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## From Global English to Global Englishes: Implications for a New Reading of the National English Curriculum Standards of China

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transition from the concept of Global English to Global Englishes and its implications for interpreting the National English curriculum standards of China. It examines the relationship between China's national English curriculum standards and the Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) framework, with a particular focus on the *English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision)* and the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)*. Using qualitative content analysis, the study analysed curriculum standards against four key GELT dimensions: target culture, learners' own languages and cultures, assessment criterion, and source of materials. The findings reveal both alignments and divergences between the two curriculum standards and the GELT principles. While both highlight intercultural competence, cultural identity, and communicative effectiveness, the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)* continues to privilege standard English norms in both curriculum content and textbook development, reflecting a native-speakerism ideology. By contrast, the *2022 ECS* demonstrates a stronger orientation toward plural and fluid cultural representations, suggesting a gradual shift toward embracing Global Englishes. The insights call for deeper integration of GELT principles into curriculum content, textbook development, and teacher education to equip learners with intercultural competence needed for effective communication in a globalised world.

**Keywords:** Global Englishes; English Curriculum Standards; English Language Teaching; Linguistic Diversity; Curriculum Reform

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# 1. Introduction

The relationship between English and globalisation is closely intertwined. Globalisation has promoted the rapid development of English as a global language, which is widely utilized in various domains such as economy, culture, and technology on a global scale. Conversely, “Global English” is viewed as “part of the cause, the process, and the product of globalisation”<sup>[1]</sup>.

Typically, for describing the spread of English around the world and explaining the sociolinguistic landscape of English within a country, Kachru<sup>[2]</sup> has put forward the influential model of Three Circles of English, which consists of three concentric circles — an “Inner Circle”, an “Outer Circle”, and an “Expanding Circle”. Kachru considers these circles to represent “the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across culture and languages”<sup>[3]</sup>.

Although the Three Circles model has contributed to changing people’s perspectives on English worldwide from regarding it as a single, homogeneous entity to viewing it with respect to English varieties, this way of classifying worldwide varieties demonstrates a Standard English ideology in that the English of the Inner Circle countries is referred to as “norm-proving”, acting as the model of the language, while the Outer Circle comprises “norm-developing” countries and the Expanding Circle consists of “norm dependent” countries<sup>[4]</sup>.

However, the growing population of non-native English-speaking users and the increased mobility of English users in cross-cultural communication have challenged the Three Circles model and its perspective of a monolithic English. English is increasingly characterised by fluidity, hybridity, and context-dependence, rather than being confined to the Inner, Outer, or Expanding Circle classifications. In recent years, Linguistic Landscape (LL) analysis has offered a critical and complementary perspective on English as a global language. As Gorter<sup>[5]</sup> shows, LL research reveals the multilingual coexistence and localized use of English in public spaces, challenging the fixed boundaries of the Three Circles model. By providing a decentralized, dynamic, and context-sensitive view, LL analysis not only empirically complements the Three Circles model, but also theoretically questions its logic of classification, offering a novel approach to understanding global English varieties. In the field of En-

glish language teaching, this has led to a paradigm shift from Global English to Global Englishes (GEs).

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the relationship between the Global Englishes perspective and the educational concepts in China’s latest English curriculum standards, namely, the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)* and the *English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision)*, hereafter referred to as the 2022 ECS and the 2017 ECS (2020 Revision) respectively. Through an analysis of the alignments and divergences between GE-oriented teaching and the curriculum standards, it aims to explore how Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) framework influences and challenges the traditional paradigm of English language teaching, promoting a shift from standard teaching to more flexible and diversified approaches, and make suggestions for adjusting the curriculum standards in terms of curriculum content, curriculum implementation and teacher education to better incorporate the GELT perspective into the practice of English language teaching in China.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Development of Global Englishes

Compared to Global English, which stresses the monolithicity and standardization of English as a global language, the concept of “Global Englishes” has been gaining increasing attention and recognition in the academic community, with an emphasis on the diversity, plurality and dynamics of English.

Global Englishes has previously been used to locate “the spread and use of English within critical theories of globalisation”<sup>[6]</sup>. The global spread of English has prompted the development of several interrelated research fields, including English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and World Englishes (WE). WE, grounded in Kachru’s<sup>[2, 3]</sup> Three Circles model, highlights the pluricentricity of English and legitimizes localized varieties in their sociocultural contexts<sup>[7, 8]</sup>. ELF, by contrast, shifts attention from fixed varieties to communicative practices, emphasizing English as a contact language negotiated among speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds<sup>[9]</sup>. In ELF environments, English becomes more dynamic and adaptive as it is constantly adjusted to suit communicative circumstances<sup>[10–12]</sup>.

