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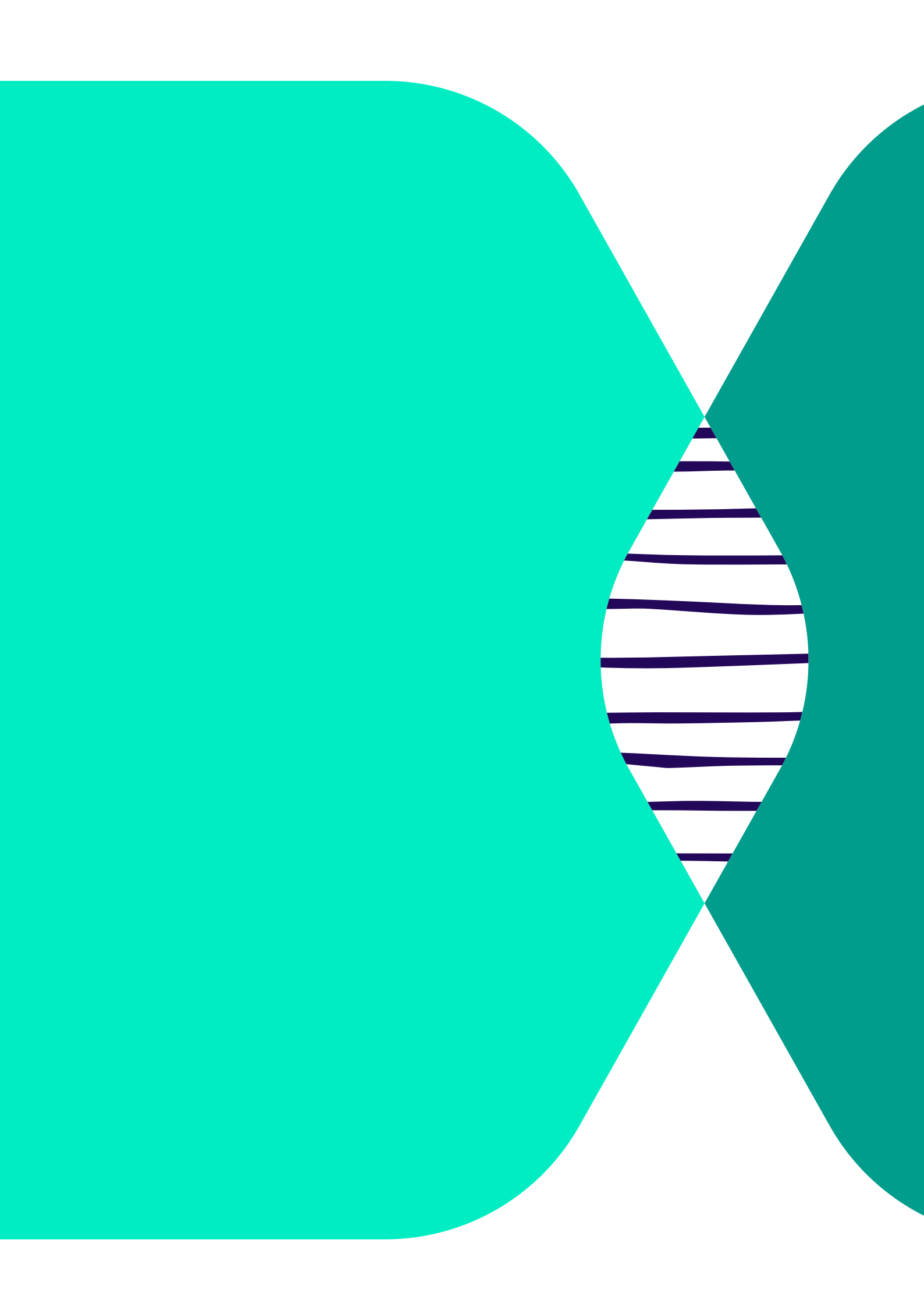

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Executive summary

Introduction

Higher education (HE) plays a pivotal role in socioeconomic mobility, as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education. English, as a global lingua franca, facilitates intercultural communication, career advancement and cultural exchange. However, its role in HE is contentious, often perpetuating inequalities. English's dominance is linked to its colonial legacy, reinforcing socioeconomic and cultural disparities. This report critically examines how de/coloniality, dis/empowerment and marginalisation intersect with English language teaching (ELT) in HE across five settings (Colombia, Mexico, Iraq, Vietnam and Thailand) that teach linguistically, culturally and socioeconomically diverse students.

Background

The rise of English as a global language has significant implications for HE and ELT. Despite the diverse use of English worldwide, pedagogical and policy frameworks often prioritise colonial Anglophone norms, marginalising non-native users and reinforcing inequalities. Decolonial approaches to ELT challenge these norms, advocating for flexible, multilingual practices that empower learners and respect local identities. However, empirical evidence on their effectiveness is limited, particularly in low- and middle-income settings.

Methodology

This study focused on five linguistically, culturally and socioeconomically diverse HE institutions in Colombia, Mexico, Iraq, Vietnam and Thailand. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including surveys, interviews, observations and document analysis. Participants included students, teachers and administrators from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic and geographical backgrounds. The study explored four key research questions:

1. The roles of English and other languages in HE policy and practice and their relationship to de/colonialisation of English.

2. The extent to which ELT enables or restricts empowerment and access to HE for diverse groups of students.

3. How global citizenship principles are integrated into ELT.

4. Effective pedagogical practices for decolonising English and empowering learners.

Findings

Survey data

A total of 1,825 participants completed the survey. Key findings include:

- **English proficiency and access:** Most students reported extensive English education but felt inadequately prepared for academic and professional demands. Socioeconomic status, ethnicity and rural-urban divides significantly influenced access to quality English education.

- **Motivations for learning English:** Career advancement, intercultural communication and travel were top motivators. However, there remained a strong preference for Anglophone English varieties, reflecting colonial ELT influences.

- **Global citizenship:** While many students identified with global citizenship principles, understanding and integration of these concepts in ELT varied widely.

Case studies

1. Southwestern University, Colombia

- **Context:** English is central to HE, with national policies requiring proficiency for graduation. However, students from public schools and rural areas face significant barriers.

- **Findings:** English is viewed as both an opportunity and a barrier. Socioeconomic and ethnic inequalities persist, with Indigenous and rural students at a disadvantage. Translanguaging and locally developed teaching materials reflect emerging decolonial practices.

2. Intercultural University, Mexico

- **Context:** Focused on marginalised Indigenous communities, the institution emphasises multilingualism, including Indigenous languages and English.

- **Findings:** English is positioned as a tool for empowerment and as an international language, providing an alternative to the perceived colonial legacy of Spanish. Multilingual policies and locally developed materials aim to balance global and local perspectives, but orientations to external educational frameworks hinder implementation.

3. Central Vietnamese University

- **Context:** English is integral to Vietnam's internationalisation strategy. However, rural and minority students face systemic disadvantages.

- **Findings:** Socioeconomic disparities are pronounced, with rural students reporting less access to quality ELT. Despite these challenges, there is a strong demand for English as a means of socioeconomic mobility.

4. Southern Thai University

- **Context:** Situated in a conflict-affected multicultural and multilingual area of Thailand, English is a compulsory subject, with increasing emphasis on diversity and global citizenship education.

- **Findings:** While students recognise the importance of English, other regional languages such as Malay and Arabic were also valued. Teachers' use of translanguaging, culturally relevant materials and equitable hiring practices are promising trends. Yet further effort to integrate global citizenship more systematically into classrooms is needed.

5. Southern Iraqi University

- **Context:** English is viewed as essential for academic and professional success and as an avenue to integrate HE into the international community after decades of war and political instability.

- **Findings:** English is perceived as a language of potential empowerment, but there are social divides and a mismatch between simplistic, Anglophone orientated ELT materials and the translingual complexities of English use across academic disciplines.

Discussion and implications

- **Decolonialising ELT practices:** Translanguaging, locally developed materials and multilingual policies are effective in challenging colonial norms. However, their implementation is inconsistent.

- **Global citizenship:** While English facilitates global connections, its integration into citizenship education often reflects neoliberal, rather than decolonial, values.

- **Empowerment and marginalisation:** English can empower students through access to opportunities but often reinforces existing inequalities. Marginalised groups, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, minority ethnic communities and rural settings, face systemic barriers.

Policy Implications

1. **Equitable access:** Governments and institutions must address ethnic, socioeconomic and geographical disparities in ELT provision.

2. **Decolonial approaches:** Policies should promote multilingualism, critical pedagogy and recognition of local identities and cultures.

3. **Teacher training:** Educators need training in decolonial ELT methods, including translanguaging, materials development and intercultural competence.

4. **Global citizenship:** ELT curricula should integrate critical global citizenship education that challenges neoliberal and colonial ideologies.

Conclusion

The study highlights the complex interplay between English, HE and decolonisation. While English offers opportunities for empowerment, it also perpetuates inequalities. Decolonial ELT approaches, emphasising multilingualism, local relevance and global citizenship, provide a pathway toward more inclusive and equitable ELT. However, systemic changes in policy, pedagogy and resource allocation are essential for meaningful transformation.

1 Introduction

Higher education (HE) is seen as a crucial site of socioeconomic mobility underscored by its recent addition to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of 'quality education' and it is also 'integral to meeting all 17' of the SDGs (ACU, 2020). Likewise, English is viewed as a global lingua franca enabling diverse groups of people to communicate across borders and opening up new educational, career, social and cultural avenues (Patel et al., 2023). In recent decades, these two areas have increasingly come together through the growing role of English both into and in HE (e.g., entrance and exit exams, in-sessional courses) and increasingly as a medium of instruction (EMI). Together with expanding mobility and widening participation opportunities, English use and education have become part of the strategy of many international universities to develop global citizenship and intercultural understanding among their staff and students. However, neither the role of English nor the opportunities HE and English provide are uncontentious. Access to HE is still unequal particularly across income groups, genders, marginalised and minority communities (UNESCO, 2017). Similarly, English is viewed as the language of the elite in many societies and access to 'quality' ELT (often essential for access to HE) may only be available to students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, thus further increasing, rather than reducing, inequalities. Furthermore, persistent ideologies which associate English with colonial Anglophone countries and 'native' speakers may disempower, rather than empower, those who learn and use English. The prevalence and prestige of 'native English speaker' varieties provides an unrealistic and unhelpful model for the majority of the world's English users, who use it as a lingua franca in variable ways in diverse multilingual settings. These issues are especially pertinent in low- and middle-income settings where the role of English and ELT has rapidly increased over the last few decades but where governments may struggle to provide equal access for all parts of society to HE and ELT (Patel et al., 2023). Therefore, this study critically explores how empowerment, diversity and marginalisation are conceptualised and materialised in relation to English language education and HE in five such linguistically and culturally complex settings in Colombia, Mexico, Iraq, Vietnam and Thailand.

2 Background

It is now well-established that English is used by significantly more L2 users than L1 users and this has major implications for how we view 'successful' English use and teaching (Jenkins et al., 2018). This is researched in the field of Global Englishes which is concerned with 'the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of global uses and users of English' (www.soton.ac.uk/cge) and typically includes the areas of World Englishes (WE), English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English as an international language (EIL). Research has repeatedly demonstrated that, as the communicative practices of multilingual intercultural speakers are variable and fluid, monolingual native English speaker norms can no longer be uncritically held as the most appropriate uses of English in all settings (Jenkins et al., 2018). However, the impact that empirical findings on the dynamic uses of global Englishes has had on pedagogical objectives, teacher training and teacher recruitment trends is limited (Rose and Galloway, 2019). ELT has predominantly been focused on colonial Anglophone native speaker models and cultures which provide an unrealistic and potentially undesirable goal to the majority of English learners and teachers, who use the language with diverse speakers in multilingual and multicultural scenarios far removed from the Anglosphere. These issues have also carried into HE through ELT, entry and exit exams and EMI instruction, all of which are still frequently orientated to native speaker Anglophone models of English (Jenkins and Mauranen, 2019). Furthermore, the essentialist association of the English language with Anglophone speakers and settings can be viewed as a continuation of colonial ideologies (Menezes Jordão, 2019). These ideologies reproduce unobtainable and disempowering educational models of 'monolingual native standard' English. At the same time such ideologies place the majority of the world's users of English in a deficit position as 'imperfect', 'non-standard', 'non-native' L2 users of English, as well as restraining the agency and sociolinguistic creativity of multilingual speakers of English. Additionally, those able to learn a variety of English closer to the perceived standard, typically through expensive and elite education, are positioned advantageously relative to those who learn and use other kinds of English (Darvin, 2017).

As a counter to colonial, Anglophone, monolingual ideologies, there are a number of contemporary decolonising approaches to ELT and English in HE which seek to recognise the agency that these learners can have in shaping the language (e.g., Garcia and Li, 2014; Macedo, 2019; Rose and Galloway, 2019; Sifakis, 2019). They are all underpinned by a perspective that challenges the hierarchisation of languages and communicative resources, decentres idealised native speaker Anglophone norms in communication, and recognises the importance of adaptability and flexibility in multilingual communication through English used for intercultural communication. Such approaches are better suited to the diverse uses and users of English in expanding circle settings and offer more obtainable and potentially empowering models for teachers and students. Yet, the extent to which such pedagogical approaches may be successful in enabling experiences of empowerment and equality is still an open empirical question. Previous research on marginalised communities suggests there is potential for English and ELT to empower students. For instance, the Language for Resilience project (British Council, 2018) and HOPES programme (2020) report the relevant role of English in helping Syrian refugees access education, training and employment. The Language for Resilience project also identified learning English as a way to bring different groups together and as a medium to address the effects of trauma through the safety of a second or third language (2018). The @Palestine project (British Council, 2020) emphasised the importance of English for young Palestinian graduate entrepreneurs, especially for the majority of its female respondents. However, other scholars warn that even efforts to construct a Global Englishes informed ELT curriculum can lead to decolonial opportunities and undesirable colonial effects simultaneously (Gimenez, 2024).

