Experience living in an English-speaking country
    □ Yes   □ No
    If yes, how many years?
5. I think the first speaker of the audio file is from ….
    □ the U.S. □ the U.K. □ Singapore   □ Taiwan   □ Japan
    □ unknown
6. I think the second speaker of the audio file is from ….
    □ the U.S. □ the U.K. □ Singapore   □ Taiwan   □ Japan
    □ unknown
7. I think the third speaker of the audio file is from ….
    □ the U.S. □ the U.K. □ Singapore   □ Taiwan   □ Japan
    □ unknown
8. I think the fourth speaker of the audio file is from ….
    □ the U.S. □ the U.K. □ Singapore   □ Taiwan   □ Japan
    □ unknown
9. I think the fifth speaker of the audio file is from ….
    □ the U.S. □ the U.K. □ Singapore   □ Taiwan   □ Japan
    □ unknown

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