As for GEs, it consolidates and extends these perspectives. Unlike WE's regional anchoring or ELF's interactional dynamics, GEs aims to critically examine hegemonic views and ideologies of English, advocating a more inclusive understanding of its global diversity—what English is, who uses it, where, and how<sup>[13]</sup>. In this sense, WE legitimizes diversity across national varieties, ELF highlights communicative negotiation in intercultural settings, and GEs integrates these insights into a broader framework that reimagines English language teaching for a globalized world. Despite indicating different intellectual histories and affiliations, these research fields explore the diverse uses and impacts of English in relation to its global spread, which share a central endeavor to challenge the status quo in TESOL and to innovate the ELT industry. Therefore, Rose and Galloway<sup>[14]</sup> further define GEs “as an inclusive paradigm looking at the linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural diversity and fluidity of English use and English users in a globalised world”, which consolidates research in WE, ELF and EIL, while engaging with work on translinguaging and multilingualism in the field of second language acquisition.

Scholars in the field of Global Englishes highlight English's pluricentricity, its functions in a globalized context, and its global ownership<sup>[15]</sup>. From a Global Englishes perspective, English is not the exclusive property of any particular individual or community; its global ownership means that anyone who uses English is legitimately entitled to a claim of ownership<sup>[16]</sup>.

The linguistic, cultural, and functional diversity of contemporary English challenges the core assumptions of traditional ELT, necessitating a critical reassessment of pedagogical practices and innovation in ELT practices<sup>[17]</sup>. From the Global Englishes perspective, both the needs of English language learners and the goals of ELT have undergone significant changes<sup>[18]</sup>. In other words, the development of Global Englishes has fundamentally altered the principles of English language teaching and learning. Consequently, there is a growing consensus among scholars on the urgent need for a transformative shift in English language teaching, which

is considered as necessary in terms of reshaping language teaching to align with the new sociolinguistic landscape of the 21st century<sup>[14]</sup>.

## 2.2. The Global Englishes Language Teaching Framework

Galloway<sup>[19]</sup> firstly coined the term Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT), which was further developed by Galloway and Rose<sup>[10, 18]</sup>. Six major changes, referred to as the GELT proposals, have been proposed by Rose and Galloway<sup>[14]</sup> to facilitate the paradigm shift in the field of ELT:

1. Increasing World Englishes and ELF exposure in language curricula;
2. Emphasising respect for multilingualism in ELT;
3. Raising awareness of Global Englishes in ELT;
4. Raising awareness of ELF strategies in language curricula;
5. Emphasising respect for diverse culture and identity in ELT;
6. Changing English teacher-hiring practices in the ELT industry.

These proposals point to a need to innovate ELT in the 21st century to meet the evolving needs of learners engaging with a global lingua franca. Despite a consensus on the necessity for changes, a detailed and actionable plan for innovation that can be effectively implemented remains lacking<sup>[14]</sup>. The concept of Global Englishes Language Teaching seeks to address this gap between theoretical insights and practical application, which has been widely recognized.

Accordingly, Rose and Galloway<sup>[14]</sup> put forward the Global Englishes Language Teaching framework (refer **Table 1**), which has evolved from the original framework initially introduced by Galloway<sup>[19]</sup> and the second version of the framework by Galloway and Rose<sup>[10]</sup>. This framework offers a new perspective on viewing language to inform teaching and curriculum innovation, thus empowering teachers to critically evaluate the curricula.

**Table 1.** The Global Englishes Language Teaching framework.

	Traditional ELT	GELT
Target interlocutors	Native English (NE) speakers	All English users
Ownership	Inner Circle	Global

**Table 1.** *Cont.*

	<b>Traditional ELT</b>	<b>GELT</b>
Target culture	Static NE cultures	Fluid cultures
Norms	Standard English	Diverse, flexible and multiple forms
Teachers	Non-NE-speaking teachers (same L1) and NE-speaking teachers	Qualified, competent teachers (same and different L1s)
Role model	NE speakers	Expert users
Source of materials	NE and NE speakers	Salient English-speaking communities and contexts
Other languages and cultures	Seen as a hindrance and source of interference	Seen as a resource as with other languages in their linguistic repertoire
Needs	Inner Circle defined	Globally defined
Assessment criterion	Accuracy according to prescriptive standards	Communicative competence
Goals of learning	Native-like proficiency	Multicompetent user
Ideology	Underpinned by an exclusive and ethnocentric view of English	Underpinned by an inclusive Global Englishes perspective
Orientation	Monolingual	Multilingual/translingual

\*Source: Rose et al. <sup>[14]</sup>.

In contrast with traditional ELT, the GELT framework represents a reconsideration of established perspectives on English language teaching, moving away from traditional teaching practices rooted in Inner Circle-focused and native-speaker norms towards a more globalised and inclusive teaching perspective. There are 13 dimensions within the GELT framework which reflect the new sociolinguistic dynamics of ELT, highlighting the transformation in the following areas: target interlocutors; ownership of English; target culture; linguistic norms; teachers; role model; sources of materials; positioning of other languages and cultures; needs; assessment criterion; goals of learning; ideology; and linguistic orientation.