Linked to concerns about the potential of English to empower or disempower are issues related to which diverse groups of students may potentially be further marginalised through English. These include people with a range of identities and material conditions, especially as regards gender, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, race, religion, urban/ rural background and sexuality and, crucially, how these identities intersect with each other (Kubota, 2020). Gender is a core area of potential marginalisation, with gender and inequality scholars (for example, Davies, 2021) critiquing the extent to which the inclusion and social justice effects of HE

'widening participation' policies actually extend access to groups other than upper- and middle-class white men. Such concerns have also been directly related to ELT (for example, Appleby, 2010). Other scholars have explored the relationships between English use, ELT provision and marginalisation in relation to class and socioeconomic status (Block, 2014; Darvin, 2017; Morán Panero, 2019), rurality (Draper, 2012), race (Kubota, 2020) and sexuality (Banegas and Evripidou, 2021). In this study we also consider the role that English language and education can have in challenging and/or reproducing inequalities in HE settings, and how these may intersect with other forms of marginalisation.

A contemporary approach in education that directly addresses issues of equality and diversity is global citizenship education (Gaudelli, 2016). Global citizenship is conceived as the extension of citizenship beyond national borders in recognition of the global scale of social relations, the need to respect and value diversity, and to engage responsibly with communities at multiple scales from the local to the global. While this is applicable to all education levels, it is particularly relevant to HE due to increasing internationalisation and the objective to produce 'global graduates' (Killick, 2013). Furthermore, language teaching has been closely tied to global citizenship due to its focus on cultures and communication across borders, most typically through the notion of intercultural citizenship education (for example, Byram et al., 2017). Studies are beginning to emerge which also link intercultural citizenship education to ELT and English use (Baker and Fang, 2019). Nonetheless, there are concerns that rather than engaging with diverse communities through socially responsible actions, neoliberal perspectives on global citizenship may result in socioeconomic benefits for global elites, increased stratification and new forms of colonialism (Abdi, 2015; Aktas et al., 2017). Likewise, critical research from intercultural and decolonial perspectives is examining the role of western inherited educational systems in perpetuating colonial ideologies and practices (Álvarez Valencia and Miranda, 2022; Mignolo, 2011).

It is important to note that much of the key terminology used in this research is not uncontroversial and can be defined in various ways. These include differing understandings of identities such as gender, race and ethnicity, as well as theoretical concepts such as de/coloniality, empowerment and marginalisation. A decoloniality

agenda encourages us to visualise and, where possible, try to revert unequal power, knowledge, race relations and issues of access that are reproduced in 'universalist' or monolithic accounts of phenomena (for example, language) as lingering patterns of coloniality (Mignolo, 2000). Although we initially took performativity-based perspectives to approach gender or race as social constructs, rather than as biologically-determined (e.g., Kubota, 2020; Pennycook, 2021), the documentary data collected did not always reflect such distinctions (for example, often conflating gender and sex). It was important to remain open to co-existing definitions and understandings of these notions across site documents, local agents or gatekeepers, languages and locally appropriate forms of inquiry (Santos, 2014 on 'ecology of knowledges'), even if agreement was sought within the research team. The decolonial ethos of the project and the need to grapple with the co-existence of multiple epistemologies on these dimensions also motivated the negotiation of data collection tools with local informants (for example, questionnaires) to make them relevant and functional across the investigated local contexts. We strove to avoid the imposition of epistemologies onto participants and the invisibilisation of diverse categorisations or possible discrimination, by looking whenever possible, at how these social notions are situatedly constructed, and with what local consequences.

It is important to note, however, that in this study we examine de/coloniality specifically in relation to decolonising the English language and ELT (in, for example, classroom materials). Decolonising English can be characterised here as

approaching English beyond 'colonial' national linguistic and cultural frameworks, while also acknowledging their symbolic power and seeking to actively deconstruct their hegemony. In particular, it is the notion of 'English' as a named language that needs decolonising, as this lags behind actual speakers' practices of appropriation, and this discrepancy leads to persistent forms of discrimination and inequality. Thus, decolonising English aims to decentre ideas of English from Anglophone orientations in both linguistic and pedagogic models.
(Baker et al., 2024, p. 3).

It is also important to point out that the countries included have experienced colonialism and coloniality differently. Most of the countries in this study were colonised by countries that did not use English (and Thailand has never been colonised by any other country) but they all make substantial use of the English language in HE.

In our approach to 'empowerment' and 'marginalisation' we also took an emic perspective, refraining from imposing our own criteria and labels onto individuals or specific groups *a priori* (see methodology for a further discussion of identity categorisation). To understand how people gain, lose or maintain sufficient agency to shape and/or 'change themselves, their conditions and society' (Kraft and Flubacher, 2020, p. 9), we explored how their situated aims, constraints, identities and desired trajectories related to English. All this, without ignoring the relevance of both symbolic and material dimensions in our investigation, and while maintaining a commitment to understanding not only differences across groups but also within them (e.g., diversity within genders, rural/urban upbringings or religious affiliations).

In sum, both English and HE have the potential to offer empowering opportunities to diverse groups of students in low- and middle-income expanding circle settings. However, there is also equal potential for exclusion and exacerbation of existing inequalities and divides. While some evidence indicates that teaching (through) English can provide possibilities for crossing borders (for example, Erling, 2017), it is crucial that ELT is approached from critical multilingualism and ELF perspectives that value students' diverse linguistic and communicative repertoires, that de-centre colonial Anglophone models, and challenge world languages hierarchisation. To date, much of the research has focused on basic education (for example, Simpson, 2019), or elite HE groups in high-income countries (for example, Jenkins and Mauranen, 2019). There is still a lack of reliable and in-depth data about access to and delivery of programmes in HE in low- and middle-income settings in which the role of English and ELT is a core (and often compulsory) component for all students (not just in EMI programmes). Given the increased importance of English in HE in ODA (Official Development Assistance) contexts, more research is needed to better understand the extent to which English does, or does not, promote equality and respect for diversity leading to improved material and symbolic opportunities for student empowerment.

3 Methodology

We focused on ODA eligible settings within the expanding circle, namely Colombia, Mexico, Iraq, Vietnam and Thailand, as research has struggled to keep up with the rapid expansion of English in HE here. Collaborations between local and UK research teams were established, and five relevant HE institutions were selected in each country for in-depth case studies. Local researchers provided essential insider perspectives allowing us to produce rich descriptions of the sites and identify emergent issues of relevance to stakeholders. Alongside the shared features, there was a large degree of diversity within and between the sites including language, culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, rural and urban populations, as well as ongoing social conflicts.

Voluntary participants were recruited from teachers, students, administration and management involved in ELT provision by research teams at their institution. The focus was on English language education but there was also some crossover with EMI programmes as the boundaries between ELT and EMI were not always clear (for example, many students reported needing English for content classes even when not on EMI programmes (see below). We used purposive sampling to represent the diversity of students present in each setting. Ethical procedures at each research site were implemented according to both local procedures and those of the coordinating institutions (University of Southampton, British Council) including informed consent, the right to withdraw, and anonymity. Based on the research gaps identified previously, the following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the roles of English and other languages in policy and practice in these settings (including multilingualism, English as a lingua franca and disciplinary language)? How do these roles relate to processes of de/colonialisation of HE?

2. To what extent does ELT and English allow or restrict access to opportunities of empowerment for different groups of students in their way to and through HE in these settings?

   a. Who is (positioned as) 'marginalised' in each setting and how does this category relate to English and other languages?

   b. Are sex and gender identities mediating factors in language-related processes of dis/empowerment, marginalisation and mobility?

   c. What additional social, material, academic or geographical factors emerge as mediating factors in language-related processes of dis/empowerment, marginalisation and mobility?

3. To what extent are the elements of global citizenship (connections and responsibilities to local, national and global communities, respect for diversity, gender equality) incorporated into English language education in policy and practices? How are culture(s), diversity and cohesion conceptualised, approached and experienced in these settings?

4. What pedagogical orientations and practices are found to be successful in decolonising English in ELT and empowering students in these settings? What alternatives are identified by participants and researchers as necessary but are currently lacking?

The methodology followed a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2015) with quantitative data from questionnaires (Appendix 1) used to identify broad trends and more in-depth qualitative data from interviews (Appendix 2), observations (Appendix 3), and documents. Within this framework, we conducted five case studies with the cases being each Higher Education institution (HEI) and the roles, perceptions and experiences of English within them. Data collection was carried out by the research teams in each of their settings over a 12-month period. The data sets were coordinated and collated by the researchers at the UK university. Data collection and research instruments comprise:

Documents	Profiles of the role of English and ELT in each HEI based on national/institutional policy documents and current research (e.g., official language policies, internationalisation policies, curricula, assessment exercises and criteria) Demographic data on the diverse staff and student populations of each HEI linguistic landscape data
Questionnaire	Demographic information, learning histories, experiences and perceptions of English, ELT and multilingualism, and global citizenship among student cohorts (n=1,825)
Interviews	Teachers, students, administrators and management (n=154, approx. 125 hrs.) Semi-structured, audio recorded and transcribed in local languages On experiences of English language use, learning and teaching, multilingualism, intercultural communication and global citizenship, underpinned by concerns about access, diversity and empowerment
Classroom observations	Field notes, and selected audio recordings and transcriptions of ELT (and some EMI) courses over one semester (n=73, approx. 130 hrs. plus field notes) Focusing on language use (English, multilingualism, translanguaging, disciplinary language), student participation and teaching approaches related to de/colonialism of English

Data analysis consisted of descriptive and inferential statistics from the questionnaire data and qualitative thematic and content analysis (Miles et al., 2014) of the policy documents, interviews and observations. Quantitative analysis was used to identify frequently occurring themes and relationships from the questionnaire data. Qualitative data was coded using a mixture of top-down codes from the research questions and emergent bottom-up codes from the data. A shared coding scheme was developed in collaboration with all the sites to enable comparisons between settings. However, there was also adaptation to each site to reflect issues of local relevance. The overall aim was to provide a holistic 'thick description' of each of the research sites accounting for all levels from government to university policy, classroom practices and individuals' perspectives and experiences. Data was analysed in the L1 of the transcription and then selected examples translated by the research team for presentation in the findings.

As regards trustworthiness and limitations, it is not possible to generalise from five settings to larger populations of English language learners; however, by providing rich descriptions of each site and the participants within them, the findings may be transferable to other settings. The 25-month time frame for the project and the research partners' long-term experiences in the settings add further depth. Moreover, local research teams provided essential insider perspectives which were balanced

by the outsider perspectives of other members of the research project. Trustworthiness was further enhanced through triangulation of data, transparency via audit trails, and reflexivity discussions and explicitness about the roles of researchers.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, defining and operationalising identity categories was a complex process which involved negotiation between research teams and debate around translations. For instance, gender and ethnicity were self-identified by participants in the questionnaire but the cultural appropriateness of questions on gender, ethnicity, sexuality and income had to be carefully considered. For consistency and ease of analysis, we divided socioeconomic status into two categories of high and low status based on reported income and parents' occupation (with the addition of socioeconomic stratum for Colombia) but acknowledge that other locally relevant categories were possible. Ethnicity was equally complex, with participants in Mexico coming from the majority ethnic group in the region of the university, but from a minority group nationally. In Thailand, participants mainly identified themselves as part of the majority ethnic group despite identifying with minority religious (Muslim), cultural and linguistic groups (Malay). We, therefore, had to balance more fixed etic categories used in the questionnaire with more fluid emic categories discussed in interviews.

4 Findings

The findings are presented by overall quantitative findings which address demographic data and research questions (RQ) one, two and three. This is followed by case studies consisting of quantitative and qualitative findings from each of the research sites addressing all four RQs. While many of the factors concerning potentially marginalised groups investigated in the survey proved statistically significant, we focus on those which emerged as most salient in their reported influence, socioeconomic status and ethnicity, and to a lesser extent rurality, as well as gender.

4.1 Survey findings

The questionnaire consisted of a mixture of quantitative response question types (multiple choice, Likert scale, ranking, tick-boxes) and a small number of short-answer. It covered five areas: general education and language education background, current English use, perceptions of English and ELT, global citizenship understanding and perceptions, and demographic information (Appendix 1). It was translated into the majority L1 in each setting and administered online and on paper for a small number of participants in Mexico.