In terms of target interlocutors, the GELT framework broadens the scope to include all English users instead of the native English speakers (NES) as being the primary target for learners' future English communication, acknowledging the diversity of English speakers worldwide. This shift challenges the native-speaker bias and aligns with the reality where English is increasingly used among non-native English-speaking users.

In traditional ELT, much emphasis is placed on the native English speakers, which is attributed to the ideology that the ownership of English belongs to the Inner Circle, meaning that native English speakers in the Inner Circle hold authority over the English language. On the contrary, the

GELT framework surpasses geographical boundaries and recognizes global ownership of English, which empowers English speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Similarly, for target culture, the GELT framework promotes fluid and diverse cultures instead of static native English cultures, emphasizing the need to cultivate dynamic and varied cultural contexts where English is used, which aims to enhance cultural awareness and facilitate effective communication in the process of increasing globalisation.

As opposed to the norms of traditional ELT which strictly adhere to standard English and are typically modeled on Inner Circle varieties, the GELT framework aligns with opinions that learners will benefit from diverse, flexible, and multiple forms of English, supporting a more inclusive perspective of linguistic norms and recognizing the legitimacy of varieties of English around the globe.

In terms of teachers, traditional ELT prefers non-native English-speaking teachers with the same L1 or native English-speaking teachers, reinforcing a bias toward native speakers of English. In contrast, GELT values qualified and competent teachers regardless of their L1, promoting inclusivity and recognizing the importance of diverse linguistic backgrounds in language teaching. This approach reflects the need for English teachers who can navigate different cultural and linguistic contexts.

Native English speakers are seen as the ideal role model in traditional ELT, revealing a monolithic view of language proficiency. However, the GELT framework challenges the native-speaker ideal and shifts the focus towards expert users, recognizing the competence of non-native English speakers who are effective communicators in global contexts.

In terms of sources of materials, traditional ELT relies heavily on teaching materials derived from native English contexts, prioritizing the language norms of native English speakers. Conversely, the GELT framework advocates for materials that reflect salient English-speaking communities and contexts worldwide and suit the future language needs of students. This shift ensures that instructional content is relevant and accurately reflects the global uses of the English language, which can ultimately resonate more effectively with learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Traditional ELT views other languages and cultures as a hindrance or source of interference, promoting a monolingual ideology. In contrast, the GELT framework embraces the importance of a learner's own culture<sup>[14]</sup>. It perceives other languages and cultures as valuable resources within a multilingual repertoire, fostering a more inclusive approach that leverages students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thus challenging the monolingual paradigm in ELT.

Traditional ELT defines students' learning needs based on Inner Circle standards, which may fail to meet the communicative needs of learners in diverse global contexts. On the contrary, the GELT framework redefines learning needs through a global lens, taking into account the actual communicative demands of English users in a globalised world. This shift seeks to make English learning more relevant and applicable to real-world contexts, thereby improving the effectiveness of learning English for global use.

Rose and Galloway<sup>[14]</sup> argue that central to a reorientation in ELT paradigm is the fundamental change in perspectives of the assessment criterion against which language outcomes are measured. Traditional ELT practices focus on accuracy according to prescriptive standards stemming from native-speaker norms, frequently adopting inner-circle varieties in the construct of English proficiency. However, with increasing use of English by non-native speakers, it may not be fair, useful or appropriate to measure the proficiency of English against a particular, or a few particular "inner-circle" varieties<sup>[20]</sup>. Accordingly, the GELT framework argues that

assessment criteria should be grounded in communicative competence—the speaker's ability to communicate effectively and concisely in a global context, recognizing the importance of effective communication over strict adherence to native-speaker norms.

Traditional ELT considers achieving native-like proficiency as goals of learning, which can be unrealistic and unnecessary for most global Englishes users. Conversely, the GELT framework aims to develop multicompetent users who can navigate diverse English-speaking contexts, matching learning goals with the practical needs of contemporary English usage and supporting more inclusive and adaptable language learning outcomes.

Traditional ELT is based on an exclusive and ethnocentric perspective of English, privileging certain varieties over others, which demonstrates a standard English ideology. In contrast, the GELT framework promotes an inclusive Global Englishes perspective, valuing linguistic diversity and recognizing the legitimacy of all English varieties. By embracing all English varieties, the GELT framework facilitates a more holistic understanding of English within the global context. This ideological shift underpins a more equitable and globally informed ELT framework, promoting inclusivity and challenging traditional norms.

Traditional ELT maintains a monolingual orientation, often ignoring or devaluing students' multilingual capabilities. On the contrary, the GELT framework calls for a multilingual or translingual orientation, encouraging English learners to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire. This shift not only reflects the realities of global communication but also promotes a more inclusive approach to language learning, acknowledging and valuing linguistic diversity in educational contexts.