Figure 1 Questionnaire responses (total 1,825)
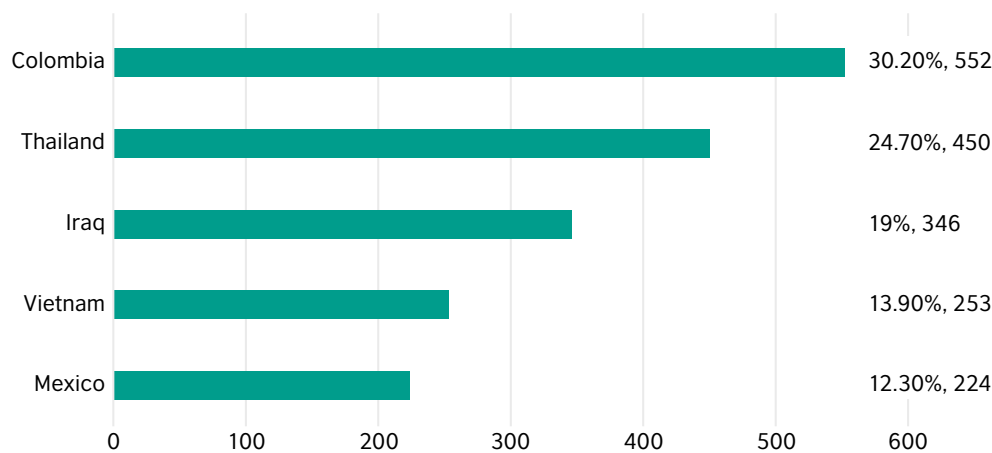
Overall, there were 1,825 responses. The differences in numbers of responses were a good reflection of the size of the institutions investigated, with Colombia and Thailand hosting the largest universities and Mexico the smallest.
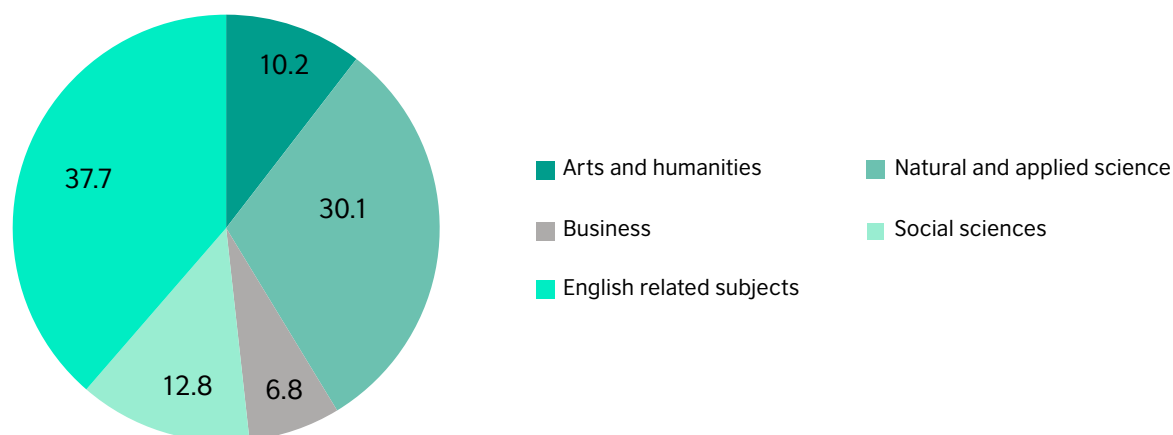
Demographic data[1]

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants identify as female which is an indication of the gender balance of the institutions investigated. A majority of students were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as the project targeted institutions with such students. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds was 18 per cent;

although there was a lot of variation by site (see case studies). A similar number of students also reported using a minority L1. There was a roughly equal split between students from rural and urban areas as recorded by schooling. The study also drew students from a range of disciplines (Figure 2); however, again, there was quite a lot of variation by site.

Table 1: Demographic data

Category	Frequency	%
Gender/Biological sex		
Female	1,208	66.2
Male	589	32.3
Others	1	0.1
Majority or minority ethnic group		
Majority ethnic group	1,422	77.9
Minority ethnic group	330	18.1
Don't know/none	24	1.3
First language(s)		
Majority L1	1,437	78.7
Minority L1	351	19.2
Socioeconomic status		
Lower income bands – working class jobs	1,319	72.3
Higher income bands – middle class jobs	390	21.4
Location of school		
Urban	943	51.7
Rural	863	47.3

Figure 2 Academic discipline %

Arts and humanities • Natural and applied science • Business • Social sciences • English related subjects

1. Missing responses mean that figures do not always add up to 100 per cent

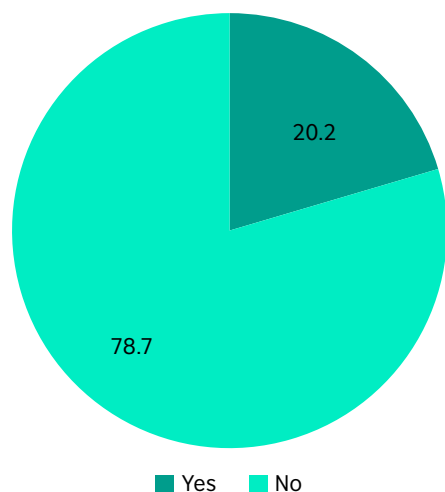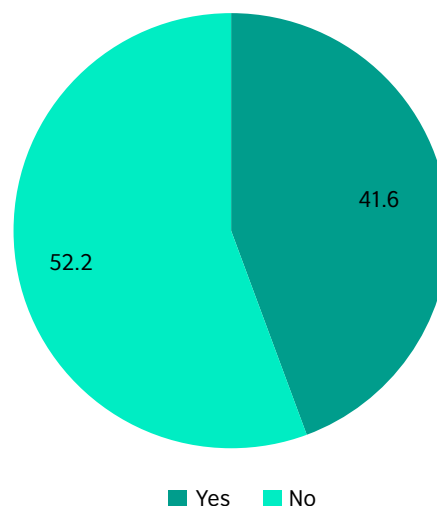**Figure 3 Are you happy with your current level of English? %**

20.2

78.7

■ Yes   ■ No

Figure 4 Do you think your English proficiency is adequate for your studies? %

41.6

52.2

■ Yes   ■ No

RQ1 Roles of English and other languages in policy, practice and de/colonialisation in HE

All students had studied English in primary and/or secondary education with a mean of 9.4 years learning; although with a lot of variety (SD 5.7). Some students had applied for grants or scholarships where English was a criterion (22 per cent) but only 96 students (5 per cent) reported any success with this. Before university, most students (75 per cent) had not had any private English tuition and only 54 per cent reported using English outside of school. Many students reported English exams being an influencing factor for accessing university (62 per cent) and for graduating (72 per cent). Almost all students were currently taking English classes (89 per cent); 62 per cent believed they needed English for their content classes too, and 67 per cent reported currently using English outside of classes. Despite this extensive use of English, most students rated their English as medium to low and were unhappy with their level (Figure 3). They also felt it was inadequate for their studies (Figure 4). Yet, almost all thought English was important (97 per cent). Most think studying other languages is important too (68 per cent), but only a minority (42 per cent) are taking other language classes.

Attitudes and perceptions of English were mixed, but with some pull of Anglophone native English speakers (NES). Motivations that ranked highly for studying English were careers, experiences of intercultural communication, and traveling (Figure 5). However, NES orientation was still highly ranked, fourth out of 12. Yet in terms of teaching, experience and knowledge were ranked highest with nativeness last (Figure 6). Nonetheless, as regards both usefulness and preference for different varieties, American and British English were ranked highly (Figures 7 and 8). Similarly, in intercultural communication while knowing about how other English speakers communicate regardless of background was ranked highest, knowing about NES was ranked second (Figure 9). In contrast, only a minority thought sounding like a NES was a priority when speaking (29 per cent).

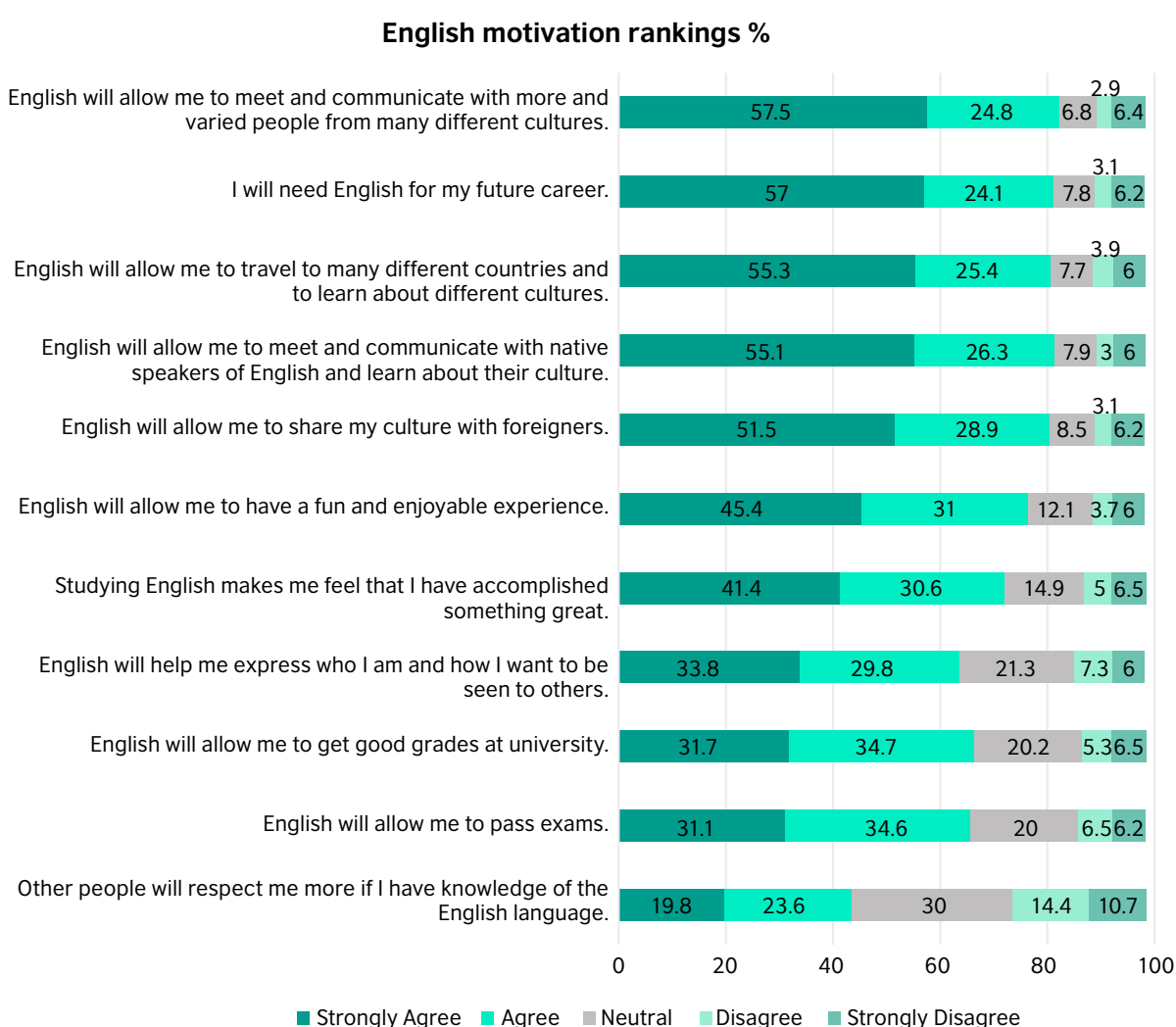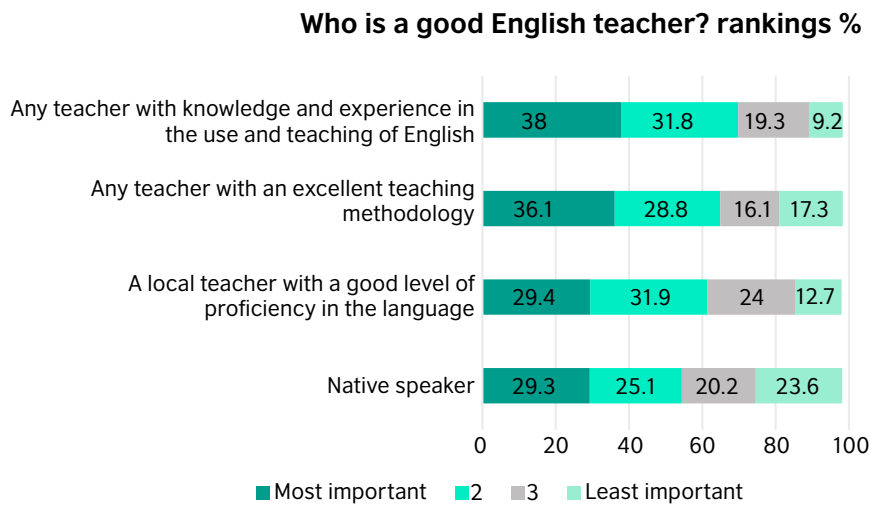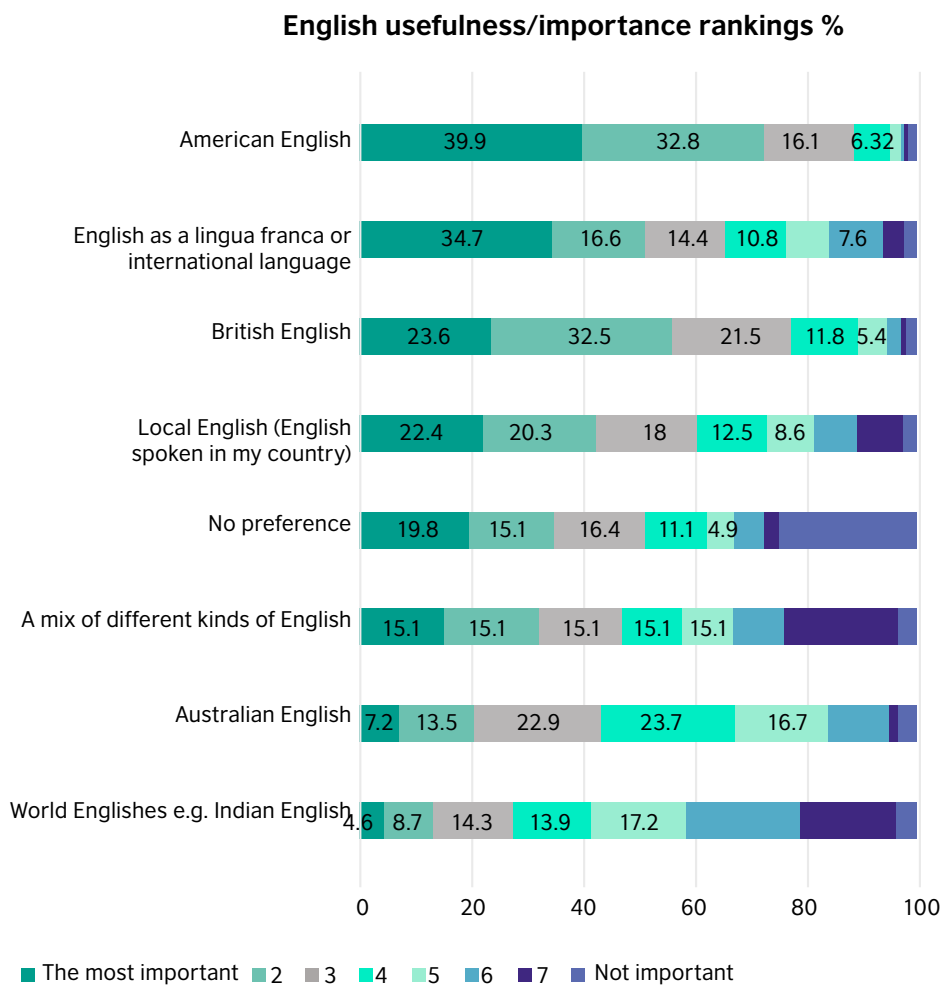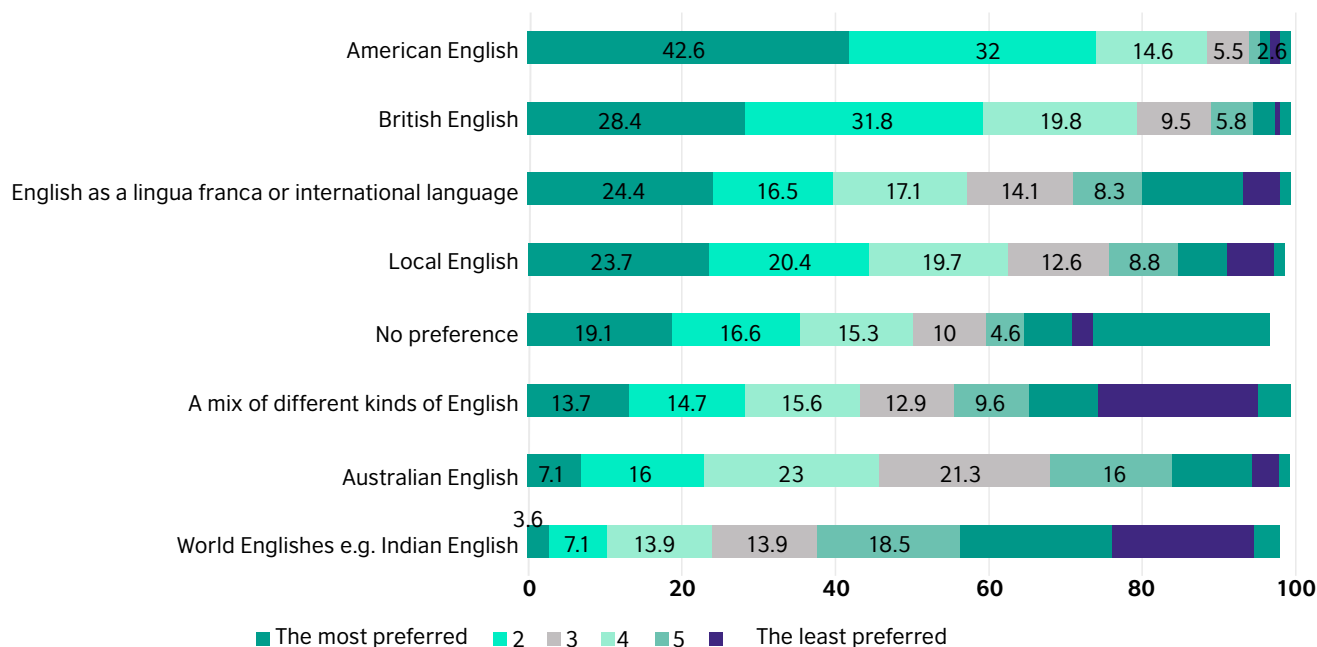**Figure 5 English motivation factors (1 = strongly agree – 5 = strongly disagree)**