In a word, the GELT framework illustrates a significant comprehensive shift from traditional ELT approaches, historically dominated by native-speaker norms and monolingual ideologies and prioritized linguistic accuracy over pragmatic effectiveness<sup>[21]</sup>, to a more globalised and inclusive approach. This transformation aligns English language teaching with the current sociolinguistic landscape and provides a robust theoretical foundation for innovative language teaching practices<sup>[22, 23]</sup>, such as adopting the GELT framework to assess innovation in course curricula and teaching materials<sup>[14, 24]</sup>, ultimately enhancing learners' ability to communi-

cate effectively across diverse contexts.

Building on these insights, the present study further develops the application of the GELT framework to English curriculum research. While Liu and Fang<sup>[25]</sup> explored the implementation of GE principles in the *2017 ECS*, their study primarily focused on phonology and cultural learning. In contrast, the present study adopts a multi-dimensional analytical approach, extending the investigation to curriculum content, curriculum implementation, and teacher education. Moreover, it conducts a comparative analysis of the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)* and the *2022 ECS*, providing a longitudinal perspective on the gradual integration of GE principles into China's curriculum standards. By applying the GELT framework across multiple dimensions, this study systematically reveals the alignments and divergences between the curriculum standards and GE-oriented teaching, offering new theoretical and practical insights for English curriculum reform and teacher education in China.

### 3. The Study

Curriculum standards are authoritative documents issued by a nation, serving as mandatory guidelines for the design and organization of teaching. The implementation of language ideology in educational settings is significantly influenced by a national curriculum, which is considered one of the most powerful tools in this regard<sup>[25]</sup>. Overall, the core of China's English education policy is reflected in the English curriculum standards. This paper aims to use the GELT framework to analyse the relationship between Global Englishes and the concepts outlined in the *2022 ECS* and the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)*.

This study seeks to address the following research question: what are the alignments and divergences between

the GEs-informed pedagogy and the concepts embodied in China's national English curriculum standards? To explore this issue, the study examines the national English curriculum standards of China from the GEs perspective. Through the qualitative content analysis (QCA) methodology<sup>[26, 27]</sup>, this study has identified key dimensions within the GELT framework for analysis, including target culture, other languages and cultures, assessment criterion and source of materials. The items related to these GELT dimensions were explicitly stated in the curriculum standards, allowing for a direct reflection of the framework's key dimensions. Other dimensions such as ownership and role models were excluded because the documents contain no explicit references that could be systematically analyzed under these categories. This focused selection enhances the transparency and validity of the analysis, while acknowledging the limitations in scope. The original document is written in Chinese and the analysed extracts from the curriculum standards were translated by the authors.

The coding procedure in this study proceeded as follows: first, deductive coding was conducted, in which a coding frame was developed based on the four selected key dimensions of the GELT framework; subsequently, mapping was carried out, in which relevant statements in the curriculum documents were assigned to the corresponding GELT dimensions. For example, the statement "students should be familiar with cultural characteristics and ways of thinking in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States" was coded under the Target Culture dimension as Native-speakerism ideology. This procedure ensured that the analysis was systematic and closely aligned with the theoretical framework. **Table 2** illustrates how GELT dimensions were applied in coding extracts from the curriculum documents:

**Table 2.** Coding examples.

GELT Dimension	Curriculum Extract	Coding Category
Target culture	"Students should be familiar with cultural characteristics and ways of thinking in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States." ( <i>2017 ECS, 2020 Revision</i> )	Native-speakerism ideology
Other languages and cultures	"They will also be able to develop a deeper understanding of, and sense of identity with, Chinese culture, establish international perspectives, and build confidence in sharing their own culture." ( <i>2022 ECS</i> )	Promotion of learners' own languages and cultures

Table 2. *Cont.*

GELT Dimension	Curriculum Extract	Coding Category
Assessment criterion	“Teaching assessment should be centred on one that is oriented toward the English subject’s core competencies and focus students’ holistic development and growth.” (2022 ECS)	Communicative competence emphasis
Source of materials	“Textbook writers should try to select materials written in standard English.” (2017 ECS, 2020 Revision)	Standard English bias in materials

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, a partial intercoder agreement test was conducted in this study. Two researchers independently coded approximately 30% of the selected data. This procedure corresponds to a mid-level test of intercoder agreement, in which the second coder received the texts along with coding guidelines and definitions. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. After discussion, agreement exceeded 85%, which indicates reliable coding practices.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal both alignments and divergences between the concepts of Global Englishes and these two latest English curriculum standards. Such a relationship highlights China’s understanding and response to the diversity of English and its teaching practices within the context of globalisation.

### 4.1. Learning Goals and Target Culture

Both the GELT framework and the two latest curriculum standards place significant emphasis on intercultural communicative competence. The 2022 ECS and the 2017 ECS (2020 Revision) regard students’ intercultural communicative competence as an important part of the curriculum goals. They share the general goal of promoting students’ English subject core competencies, which consists of language ability goals, cultural awareness goals, thinking capacity goals and learning ability goals. Among them, cultural awareness goals state that “students should.....develop skills for cross-cultural communication and the transmission of Chinese culture”<sup>[28]</sup> and “students will be able to learn about outstanding cultural achievements in different countries, compare cultural similarities and differences, develop cross-cultural communication ability”<sup>[29]</sup>.

In parallel, the Global Englishes paradigm emphasizes

the legitimacy and value of different English varieties, and encourages students to comprehend and adapt to different Englishes to enhance intercultural communicative competence. For instance, the GELT framework promotes fluid and diverse cultures rather than static NE cultures, aiming to facilitate effective communication in an increasingly globalised world.

However, there is a difference in the positioning of the target culture between the 2017 ECS (2020 Revision) and the GELT framework. Although the 2017 ECS (2020 Revision) calls for intercultural understanding, the curriculum content continues to emphasize the learning and use of “standard English”, typically modeled after British and American Englishes. For instance, the “content requirements for pragmatic knowledge” suggest that students should “be familiar with the cultural characteristics and ways of thinking in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States”<sup>[28]</sup>.

Similarly, the “content requirements for cultural knowledge” recommend that “teachers can take a variety of measures to carry out the teaching of cultural knowledge”<sup>[28]</sup>, such as explicitly guiding students to understand the cultural background knowledge about countries such as the USA and the UK. These statements place emphasis on British and American Englishes while overlooking the varieties of other English-speaking countries, reflecting the native-speakerism ideology identified by Holliday<sup>[30, 31]</sup>, a bias privileging English native speakers and their culture, which conflicts with the GELT principles advocating for recognizing the legitimacy of all English varieties and risks limiting learners’ preparedness for diverse global encounters.

To better understand the positioning of China’s curriculum in a global context, it can be compared with curriculum innovations in other Expanding Circle countries. For example, in Thailand’s GE-oriented courses, students are explicitly exposed to multiple English varieties and encouraged

to engage with diverse linguistic and cultural communities through intercultural activities<sup>[32]</sup>. Such practices provide students with richer intercultural experiences and, compared with curricula that focus solely on British and American Englishes, more effectively enhance their ability to communicate in English globally. This comparison not only highlights the gaps in China's curriculum regarding the positioning of the target culture, but also offers valuable cross-cultural insights for future curriculum reform.

From the above, it is evident that the new curriculum standards and the principles of the GELT framework are highly consistent in their intercultural objective, both aiming to foster students' intercultural understanding and their ability to use English flexibly in a globalised context. However, the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)* still retains a standard English ideology. In contrast, the *2022 ECS* aligns more closely with the GELT principles for acknowledging diverse and fluid cultures. This shift reflects an increasing acceptance of the Global Englishes ideology in China's English curriculum standards.

## 4.2. Attitudes Towards Learners' Own Languages and Cultures

The two curriculum standards both emphasize the significance of recognizing and incorporating learners' own cultures, as reflected in the curriculum goals, curriculum content, and curriculum implementation guidelines.

As the cultural awareness goals specify, "students should...develop skills for...the transmission of Chinese culture"<sup>[28]</sup> and "they will also be able to develop a deeper understanding of, and sense of identity with, Chinese culture, establish international perspectives, and build confidence in sharing their own culture"<sup>[29]</sup>. Also, in terms of curriculum content, the content requirements of cultural knowledge are put forward clearly that students should "learn and use English to introduce traditional Chinese festivals and cultures (such as Peking Opera, literature, paintings, gardens, the martial arts, and food), and develop an awareness to spread fine traditional Chinese culture"<sup>[28]</sup> and learn about "basic information about typical cultural symbols and traditional festivals in both China and other countries"<sup>[29]</sup>.

For curriculum implementation, the recommendations for textbook development suggest that "the content of the textbooks should...absorb and promote fine traditional Chi-

nese culture"<sup>[28]</sup> and "textbooks should introduce advanced socialist culture, revolutionary culture, and fine traditional Chinese culture in an appropriate way"<sup>[29]</sup>.

The curriculum standards highlight the importance of recognizing and valuing learners' own cultural backgrounds while promoting intercultural communication skills, aligning with the GELT framework, which views learners' own culture as valuable resources within a multilingual repertoire and emphasizes its role in fostering intercultural communication skills. Importantly, this focus also corresponds to China's "Going Global" strategy<sup>[33]</sup>, as it equips students to share and promote Chinese culture internationally, enhancing their cross-cultural competence and supporting China's broader socio-political and cultural objectives on the global stage.

## 4.3. Assessment Criterion

Communicative competence is central to both the new curriculum standards and the GELT framework. The standards assert that "the evaluation of the English curriculum should uphold the people-centred education rationale and focus on the development of students' English subject core competencies"<sup>[28]</sup> and "teaching assessment should be centred on one that is oriented toward the English subject's core competencies and focuses on students' holistic development and growth"<sup>[29]</sup>. Therefore, the new curriculum standard underscores the cultivation of students' core competencies in English highlighted above, which emphasize not only the mastery of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to perform effectively in real communication situations.