English motivation rankings %

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Figure 6 Who is a good English teacher? (1 = highest ranked – 4 = lowest ranked)

Who is a good English teacher? rankings %

Category	Most important	2	3	Least important
Any teacher with knowledge and experience in the use and teaching of English	38	31.8	19.3	9.2
Any teacher with an excellent teaching methodology	36.1	28.8	16.1	17.3
A local teacher with a good level of proficiency in the language	29.4	31.9	24	12.7
Native speaker	29.3	25.1	20.2	23.6

Legend: ■ Most important ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ Least important

Figure 7 Usefulness/importance of different varieties of English (1= most important – 7 = least important)

English usefulness/importance rankings %

Category	The most important	2	3	4	5
American English	39.9	32.8	16.1	6.32	
English as a lingua franca or international language	34.7	16.6	14.4	10.8	7.6
British English	23.6	32.5	21.5	11.8	5.4
Local English (English spoken in my country)	22.4	20.3	18	12.5	8.6
No preference	19.8	15.1	16.4	11.1	4.9
A mix of different kinds of English	15.1	15.1	15.1	15.1	15.1
Australian English	7.2	13.5	22.9	23.7	16.7
World Englishes e.g. Indian English	4.6	8.7	14.3	13.9	17.2

Legend: ■ The most important ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ Not important

* Only % figures of the top five responses are given for clarity

Figure 8 Like/favour of different varieties of English (1= most liked – 7 = least liked)

	The most preferred	2	3	4	5	The least preferred
American English	42.6	32	14.6	5.5	2.6	
British English	28.4	31.8	19.8	9.5	5.8	
English as a lingua franca or international language	24.4	16.5	17.1	14.1	8.3	
Local English	23.7	20.4	19.7	12.6	8.8	
No preference	19.1	16.6	15.3	10	4.6	
A mix of different kinds of English	13.7	14.7	15.6	12.9	9.6	
Australian English	7.1	16	23	21.3	16	
World Englishes e.g. Indian English	3.6	7.1	13.9	13.9	18.5	

* Only % figures of the top five responses are given for clarity

Figure 9 If you have a conversation in English with speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, which of these items help you to understand each other?
(Likert scale 1 = strongly agree – 5 = strongly disagree)

Intercultural communication rankings %

	The most important	2	3	4	5	Not important
Knowing about the way other English speakers use English, whether they are native or non-native speakers	43.3	27	14.4	7.1	4.7	3.5
Knowing about the way native English speakers use English (e.g. their accent, grammar and vocabulary)	34.3	27	14.1	12.9	6.9	4.9
Knowing about the cultural norms of the speaker you are communicating with, regardless of where they are from	25.2	31.3	19.5	11.9	7.8	4.3
Knowing about intercultural communication (communication between people from different cultures)	24.4	23.2	14.1	8.9	8.7	20.6
Knowing about the relationship between language and culture	20.2	22.7	16.3	9.4	17.8	13.5
Knowing about the cultural norms of native English-speaking countries	18.5	23.3	21.4	16	12.2	8.5

RQ2 ELT/English and empowerment, marginalisation and gender in higher education

All of the different factors addressed in this question have an influence in various ways on students' experiences of education and English. Nonetheless, as previously stated, socioeconomic background and ethnicity appear particularly influential in responses and so, alongside gender (sub-question b), these are the focus of this section.

In relation to **gender**, many of the questionnaire responses were similar across gender categorisations but there were some notable differences at statistically significant levels (p= <0.05). In keeping with general trends in HE, there were higher proportions of male students in natural and applied sciences and more female students in Arts and Humanities and especially English subjects (Figure 10). Female students studied English longer (approximately ten years vs 8.5 for male) and studied more frequently (seven hours per week vs five hours for male). Significant differences appeared between self-rating of English proficiency with female students slightly higher, but the actual mean ratings were very close at 2.24 vs 2.35. In contrast, a higher percentage of male students were more confident in their English proficiency being adequate for study (Figure 11). A higher percentage of female students think other languages beyond English are important to learn and female students are more likely to be attending other language classes (Figure 12).

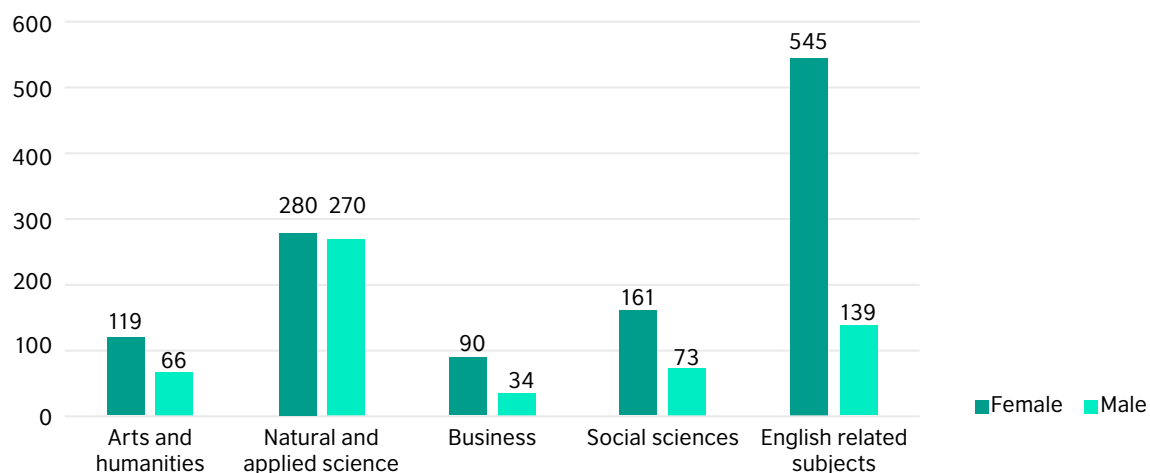**Figure 10 Academic discipline of programme and gender/biological sex**

Figure 11 Perceptions of proficiency and gender/biological sex

Do you think your English proficiency is adequate for your study?
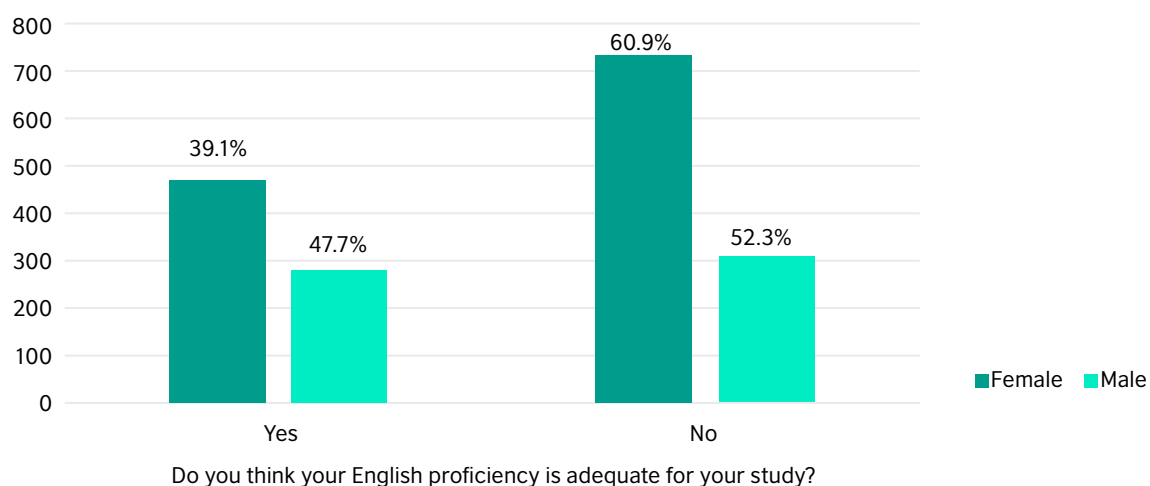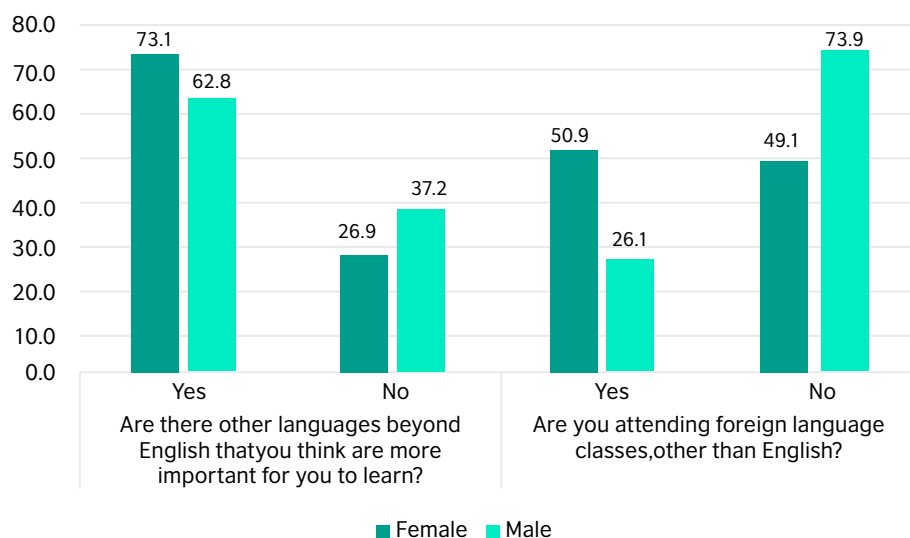
Figure 12 Other language learning and gender/biological sex