Similarly, the GELT framework argues that communicative competence should be the focus in terms of assessment criteria, prioritizing the ability of speakers to communicate in an effective and succinct way within a global context. Rather than conforming to the linguistic norms of native-speaker varieties, the framework highlights the significance of achieving communicative effectiveness. Shino<sup>[34]</sup> highlights that successful communication in ELF contexts depends less on native-like accuracy and more on pragmatic and strategic competence. Moreover, Hu<sup>[35]</sup> argues for redefining the construct of English proficiency based on communicative effectiveness as opposed to traditional measures of linguistic accuracy from the Global Englishes perspective. This perspective prioritizes the ability to use language effectively in real-world contexts over mere adherence to prescriptive



linguistic norms. Consequently, this perspective aligns with a more pragmatic conception of language proficiency, shifting the focus from linguistic precision to communicative effectiveness in varied contexts.

Overall, the new curriculum standards reflect a significant emphasis on communicative competence, aiming to equip students with the practical ability to use English effectively across different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a globalised context through a diverse range of teaching and assessment strategies.

#### 4.4. Textbook Development

In contrast to traditional ELT, which heavily relies on materials derived from native English contexts and prioritizes native-speaker norms, the GELT framework exemplifies a broader, more inclusive approach. The framework promotes the adoption of teaching resources reflecting a range of salient English-speaking communities and contexts worldwide, aligning with the global nature of the language and suiting the linguistic needs of learners. This approach ensures that curriculum content resonates with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and better equips them for future global communication.

However, the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)* further reinforces standard English norms through its guidelines for textbook development. It recommends that “textbook writers

should try to select materials written in standard English and, when necessary, make appropriate adaptations to match students’ actual English proficiency level”<sup>[28]</sup>. This statement highlights the preference for standard English, which contrasts with the GELT framework’s emphasis on incorporating materials that reflect salient English-speaking communities and contexts worldwide. Thus, this indicates that in terms of linguistic norms, there exists a certain degree of tension between the ideological underpinnings of Global Englishes and the principles embodied in the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)*. The curriculum’s adherence to standard English norms reflects a limited awareness of the equal legitimacy of different English varieties. In contrast, in the section of the *2022 ECS* that offers guidelines for textbook development, there is no emphasis on using materials written in standard English, which reflects the curriculum standards developers’ growing awareness of Global Englishes.

In summary, based on the analysis of the four dimensions (see **Table 3**), it is evident that although the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)* partially aligns with trends in globalized English education, it remains misaligned with the principles of Global Englishes in certain respects. The curriculum continues to follow traditional standard English ideologies in both curriculum content and textbook development, limiting its ability to fully reflect the linguistic diversity and global communicative demands emphasized by the GELT framework.

**Table 3.** Comparative analysis of the *2017 ECS (2020 Revision)* and the *2022 ECS* with in relation to GELT principles.

GELT Dimension	<i>2017 ECS (2020 Revision)</i>	<i>2022 ECS</i>	Alignments/Divergences
Target culture	Promotes intercultural awareness but is confined to standard English contexts	Encourages intercultural communicative competence across different cultures	<i>2017 ECS (2020 Revision)</i> partially aligned; <i>2022 ECS</i> closely aligned
Other languages and cultures	Develops skills for the transmission of Chinese culture	Develops a deeper understanding of Chinese culture	<i>2017 ECS (2020 Revision)</i> and <i>2022 ECS</i> closely aligned
Assessment criterion	focuses on the development of English core competencies	Focuses on the English subject’s core competencies	<i>2017 ECS (2020 Revision)</i> and <i>2022 ECS</i> closely aligned
Source of materials	Prefers standard English materials	Avoids exclusive reliance on standard English	<i>2017 ECS (2020 Revision)</i> partially aligned; <i>2022 ECS</i> closely aligned

This partial misalignment can be understood in light of China’s long-standing emphasis on British and American Englishes as “normative” or “prestigious” varieties, as well as the practical pressures imposed by exam-oriented education.

In contrast, the *2022 ECS* aligns more closely with GELT principles. This shift can be attributed to China’s “Going Global” strategy and evolving educational policies that emphasize intercultural communicative competence, growing

awareness of global English diversity among curriculum developers, and the need to equip students for communication in international contexts. The change reflects a gradual yet uneven acceptance of Global Englishes and highlights the persistent tension between traditional language ideologies and the recognition of English as a pluralistic global language in Chinese English educational practice.

## 5. Implications for English Language Teaching

The analysis reveals both alignments and divergences between the principles of Global Englishes and China's English curriculum standards, suggesting that curriculum reform necessitates a more nuanced approach. To address these issues, the following sections discuss the implications for English language teaching in three key areas: curriculum content, curriculum implementation, and teacher education.