As regards socioeconomic status, most participants are from families of working-class occupations and/or lower income bands (72 per cent). There were important differences in experiences with English all at statistically significant levels. Lower socioeconomic status participants are more likely to be from a minority ethnic group and educated in a rural setting. These students are less likely to have had private English tuition, preparatory classes before university, to have used English outside of school, or to have travelled abroad. Lower socioeconomic groups have studied English for fewer years (9.4 vs 10.4) and hours a week (5.5 vs 9.2) and rate their English lower (2.34 vs 2.13). Lower socioeconomic participants are less satisfied with their current level of English (Figure 13) and less likely to think their English was adequate for study (Figure 14). Lower socioeconomic students are less likely to need English for their content subjects. Despite the unequal access, both low and high socioeconomic groups have similarly positive responses to the importance of English (between 98–99 per cent) and of learning other languages. However, lower socioeconomic students are less likely to be attending other language classes.
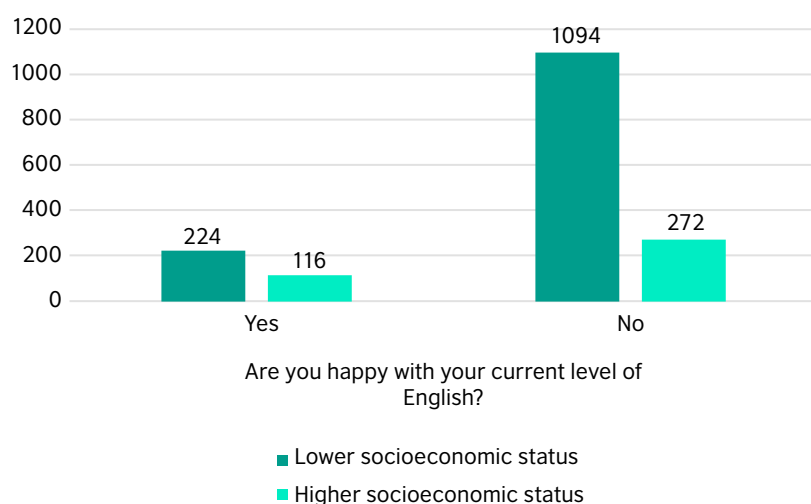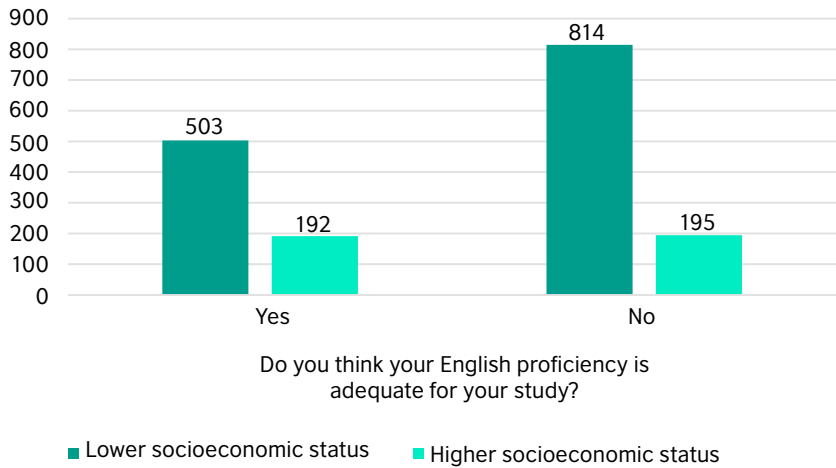
Figure 13 Level of satisfaction with current level of English

Figure 14 How adequate was English level for participants' programme?

Do you think your English proficiency is adequate for your study?

- Lower socioeconomic status
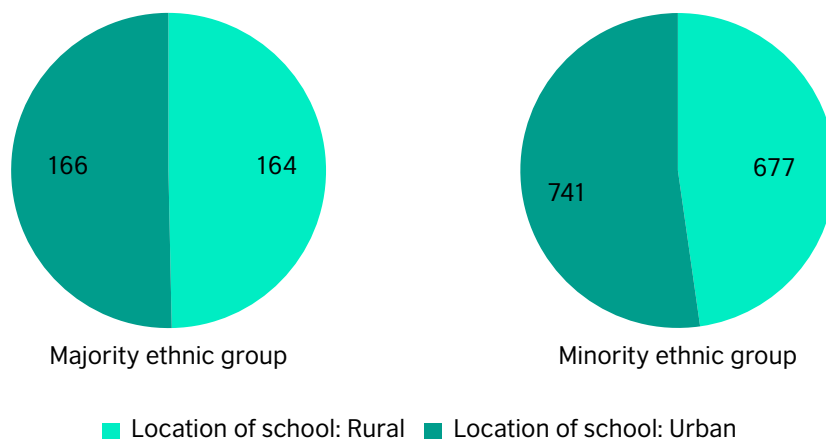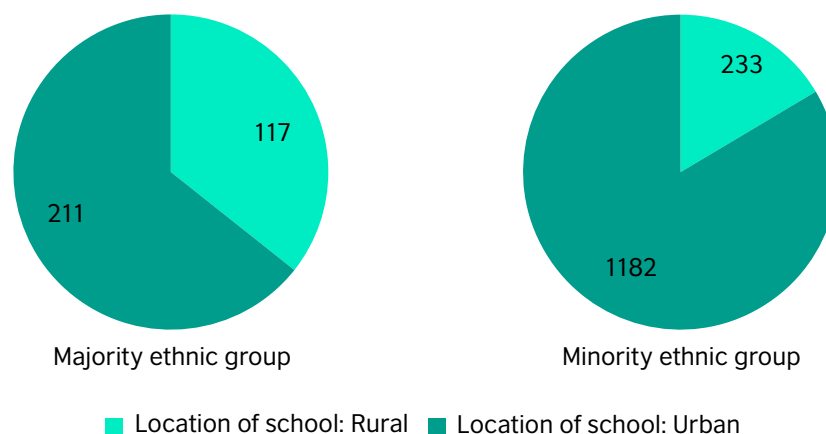- Higher socioeconomic status

For **ethnicity**, differences between majority and minority ethnic groups have a large influence on many of the factors reported in the questionnaire, again, all at statistically significant levels. Ethnicity also intersects with other factors with more minority students having lower socioeconomic status (Figure 15), coming from rural settings (Figure 16), and speaking a minority language (Figure 17). Minority students have fewer years learning English (6.2 vs 10.2) and fewer hours per week (2.9 vs. 7.1). Minority students are less likely to have had private English lessons, preparatory classes before university, to have used English outside school, or to travel abroad. Minority students are less likely to have applied for scholarships involving English, less likely to have had opportunities outside education because of English, and more likely to feel they have

missed opportunities because of English. Minority students are less happy with their English level, and less likely to feel English is adequate for study; although minority students actually rated their proficiency slightly higher (2.1 vs 2.3, with 1 highest). There were similar ratings for currently taking English classes but minority students are less likely to use English outside of class, and to be attending other language classes, despite similar ratings for importance of other languages. Nonetheless, in terms of motivations for English study (Figure 5) minority students consistently rated all the items more positively. Further discussion of how these identity dimensions emerged as influential will be developed in the qualitative case study presentation sections.

Figure 15 Ethnicity and socioeconomic status

Majority or minority ethnic group

- Lower socioeconomic status
- Higher socioeconomic status

Figure 16 Urban/Rural schooling and ethnicity

Majority ethnic group · Minority ethnic group

■ Location of school: Rural   ■ Location of school: Urban

Figure 17 Ethnicity and first language use

Majority ethnic group · Minority ethnic group

■ Location of school: Rural   ■ Location of school: Urban

RQ3 Global citizenship and English language education

The responses to global citizenship were quite mixed, while the majority of students were either unsure or had not heard of global citizenship (26 per cent each), nearly half of the students (46 per cent) had heard of it (Figure 18). Similarly, the majority of students considered themselves a global citizen, sometimes, often or always, but a sizable minority did not (43.5 per cent, Figure 19). There were some statistically significant differences between groups. Minority ethnic groups and lower socioeconomic groups were less likely to have heard of global citizenship. In keeping with this, higher

socioeconomic status participants are more likely to rate themselves as global citizens. Female students have a higher score for considering themselves global citizens but the actual average ratings were similar – 3.4 vs 3.6. Rural students were also slightly more orientated towards regarding themselves as global citizens but the actual ratings were again quite close – urban 3.6, rural 3.2. There were similar positive mean scores for all elements of global citizenship with a rating of around 2 (Figure 20). Most participants (60 per cent) reported 'global issues' as part of English classes content (Figure 21) and that English classes had impacted the way they related to others 72.5 per cent (Figure 22).

Figure 18 **Have you heard of the term intercultural or global citizen? %**
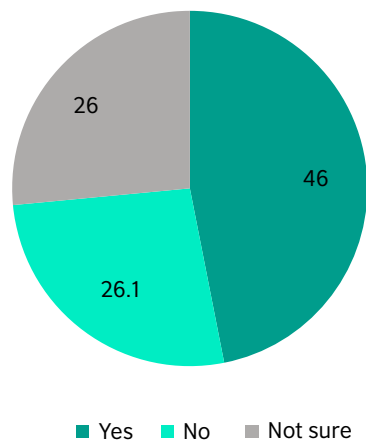

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Figure 19 **Do you consider yourself an intercultural or global citizen? %**

- Always
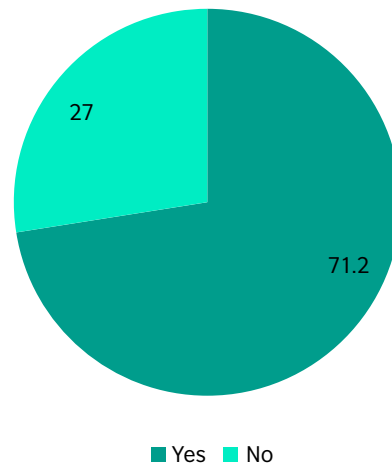- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- Don't know
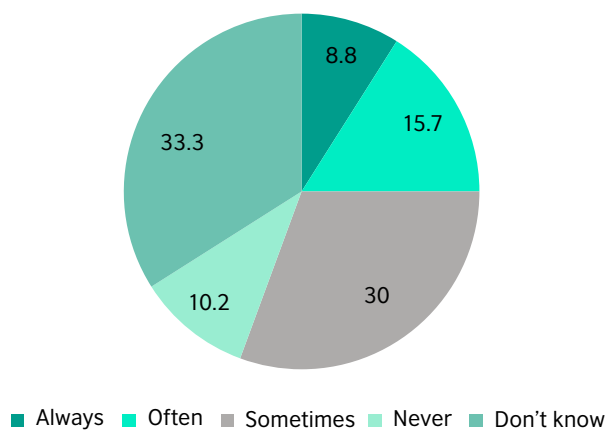
Figure 20 Elements of global citizenship

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree
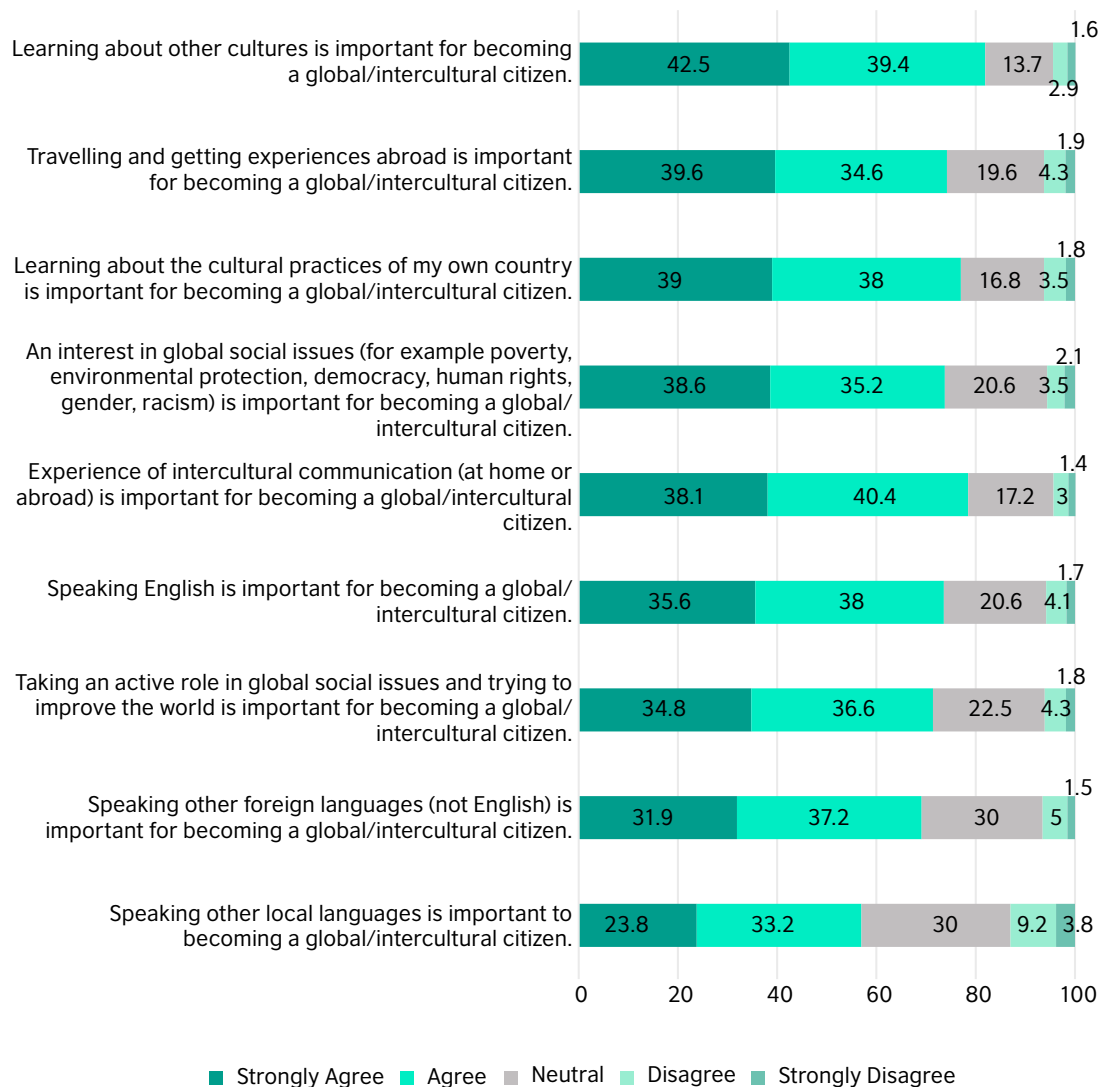
Figure 21 Do your English classes include content and/or discussions about global issues? %

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No
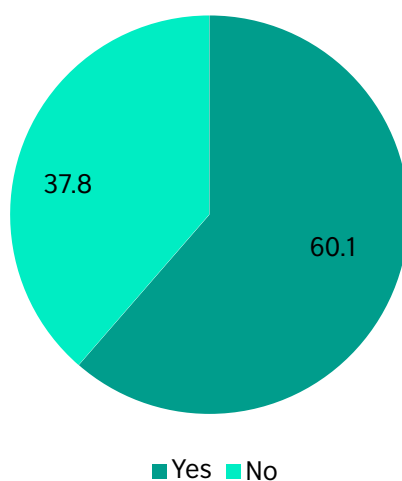
Figure 22 Have your English classes impacted the way you relate to others? %

27

71.2

■ Yes ■ No

Conclusion

For almost all students, regardless of subject of study, English has been part of their education and for many was a necessary requirement for university entry and/or exit. Almost all students are still undertaking English language classes and many also need it for their content subjects; almost all felt it was an important subject. Despite this extensive English education, most students are unhappy with their level of English and feel it is inadequate for their studies. While there are a range of motivations and attitudes as regards English and ELT, there is still a significant orientation towards Anglophone Englishes in terms of varieties. Although all the factors investigated have an influence on students' experiences of English, socioeconomic status and ethnicity emerge as particularly salient from questionnaire data. Students from lower socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities report having less access to English education before university, being less satisfied with their proficiency, and using English less during their time at university, despite similar, or greater, levels of interest and motivation. Although gender was less significant in experiences with English, there were some important differences around subjects studied, with female students more focused on Arts and Humanities and especially languages. Female students spent more time studying English and other languages and rated their English proficiency higher than male students but were less confident that their level was adequate for their studies. There were mixed findings as regards global citizenship with large numbers of students identifying with it but also large numbers who were more unsure about the idea. Global citizenship issues were covered in ELT classes to some extent and, importantly, the majority of students felt English classes had impacted their self-other relationships. Nonetheless, within these broad trends there was quite a lot of variety by research site which the following case studies illustrate.

4.2 Case studies

4.2.a Southwestern University in Colombia[2]

Introduction

Colombia is the third- most populous country in Latin America, with over 50 million people. The population is ethnically diverse, with mestizo (mixed European and Indigenous), Afro-Colombian, Rom and Indigenous peoples. Spanish is the official language but there are more than 60 Indigenous languages spoken across 115 pueblos (DANE, 2020) and two Creoles, in addition to Colombian Sign and Rom languages. The Political Constitution recognises the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country, and introduced legislation to protect the languages of minoritised groups. Furthermore, the state has made great efforts to align with global trends concerning the compulsory inclusion of English in different educational levels. Since 2004, the Ministry of Education (MEN) has developed bilingual policies such as the National Program of Bilingualism 2004–2019, which overall has contributed to improving English language teaching. Nevertheless, at many levels the policies have failed to fulfil their promise of education quality and equity for all (Miranda, 2020; Usma Wilches, 2015). In HE, English is the preferred language with most universities requiring students to take English language courses. In addition, the national standardised exit test for university students, Saber Pro, contains a section to evaluate English skills. The National Council of Higher Education, the agency that supports the MEN with planning, advice and coordination for HE, advised that a B1 level be set as a requirement for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

In the case of Southwestern University, English contributes to the multilingual and multicultural palette of the campus. It is a state-funded university with 11 campuses across the region, and is one of the largest public universities in the country with more than 33,000 students and an academic offer of 399 programmes. Since 2014, the university has issued several language policies mostly linked to internationalisation, which aims for greater participation in international mobility and academic exchange. These initiatives include the Institutional Program for the Promotion, Education and Bilingual Development, as a strategy to improve the competitiveness of teachers, employees and students. At the curricular level, the School of Language Sciences, through the programme Languages for General and Academic Purposes, oversees the provision of foreign language courses to more than 3,000 students across the university. The programme offers four courses for all majors and two additional elective courses on advanced academic reading, writing and oral skills, but each academic programme decides autonomously the number of courses their students will take. The university has also established a B1 level in a foreign language as the graduation requirement for all programmes. While English remains central, other foreign and Indigenous languages claim recognition. This has resulted in the creation of a Multilingual Policy, which is currently under review.

Methods and participants

The participants were 569 members from the academic community. The interviews included nine students (four males and five females), nine English teachers (five males and four females) and eight administrators (six males and two females). Fifteen observations were conducted in five classes for a total of 30 hours. The respondents of the survey consisted of 552 students including 265 females (48 per cent) and 287 males (52 per cent), with ages

ranging between 16 and 20. Most students belonged to the majority ethnic group (mestizos, n= 424; 76.8 per cent), mostly coming from urban areas (n= 481; 85.3 per cent) and belonging to working class families (n= 521; 94.5 per cent). The dominant language is Spanish (99.6 per cent) while only two participants (0.4 per cent) spoke an Indigenous language (Table 2). To present a broader picture of the context, the study aimed to balance gender

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2.   Pseudonyms are used for all sites for ethical reasons.

participation as well as representation of teachers from diverse teaching experience. Interviews and observations were conducted with teachers from

the first four English courses of the curriculum. Interviews with administrators included programme directors from the largest faculties of the university.

Table 2 **Demographic data of survey participants**

Category	Frequency	%
Gender/Biological sex		
Female	265	48
Male	287	52
Others	NA	NA
Majority or minority ethnic group		
Majority ethnic group (mestizos)	424	76.8
Minority ethnic group (Indigenous, Afrocolombian)	116	21
Don't know/none	12	2.2
Language		
Majority L1	550	99.6
Minority L1	2	0.4
Socioeconomic status		
Lower income bands– working class jobs	521	94.5
Higher income bands– middle class jobs	28	5
Don't know/none	3	0.5
School location		
Urban	471	85.3
Rural	81	14.7

Findings

RQ1 Roles of English and other languages in policy, practice and de/colonialisation in HE

Most participants assign an instrumentalist role to English, considering it a valuable commodity that yields benefits directly through language learning. One teacher succinctly expressed in one of his lessons:

> *English is like money: the more, the better*

English is perceived as an instrument that opens the doors for different gains in relation to education, career development and social life. Nevertheless, some participants transcend this instrumentalist

view and highlight that learning English can lead to self-recognition and openness.

> *English is a window to the world … it is a powerful tool to see oneself from another perspective*

American English is the most used and preferred variety, possibly because of media consumption coming from the United States, as one teacher mentioned.

> *… we're living in a pretty Americanised world … most of the TV series we watch, movies or comics … all those cultural things … come … from … the United States*

The American accent was not the only aspect identified in the data. Translanguaging also appeared as a common practice. Students use translanguaging due to limited communicative resources, while teachers employ it as a pedagogical tool to clarify concepts or instructions. Finally, even though English is ideologically seen as a lingua franca for international communication, the data does not indicate the incorporation of its principles in teaching.

Both the instrumental role granted to English and the preference of the American variety are signs of colonial traces in ELT in Southwestern University. The desire of a life akin to the white middle and upper class living in the Global North, allegedly attained through English proficiency, indexes a hierarchy between cultural groups. This hierarchy not only places Anglophone English above other varieties of English but also positions it as superior to other languages.

RQ2 ELT/English and empowerment, marginalisation and gender in higher education

For participants, ELT and English represent sources of empowerment, facilitating the acquisition of material and symbolic resources for socioeconomic advancement and societal development. For them, English opens up a myriad of possibilities of access to economic and cultural benefits. Nonetheless, English can also become a roadblock to achieving their professional and personal goals, resulting in feelings of disempowerment. For many students, the English course requirement, or the need to demonstrate level B1 through an exam to opt out of the courses becomes a block to their graduation. Standardised tests also become gatekeepers for accessing graduate studies or scholarships.

> *This happens a lot, because, for example, in the ICFES tests we all do very bad in English, but I wouldn't know why ... It is a barrier for us because we lose a lot of points because of English. We don't have access to the public university.* (Indigenous, rural, public school student)

Regarding who is positioned as marginalised, the data shows that Indigenous students who come from rural areas normally face more challenges in English classes, leading to lower perceived competency compared to mestizos. Furthermore, students who attended public schools, even in urban areas, feel at a disadvantage compared to their peers from private schools who usually have greater access to

resources. These results indicate that additional social, material and geographical factors mediate language-related processes of dis/empowerment, marginalisation and mobility as explained by an administrator.

> *... there are people who have been excluded ... there are students who have come from good schools ... they have come from bilingual schools ,.. [and] when scholarships are offered, they get it first, right? Or an exchange programme, so they win it relatively easily ... other students have not had it so easy, it costs them more, others are excluded.*

Thus, students' opportunities benefiting from English are mediated by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational background and rural or urban provenance. For example, concerning educational background, 29.9 per cent (n= 165) of the participants who graduated from public schools report that they have missed an opportunity or been excluded from a group due to their English level.

Two factors that did not appear as significant in the data were sex and gender. While some students indicate that English classes have made them more aware of issues of gender and equity, administrators and teachers do not conceive of gender as a mediating factor in ELT processes.

RQ3 Global citizenship and English language education

Although most participants do not have a clear idea of the meaning of global citizenship, especially students, some of its elements are integrated into English classes, mainly through discussions about social issues of global concern. These include environmental problems, poverty, democracy, human rights, economic crises, racism and global conflicts, among others. The link between local issues and their global impact is frequently left implicit, although occasionally it is made explicit. This is evident in certain materials available on the university's virtual learning platform, which are intended to enhance academic reading skills. *If there is hope in Colombia, then there can be hope everywhere* reads the title of a text about the Colombian Peace Agreement addressing an issue of particular interest for Colombians, but at the same time making connections with the outer world.

Cultural diversities are mainly perceived through ethnic affiliation and urban-rural distinctions. Administrators, teachers and students alike

commented on the disadvantaged position of Indigenous students coming from rural territories as compared with their urban mestizo counterparts. Other diversities including religion or gender do not seem to be in the scope of English language teaching. Regarding teaching, cross-cultural comparisons are common in English classes. Employment and work, educational systems and practices, immigration and discrimination, and geography, for instance, are often compared across nations, mainly with Anglophone countries but sometimes with non-English-speaking ones, like Croatia. Additionally, aspects of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, pronunciation and punctuation are compared across English, Spanish and, occasionally, other languages. One of the teachers presents this information to his students.

> *Here we have departments, in other countries they are called provinces, in other countries they could be counties, for example, in Great Britain.*

The skills-integrated approach of the official language curriculum, which fosters communicative, academic and intercultural competences, influences teachers' decisions to incorporate intercultural topics and activities in class.

RQ4 Decolonial ELT practices

Although classroom observations and interviews with teachers did not evidence any explicit alignment with decolonial thinking, choices at the pedagogical and policy level contribute to decolonising English in ELT. At the pedagogical level, translanguaging is common practice between students and teachers.

> *Atrás, es una casa, es un parque, una avenida ¿Qué es? ¿Qué es lo que hay behind the bakery? What is there beside the bakery? On the left and on the right? [signalling left and right with the hand] ¿Qué significa eso?* (Class observation)

Translation

> *Behind, it's a house, it's a park, an avenue. What is it? What is behind the bakery? What is there beside the bakery? On the left and on the right [signalling left and right with the hand]. What does that mean?*

Additionally, instead of adopting a language coursebook, teachers design their own materials and in this way they challenge the practice of relying on foreign coursebooks to guide the English language curriculum. Teachers who develop their own didactic materials have greater flexibility in deciding about the content and the type of activities that are incorporated in English classes. This enables the inclusion of sensitive local issues, history and the role of prominent figures of the country. Creating didactic materials for ELT at Southwestern University facilitates situated learning experiences for undergraduates.

At the policy level, the university intends to decentre the dominant role of English by promoting multilingualism. Undoubtedly, English classes rank first in student enrolment, however, the university also offers courses in other foreign languages (e.g., French, German, Portuguese, Japanese) as well as one Indigenous language. The recent institutional Policy of Multilingualism adopts an ecological and critical intercultural view, fostering a decolonial perspective of language education. On the other hand, English teachers take actions to decentre the dominance of English by inviting their students to study the language(s) they care about and align with their interests and plans. Choosing to learn a language depends on various factors, as one of the teachers mentions.