### 5.1. Aligning Curriculum Content with GELT Principles

#### 5.1.1. Strengthening Pragmatic Knowledge and Cultural Knowledge

The curriculum standards emphasize not only the acquisition of linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar, but also the development of students' pragmatic skills, which enables effective communication across diverse cultural contexts. Through context-based learning activities and reflective practices, such as peer feedback and self-assessment, students can evaluate and adjust their communicative strategies. For example, Jindapitak, Teo, and Savski<sup>[36]</sup> implemented a nine-week Global Englishes awareness-raising project with Thai university students, which effectively improved students' attitudes toward English varieties and enhanced their confidence.

In addition, the curriculum highlights the importance of cultural knowledge, such as using English to introduce Chinese traditional festivals and cultural elements, including Peking Opera, literature, gardens, and martial arts. To effectively address China's global engagement needs elaborated in the curriculum standards, curriculum design should integrate context-based learning to help students apply their linguistic and pragmatic knowledge in diverse cultural set-

tings and enhance their intercultural communication skills, enabling them to effectively showcase Chinese culture and tell compelling Chinese stories, and promote China's voice on the global stage.

#### 5.1.2. Recognizing the Ownership of Global Englishes

Banks<sup>[37]</sup> argues that multicultural education should empower students to critically understand and appreciate cultural diversity, yet the current curriculum standards remain limited in their acknowledgement of diverse English varieties. The existing standards primarily reflect the norms of native English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, in line with traditional ELT paradigms. However, the GELT framework advocates an inclusive perspective that acknowledges the legitimacy of all English varieties worldwide. Therefore, the curriculum should recognize and incorporate diverse English varieties, recognizing their legitimacy and local significance, rather than exclusively focusing on British and American Englishes.

For instance, curriculum content could integrate texts written in Nigerian, Indian, or Singaporean English, such as *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, and *Little Ironies: Stories of Singapore* by Catherine Lim, exposing students to diverse linguistic forms, idioms, and cultural perspectives, thereby developing intercultural communicative competence in line with GELT principles.

### 5.2. Addressing Implementation Challenges in English Teaching

#### 5.2.1. Integrating Global Englishes and Cultural Identity into Teaching Materials

Textbooks serve as a pivotal link between curriculum standards and actual teaching practices and should reflect the diversity of English varieties, including those from Outer Circle and Expanding Circle contexts. The critical ecological framework proposed by Widodo, Fang, and Elyas<sup>[38]</sup> can be referenced in designing textbooks to enhance learners' Global Englishes awareness and self-efficacy, and cultivate their positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity. It aims to guide students to adopt a critical perspective on English as a global lingua franca and to cultivate positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity.

Furthermore, Zhang and Liu<sup>[39]</sup> argued that cultural representation in textbooks should go beyond merely acknowledging national identity; instead, it should deeply engage with the tendencies and lived experiences of local cultures to enhance cultural awareness. Textbooks should also recognize the importance of learners' own cultural backgrounds by incorporating content that promotes and celebrates Chinese traditional culture, which can contribute to the consolidation of learners' Chinese cultural identity<sup>[40]</sup>.

Future textbook development should strike a balance between the diversity of Global Englishes and the specific needs of local learners, integrating local cultural elements to enhance learners' cultural identity. Moreover, the development of digital textbooks deserves exploration, as they can offer more flexible and adaptable materials for learning Global Englishes.

### 5.2.2. Shifting Evaluation Focus to Prioritizing the Pragmatic and Strategic Use

Hu<sup>[35]</sup> stresses the importance of strategic competence in language proficiency, namely, communicative effectiveness and explains further that a pillar of a proficient English user's communicative repertoire is their strategic competence, "the ability to make effective use of various strategies of communicative negotiation" in English-mediated communicative encounters<sup>[21]</sup>. Therefore, in assessing students' communicative competence within the framework of Global Englishes, it is essential for curriculum evaluation to prioritize the practical application of language in real-world scenarios rather than relying solely on traditional metrics of linguistic accuracy.

Although the curriculum standards lack clear assessment guidelines in this area, evaluation methods such as role-plays and group discussions can effectively gauge students' ability to employ communicative strategies. Structured role-play scenarios can require students to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds or resolve misunderstandings, and group projects can involve problem-solving tasks to assess language accuracy, pragmatic appropriateness, intercultural sensitivity, and negotiation strategies.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the utilitarian value of standard English, so curriculum design should equip students both with the practical ability to succeed in standardised assessments and the intercultural competence to communicate effectively in diverse real-world

English contexts.

## 5.3. Enhancing Teacher Competencies for Global Englishes Instruction

The GELT framework places higher demands on teachers' professional competencies, instructional capabilities, and intercultural communication abilities.

To begin with, teachers should be exposed to Global Englishes to cultivate "a general empathy and cooperative open-heartedness towards different varieties of English"<sup>[41]</sup>, addressing the conceptual mismatch between the teachers' emic understandings and the researchers' etic perspectives of Global Englishes<sup>[42]</sup> and developing a GE-informed teacher identity.