> *… depends on where do you want to live? Where do you want to go to work? What are your interests?*

Administrators think that French, German or Portuguese will facilitate the study of philosophy and psychology, while students like Japanese or Korean for leisure and entertainment.

Conclusion

English plays a dominating role in HE and other educational levels in Colombia. This trend is reflected in the presence of English in the curriculum of Southwestern University and the circulation of knowledge and cultural practices linked to countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The participants in the study view English as a source of empowerment which, seen as a valuable commodity, opens doors to education, career development, social life and self-recognition. However, the opportunities to benefit from English are mediated by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational background and rural or urban provenance which together create unequal conditions for access to English and resources. Despite Southwestern University's strategies to assist struggling students, many still find catching up with English overwhelming, which often leads to feelings of disempowerment. A growing recognition of the diverse cultures and languages present within the university is leading to the development of a more inclusive language policy. This policy acknowledges the interconnectivity between local and global perspectives and emphasises the importance of adopting an ecological and critical intercultural approach to language education.

4.2.b Intercultural University in Mexico

Introduction

Intercultural Universities (IUs) were founded with the purpose of providing quality education to marginalised Indigenous communities that had been historically excluded from HE. Both international (for example, OCDE) and national (for example, ANUIES[3]) organisations have set a path for English to become a language to be taught and learned across Mexico, both in urban and rural regions, including IUs. The IUs seek to develop professional skills in rural and afro-descendant communities whilst revitalising local knowledges, languages, cultures and science. The IUs aim to connect their professionals in global and competitive workplaces and balance the preservation of the minoritised ethnic language and culture with the promotion of 'foreign' languages such as English. Although English plays an important role as a lingua franca in the tourism sector, for example, which supports regional economies, the extent to which staff and students orient to and experience English as a complementary tool for empowerment or as another colonial language that serves to disenfranchise them, remains to be explored. This report provides an account of the Mexican site regarding its (de)colonial practices and some issues of gender, access and empowerment in English teaching and learning.

The main contrasts of Mexico are sketched by the country's division into three large areas – the northern, the central and the southern areas. One issue is the existence of the mixed population which includes numerous minoritised ethnic groups who have been struggling over time to be included in educational and political national policies, especially regarding language use and learning. Mexico is a multilingual nation. The Spanish language coexists, according to official records, with 68 identified ethnic languages spoken throughout the country from north to south, with Nahuatl, Maya and Tzeltal cited as the most spoken. The Spanish language has been the language of the Mexican educational system for almost 200 years, and it is the lingua franca for ethnic language speakers located mostly in marginal and rural areas. In 2003, ethnic languages and Spanish were declared national languages and part of the cultural heritage of the

Mexican Republic. For minority ethnic groups, Spanish is the means of communication for daily activities, and English is often out of their learning perspective, except for younger generations who can attend HE and for whom English represents a third language. The knowledge of three languages including an ethnic language, a national language and an international language to cultivate intercultural communication is a recurrent goal on the Mexican Ministry of Education official websites, with the IUs taking the lead in this respect.

Traditionally, HE in Mexico has been focused on cities and with a bias towards middle and upper social classes from state or national capitals (Rodríguez Armenta, 2023). IUs, in contrast, have a strong regional and rural orientation. They were created in response to social movements such as the Zapatista uprising in the southern state of Chiapas; the Mexican Indigenous People's Law (2003) which gives indigenous students the right to learn in their own language in all levels of formal education; the United Nations (2007) position towards the rights of Indigenous Peoples; and reforms to the General Education Law and General Law for Higher Education which aim to decolonise the tertiary system (2006–2012). Additionally, legislation in 2019 gave more power to local authorities to allow lUs to focus on local needs and goals rather than national ones.

The IU researched for this study is located at the southeast of Mexico. It has 763 students, six career coordinators, six full-time language teachers, and 11 administrative staff. It offers undergraduate programmes which share the following general characteristics:

- They follow the Competency-based Learning approach.

- Their syllabus promotes the ethnic language and culture of the local region and a foreign language: four to ten Mayan courses, two to ten English courses and two to three Spanish courses.

- There is not any type of entry exam, including languages.

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3.   The *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior* (ANUIES) is a Mexican organisation that coordinates the development of HE within 211 affiliated institutions.

- English is compulsory for students to obtain their degree, through courses that are determined by each programme academy.

- English courses are designed under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels. For example, English I and English II seek to get students to A1 while English III and English IV aim at taking learners to an A2 level, and so on.

- Data collection consists of 224 questionnaire responses by students (see Table 3), 27 interviews including language teachers (n=6), students (n=16) and administrators (n=5), ten-hour classroom audio recording and observation notes.

Table 3 Demographic data of survey participants

Category		Frequency	%
Gender/Biological sex			
Male		80	35.7
Female		144	64.3
Others		NA	NA
Majority or minority ethnic group			
Mestizo		2	0.9
Mayan		185	82.6
Nahuatl		2	0.9
Spanish		3	1.3
Don't know/None		12	5.4
First languages			
Mayan		77	34.4
Spanish		119	53.1
Mayan-Spanish		25	11.2
Socioeconomic status			
Higher income bands – middle class jobs		27	12.1
Lower income bands – working class jobs		165	73.7
None (e.g., retired people)/Didn't answer		32	14.3
School locations			
Urban	Primary	80	35.7
	Secondary	82	36.6
	Preparatory	104	46.4
	University	138	61.6
Rural	Primary	144	64.3
	Secondary	142	63.4
	Preparatory	120	53.6
	University	86	38.4

Findings

RQ1 Roles of English and other languages in policy, practice and de/colonialisation in HE

English is mandatory in most sub-systems of HE in Mexico as it is considered a crucial instrument for the international labour market. Thus, English is viewed as part of innovative education in Mexico and is promoted by ANUIES (2018) as one of its objectives towards 2030. In this regard, three administrators (Participants A1, A2 and A5) in the interviews reported that being able to speak English is important as it is the language of business, science, technology and academia; however, other languages such as ethnic languages are strongly promoted as well. For example, Participant A2 suggested that knowing English might not be enough to attain knowledge, signalling a decolonising perspective of only English language access of academic or science advances:

> *There are teachers who did have that vision of <imitating> guys you have to read in English there is the knowledge [...] </imitating> but we also had other teachers who said <imitating> NO don't just look for English look also in Portuguese and use translators </imitating> even Catalans right? in Catalan they say <imitating> the translation from Catalan to Spanish is very easy </imitating> so they also told us that there are other consultation options and that it depends a lot on the subject and also depends on the vision. But that contrast was interesting.*
> (Participant A2)

Regarding learners' perceptions about the relationship between a teacher's language and pedagogical qualities, native English speaker ideology did not seem prevalent.

> *Since he/she can explain the class, it doesn't matter whether he/she is a foreigner or not.*
> (Participant S2)

In this case, Student 2 suggests that language teaching abilities are considered more important than the linguistic nativeness features of the foreign language.

RQ2 ELT/English and empowerment, marginalisation and gender in HE

Some IU students are from nearby, often marginalised, small villages that may only have access to basic services such as sanitised water and electricity depending on their closeness to an urban or semi-urban town. Communities located high in the mountains or inner jungle, sometimes lack broadband coverage, which hinders the learners' progress to follow their online lessons, especially during the pandemic. One of the administrators expressed his/her experiences during an interview:

> *It does not matter whether learners have a mobile or a laptop if there is poor or no broadband at all in the communities.*
> (Participant A2)

In terms of gender, most students are female in the IUs; however, they are less likely to go into a professional career after HE. Socioeconomical problems, a limited economy, lack of transport access or early pregnancy are factors that hinder their studies and careers, despite some social programmes that provide scholarships to single and working mothers (Gobierno de México, 2023).

Following the view of English as a 'tool' to the economy, English courses also mean opportunities for students to access mobility programmes and work positions. Added to that, English is viewed as a means to discuss and share Indigenous cultural and human rights issues, as one of the language teachers remarked:

> *English allows us how to say it, that, to make myself known with more people and, what should I call it? Make people notice that, indeed, I do belong to an ancient civilisation from a native zone but that I have a legacy, richness that I can share and collaborate, right?*
> (Participant T1).

Students may be able to express their identity in English and, thus, challenge the reification of their ethnic culture which is often 'sold' as a tourist attraction; thus, English can also empower Indigenous students' voices.

RQ3 Global citizenship and English language education

In Mexico, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is still in development, despite the launch of some national educational policies in areas of internationalisation, interculturality and human rights (for example, Education 2030 and The General Law for HE in 2021).

> *That would be an aspiration for them to be good citizens, both locally and globally, that is what is*

sought, right? They need to have the critical thinking conscious level and, we insist them to have the local development, the endogenous development because we must face and deal with daily basis problems, right? So, yes, it is interesting; for example, now that there is the war situation (…) but they also know that in order not to reach those extreme situations, we must deal with the situations we have here, our resources management, equalities, social justice, and others, and to act locally first.
(Participant A2)

IUs have at the core of their mission and vision the invaluable contributions to knowledge from ethnic cultures, therefore, favouring projects that bring together local and western knowledge is part of their tenets to encourage sustainable development from the early stages of tertiary education.

RQ4 Decolonial ELT practices

The general perspective on teaching and research practices of Mexican lUs is that they are in themselves an educational initiative that contributes to developing decolonial practices, the elimination of socio-territorial inequalities and the abolishment of racism. However, regarding ELT, most State funded universities still set up their teaching practices based on the standards established by the CEFR, and language policy decisions are generally influenced by international reports and recommendations (e.g., World Bank, UNESCO, OECD) and lUs are no exception. Nonetheless, during the observation of the English classes in this IU, translanguaging was found to be common in the classroom through which teachers seem to reach understanding, rapport and/or empathy with their learners.

> T1: *All right, questions? ma questions? MA? (teacher using Mayan language) No? all right, very good.*

Participant T1 mentioned during an interview that the use in class of ethnic, Spanish and English languages helped 'break the ice' with those students who come from small villages, who by nature are shy to speak in class as they are used to communicating through their ethnic language or with a little Spanish. It is also observable that the language teachers are free to decide on the most appropriate class materials. This means a more contextual and decolonising action towards English textbooks (e.g., methods, series, materials, etc.) that might also represent a high expenditure for students. Therefore, some teachers use different sources to practise the language and vocabulary used in dialogues, and to explain the grammar for those interactions. Importantly, teachers rather than external textbooks provide the materials most of the time.

Conclusion

This report provides a general view of the complexity of the Mexican linguistic landscape where local voices from the southern IU represent an educational decolonising initiative, in which both English and ethnic languages play an important role for students' development. Furthermore, we believe that the data and insights obtained from this IU provide implications for all HE in Mexico and similar contexts globally. This IU offers an example of equitable HE pedagogies in which local languages, knowledge, and cultural practices are valued and the well-being of all students is taken into consideration.

4.2.c Central Vietnam University

Research context and participants

The Vietnamese university where the study was conducted is located in the central part of Vietnam. For ethical reasons, in this report the university is referred to as VU, a pseudonym. Since its establishment in the early 2000s, the university has been actively working to become one of the leading higher education institutions in the field of foreign language learning and language and culture studies in Vietnam. It provides training programmes, including pedagogy, translation, interpretation, language and culture, and tourism in different languages, including English, Chinese, French, Russian, Korean and Japanese. In addition, the university offers training programmes in International Studies, American Studies, and Vietnamese studies. The university has more than 290 staff, including 197 lecturers. At the time of data collection, it provided 11 BA, four MA and two PhD programmes with a student population of around 7,000. While different language programmes are offered at VU, English is the most popular language,

with more than 3,000 BA students pursuing two degrees: BA in English Teaching Methodology and BA in the English Language. These students mainly came from the Central and the Highland areas of Vietnam, areas which often suffer from natural disasters and have lower income and development rates than other regions in Vietnam.

According to Table 4, a total of 253 students at VU participated in the questionnaire, including 172 students from English Language and Linguistics, sixty from English Teaching Methodology, and 21 from non-English programme. Most participants were Kinh people, the main ethnic group in Vietnam, except for six students of minority ethnic groups (Bru Van Kieu, Co Tu, Ede, Ta Oi, Kadong). Additionally, interviews were conducted with four administrators, ten lecturers and 20 students, giving rise to a data set of about 25 hours. Three courses in writing, speaking and reading were also observed, creating 33 hours of classroom observation.

Table 4 **Demographics of survey participants**

Category	Frequency	%
Gender/Biological sex		
Male	47	18.6
Female	205	81
Others	1	0.4
Majority or minority ethnic group		
Kinh	247	97.6
Other	6	2.4
First languages		
Vietnamese	248	98
Others	5	2
Socioeconomic status		
Lower income bands– working class jobs	167	66
Higher income bands– middle class jobs	86	34
School locations		
Urban	102	40.3
Rural	151	59.7

Findings

RQ1 Roles of English and other languages in policy, practice and de/colonialisation in HE

The data collected from all groups of participants reveal the significant roles of English currently in Vietnam. They believed that English helps people in their future careers, in intercultural communication, in personal achievement and sense of satisfaction, and in academic performance. It is particularly interesting to see that for the participants, learning English has moved beyond the school context. Such reasons as good grades, and passing exams were mentioned, but not as much as other motivations.

> *Learning English helps me to access all kinds of information and have opportunities to look for better jobs than in other majors.* (Student)

> *I am a big fan of some foreign idols, both Korean and US-UK idols. Knowing English helps me follow my idols a lot. I can watch my idols' shows or performances without waiting for Vietnamese subtitles. And I can read my idols' updated news on Twitter.* (Student)

> *If you meet a foreigner in Vietnam, maybe they are from Germany, Italy, Austria, or Spain, even if you know their languages, the first thing you say to them will be in English. It's an intuition. English is an international language.* (Lecturer)

However, while the majority of participants acknowledged the role of English as a lingua franca, a few students still expressed their preference for British and American English varieties. Their English learning objectives included the ability to speak like a native speaker.