Possible approaches include designing emotionally engaging activities (e.g., role-plays, case discussions) to stimulate critical reflection; providing ongoing professional development support (e.g., teacher communities, online resource libraries) to help teachers gradually adapt to GELT teaching; and encouraging teachers to conduct action research to explore locally appropriate GELT practices. For instance, Sifakis and Bayyurt's<sup>[43, 44]</sup> ELF-Ted project demonstrated how such approaches could work in practice, showing that ELF-aware training enhanced teachers' confidence and fostered innovation in pedagogy and action research.

In addition, "teacher education programs should foster participants' ability to devise appropriate language tasks to elicit those pragmatic strategies that facilitate effective communication and allow valid inferences about English learners' strategic competence"<sup>[35]</sup>, which can enhance the ability of future teachers to design effective language tasks, assess strategic competence, and align their teaching practices with the principles of Global Englishes.

Moreover, teachers need to understand and integrate students' cultural backgrounds into instructional design. As Ladson-Billings<sup>[45]</sup> highlights in her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers can leverage students' cultural experiences as resources for learning, while Gay<sup>[46]</sup> stresses the importance of equipping teachers with the skills to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into classroom practice. This requires teachers to consciously adjust curricula, textbooks, and classroom interactions to accommodate cultural diversity, designing appropriate teaching strategies that respond to students' unique cultural contexts.

Furthermore, teachers should be aware of the new objectives of English language education to support the development of key competencies in language, culture, thinking and autonomous learning<sup>[33]</sup>. This approach not only enhances educators' effectiveness but also prepares students to thrive in a globalised environment.

In summary, the GELT framework highlights the need to enhance teacher education by improving language proficiency, pedagogical skills, and intercultural communication. It should also be acknowledged that while the GELT framework offers valuable insights for rethinking English education in China, it is not without limitations. In particular, challenges remain in terms of assessment practices and teacher training, as the framework provides limited guidance on how to operationalize communicative competence in large-scale testing contexts or how to systematically prepare teachers for the diversity of Englishes. These limitations suggest that further research and practical experimentation are needed to adapt the GELT framework more effectively to the realities of China's educational system.

## 6. Conclusions

Currently, the rise of English as a global language has reshaped learners' needs, calling for reforms in the English curriculum. This study analysed China's latest English Curriculum Standards through the GELT lens, revealing both notable alignments and critical divergences.

While both the GELT framework and the curriculum standards emphasize the importance of intercultural communicative competence, recognizing the need for students to navigate diverse cultural contexts effectively, the curriculum continues to prioritize standard English norms, particularly British and American varieties, potentially limiting students' exposure to the diverse range of Englishes used globally. This divergence highlights a critical area where the curriculum standards fall short of embracing the principles of Global Englishes, thereby constraining students' ability to engage effectively with the varied realities of English usage across the globe.

To address these issues, curriculum designers can integrate Outer and Expanding Circle English varieties, embed context-based activities to develop pragmatic and strategic competence, and ensure textbooks balance global cultural per-

spectives with learners' own cultural identities. By acknowledging the diversity of English, respecting learners' cultural identities, and promoting intercultural communicative competence, English education can gradually move beyond, thereby advancing decolonisation practices. This approach can also offer valuable guidance for English teaching in other non-native English-speaking contexts, thus facilitating the decolonisation of English education on a global scale.

For assessment, the focus should shift to structured role-plays and collaborative tasks, with evaluation rubrics used to measure students' communicative competence. Moreover, teacher education programs should incorporate GELT-oriented training modules, action research opportunities, and culturally responsive pedagogical guidance to enhance teachers' understanding of English diversity and intercultural teaching. The development of digital and critically designed materials further supports flexible, context-rich Global English learning.

Overall, GELT-informed curriculum reform can bridge the gap between current standards and globally practical demands of English use, enhancing students' linguistic, cultural, and strategic competencies for effective engagement in an increasingly globalised world.

It should be recognised that this study has certain limitations. As it primarily analyzed language documents without the support of classroom-based empirical data, it does not fully capture the implementation of the ECS, which largely depends on the actual teaching practices of language practitioners. Therefore, future research could collect and analyse empirical materials such as classroom observations, student feedback, or teacher reflections to further validate and enrich the findings of this study. This approach would not only enhance the comprehensiveness of the research but also provide deeper insights into how the curriculum standards are enacted in teaching practice, offering empirical support for the implementation of GELT principles in English education in China.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, X.T., Y.L. and L.P.; methodology, X.T. and L.P.; formal analysis, X.T.; investigation, X.T. and Y.L.; resources, Y.L. and L.P.; data curation, X.T.; writing—original draft preparation, X.T.; writing—review and editing,

Y.L. and L.P.; supervision, Y.L.; project administration, Y.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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