> *Since I started learning English, I have aimed to get the perfect American English accent. I think I have been loving this accent for long. Also, that accent can gain me some kind of privileges.* (Student)

In addition to English, many of the participants highlighted the significance of mastering their mother tongues and other foreign languages, especially Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

> *I often tell my students to learn one more foreign language if they are already good at English. Then they will have higher job opportunities compared to those knowing English only [..] In Vietnam, they can learn Chinese or Japanese. More and more investors from these countries.* (Lecturer)

RQ2 ELT/English and empowerment, marginalisation and gender in HE

For all the interview participants, English empowers its learners in achieving their life objectives. Knowing and using English means that they can earn more money, have job opportunities, exchange information, feel proud of themselves, and be looked up to by other people. However, this can also lead to the feeling of disempowerment for those who cannot get the same access to English and technology, as shown below.

> *I recognise that if you don't know English, or at least one foreign language, it's hard to survive. Even my sibling, studying pharmacy, is under English pressure. No English, no job.* (Student)

The most obvious gap in access to English education in the data can be observed between rural and urban students. The gap can be seen in aspects, such as facilities to learn English, opportunities to learn English and use English outside classes, or teachers' pedagogical competence.

> *The gap doesn't lie in the main curriculum because it's compulsory for the whole country. I think so. But extra classes, that's the point. Urban students can go to English centers and develop their skills. They can even learn with foreign teachers. But rural students, they may like learning English, but maybe there's no language centers in the whole district. So, they don't have chances to extend their knowledge, to apply what they learn. That's the fact.* (Lecturer)

> *Experienced teachers tend to transfer to the lowland areas. They only teach in the mountains for a few years and then move to the lowlands when they secure a permanent position. But new teachers often have less experience, so teaching and learning English can be very challenging.* (Student)

In addition, some participants also mentioned socioeconomic backgrounds as a mediating factor in language-related processes of disempowerment and marginalisation. In other words, those from high-income families have more opportunities to have digital tools supporting their English learning, can attend expensive classes in language centers, and receive parental support from an early age. This is not often the case for students from low-income families.

Not everyone has the means to give their kids proper access to language learning and tech stuff. I mean, look at our students, most of them come from tough backgrounds. And that makes it hard for them to get into IT and online learning. They don't have fancy computers or laptops, just basic phones, and even 3G access is limited. (Administrator)

Other factors such as sex and gender or ethnicity did not appear significantly in the data.

RQ3 Global citizenship and English language education

The administration and lecturer participants were all confident that they had introduced the concept of global citizenship in the English programme and during their English lessons. Global issues such as environmental problems, democracy, poverty, human rights, gender equality, racism, and global conflicts were often incorporated into skills lessons via a variety of activities, such as reading, debating, role playing, or discussing. Lecturers emphasised the necessity to link global issues with domestic issues, and hence underlined the responsibility of each young person in constructing the local community as well as the current interconnected world.

Global citizenship is embedded in my lessons. For example, we can talk about cultures. A lot of things about cultures. Maybe increase students' intercultural communicative competence. Or let students do some projects in subjects like public speaking. [..] I asked my students to observe our city, our daily life, and how they can make it better, make it more beautiful. They needed to be critical and practise their persuasive skills. They could inform people, they could persuade people, anything, but the projects must be practical and realistic. That's how we help them to become global citizens. They have to start from their community first, and link it to the world. (Lecturer)

One salient aspect of the data is the connection between global citizenship and foreign languages, competence, particularly English. Knowing a lingua franca was considered by many participants as possessing the first key to the world.

Certificate from an international English test is very important. When we have that certificate, it shows that we are competent to communicate

with other people, especially when English is used popularly. It is very good for a global citizen. (Student)

I prepare myself to be a global citizen by learning foreign languages, as many as possible, and I hope to be able to use it under any circumstance. Many of my friends just learn to pass the language test and graduate, but I want to learn to be able to use it. (Student)

Although the defintions of global citizenship given by the students varied, they all shared quite similar core features, such as knowledge, skills, languages, or the ability to live and work in multicultural and multilingual settings. Most students attributed their awareness of global citizenship to their English lessons, but some also refered to the internet, books, or music as sources of information for them to learn about the concept.

RQ4 Decolonial ELT practices

In the interviews, most administrators and lecturers were more in favour of developing students' intercultural communicative competence rather than focusing on achieving native-like competence. They believed that it was important to help students to be aware of different varieties of English by adapting activities in their American-English textbooks, guiding students to explore the varieties via self-learning activities, and encouraging them to step out of the 'native-speaker' bubble. Many students shared a similar viewpoint. They felt it was important to be ready for a real-life working environment upon graduation. Being taught only British or American English in class did not sound practical to them when they did not know who they were going to use English with.

I often recommend students different online channels where they get to know different English varieties, Singaporean English. (Lecturer)

The lecturers themselves are encouraged to adapt the textbooks and use supplementary materials. In our faculty, we don't provide any stated guidance that lecturers should just follow American or British English. (Administrator)

However, the lecturers also admitted that it was quite challenging to fit all the different content into weekly in-class lessons. Accordingly, the introduction of English varieties or any other attempts to decolonise English in ELT and empower

students were often in the form of homework or extra self-learning materials, uploaded on online platforms such as LMS or Google Classroom. For example, in a speaking class, students were encouraged to make videos in which they interviewed foreign visitors to the city. In another class, they were asked to listen to a wide range of TED talks, the majority of which were delivered by non-native speakers of English.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the findings reported above that the participants underlined the importance of English in the current time of globalisation, while concurrently acknowledging the roles of other languages. The participants also underlined the gap in access to English between students of rural/ urban areas and high- and low-income backgrounds, which may disempower certain groups of students if not addressed properly. Additionally, global citizenship had been incorporated into the ELT classes via different activities, and this helped to raise students' awareness of the idea. Finally, the study reveals several pedagogical orientations and practices in decolonising English in ELT and empowering students.

4.2.d Southern Thai University

Research context and participants

The site is in a multicultural and multilingual southern subregion of Thailand. The subregion is home to a predominantly Muslim population, speaking Pattani-Malay as a native language, in contrast to Thai speakers and Buddhism in the rest of the country. Ongoing political unrest for nearly two decades has led to significant losses of life and property, socioeconomic marginalisation and educational inequality. Consequently, the subregion is perceived as a dangerous zone and is isolated from resources and logistics. Regarding ELT policy, ELT in Thailand relies on EFL-oriented pedagogies, which may not be effective when English is used as a lingua franca (ELF) (Assalihee and Boonsuk, 2022). Gender disparities persist in the education system, especially in the southern border provinces where cultural norms limit women's roles (Buranajaroenkij, 2019). Despite an increasing number of women attending universities, men continue to dominate leadership roles in the education sector. However, the research site promotes equality and inclusiveness by implementing policies supporting LGBT students (Baker et al., 2022), who may face challenges in Deep South Muslim communities (Boonsuk and Fang, 2021).

The research site has a student population of 8,000 (1,989 males and 6,011 females), primarily Thai nationals (approximately 7,900 students) with around 100 foreign nationals. According to Table 5, most participants were Siamese Muslim females who spoke Pattani-Malay as their first language and were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with high school education in rural areas. The study involved 450 questionnaire respondents, including 215 from English programmes, 201 from non-English programmes, and 34 from an international programme. Additionally, 30 individuals were interviewed for 31.07 hours in total, including fifteen students, nine teachers, and six administrators. Fifteen classes across three courses were observed in English programmes, non-English programmes, and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) programmes for 42.21 hours in total.

Table 5 **Demographic data of survey participants**

Category	Frequency	%
Gender/Biological sex		
Male	73	16.22
Female	335	74.44
Others	42	9.33
Majority or minority ethnic group		
Siamese ethnicity	432	96
Melayu ethnicity	18	4
Religions		
Islam	387	86
Buddhism	63	14
Socioeconomic status		
Lower income bands– working class jobs	405	90
Higher income bands– middle class jobs	45	10
School locations		
Urban	102	22.66
Rural	348	77.33

Findings

RQ1 Roles of English and other languages in policy, practice and de/colonialisation in HE

The interviews reveal that English is used as a primary criterion for entrance and graduation exams for all disciplines. The university mandates all students must have a qualifying English language test score to graduate such as TOEFL or locally developed tests. The student participants emphasise the importance of English proficiency for career advancement and job opportunities. Extract 1 illustrates that knowledge of English can be advantageous for individuals aspiring to advance their careers worldwide. Some stress the significance of English in accessing global knowledge and resources.

> (Student 5) *I have a goal to improve my English because I believe it will help me excel in my career…. I see it as a great opportunity and gateway to more opportunities after graduation.*

> (Student 3) *Yes, so it makes me feel if we know English, we can research everything more than people who don't know English. When I followed news, it usually came in English … Therefore, I think English can help us better understand the world today.*

After English, the participants highlighted the significance of other foreign languages, particularly Malay and Arabic.

> (Student 2) *If, if, if, from a Muslim view, Arabic is necessary to learn because it is the language the Prophet used. Allah descended the Quran in the language. Also, Malay because … the closest people are in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei, and the three use Malay.*

Additionally, the participants frequently used translanguaging, combining Thai, English, Malay and Arabic in academic and non-academic environments.

> (Student 2) *… Sometimes, I was with Thai friends, and spoke Thai with no English. Now, I was with foreign friends and had some use of English. But, it was rather mixed with Arabic.*

RQ2 ELT/English and empowerment, marginalisation and gender in HE

Student 2 believes that learners' gender, ethnicity and social background do not influence English learning ability, which implies that these factors do not inherently affect language proficiency.

(Student 2) *From my perspective, I do not think gender or ethnicity should be obstacles to learning English. Because it is like, I personally live in an area where English is not widely used, but I am still dedicated to learning it. So, I do not believe that it is an obstacle.*

According to one participant, there is a positive relationship between LGBT identities and English learning. Specifically, interview data suggests LGBT individuals tend to have better access to and enjoyment of the English language than cisgender individuals. However, there is still no concrete evidence to support this claim and the anecdotal link between LGBT identities and language proficiency might be seen as another form of stereotyping.

(Teacher 1) ... *I have met different LGBT groups. They stand out as highly skilled in English with remarkable confidence. They can express their identity through English.*

The data also shows that rural students struggle to compete with their urban counterparts due to differing educational backgrounds, mainly because of the limited focus on English language learning in rural areas, hence hindering proficiency and lowering language utilisation opportunities.

(Student 1) *When I step outside my community, such as in the university environment, there are more opportunities to practise English. But within our rural community, spaces to use English are limited.*

The participants from high socioeconomic families have more opportunities for special classes or education abroad, creating inequality and marginalisation.

(Student 5) *I think it's a barrier for grassroots people to access English learning resources, unlike those with financial capacity. They can afford special courses or travelling abroad. This is the difference in opportunity.*

RQ3 Global citizenship and English language education

Most Thai ELT stakeholders still lack a comprehensive grasp of global/intercultural citizenship, indicating that they had not heard of the terms before. However, some participants could provide definitions. They believed global citizenship meant recognising coexistence with other languages and cultures.

(Student 2) *I think global citizen is a group we can connect. All can connect, regardless of language we speak or ethnicity, assuming we agree on the same thing? We can connect and create a community not limited by ethnicity for developing what we mutually agree.*

The participants agreed that global/intercultural citizens must have an awareness of world issues, global news, politics, equality, inequality, ethnicity and cultural diversity. Furthermore, since English facilitates intercultural communication, it is significant for global/intercultural citizenship. The interview data indicated that proficiency in English was perceived as a characteristic of global/ intercultural citizenship, as it was the dominant language used for global communication.

(Teacher 3) ... *Thai is for Thais in 77 provinces, but English is needed to communicate globally. We are all global citizens.*

The data also reveals limited implementation of global/intercultural citizenship in ELT due to its novelty and lack of understanding. However, some staff and students did have experiences of the intercultural/global citizenship concept in university courses, including conducting learning activities such as projects linking local, national and global issues, as well as study abroad experiences.

(Administrator 2) ... *activities and content in the course as well as projects using to link to local, state, regional and global problems. I let students explain their small problem and how it fits the wider context. How did others deal with similar problems, and what tools are available.*

Student5: *Since joining an exchange programme ... I felt that, interacting with foreigners, I have absorbed a sense of global citizenship. It has become how I think or express ideas.*

RQ4 Decolonial ELT practices

Most participants agreed teaching English should reconsider the aim of enabling native-like usage to more emphasis on intelligibility and comprehensibility.

(Teacher 3) ... *Effective English teaching is not about getting learners to use the language like a native speaker. It's more about using the language with a partner and understanding each other. It's not necessary to strive for perfect grammar all the time. This mindset is wrong.*

Similarly, the participants emphasised the need for exposure to diverse English varieties through immersive experiences and locally relevant cultural content rather than strict native-speaker norms.

(Teacher 2) Personally, I believe giving students the opportunity to experience different English varieties both inside and outside the classroom … It is practical and can help students understand the real use of English is more diverse than just British or American.

Additionally, the study showed recruitment practices should avoid discrimination based on nationality, appearance, or native language. The participants agreed that ELT service providers should avoid ethnic discrimination in marketing and employ less discriminatory factors such as teaching performance and qualifications.

(Teacher 3) Personally, I don't think nationality matters. Every person should have the same right to apply as an English teacher. We should not use nationality as a hiring criterion.

The classroom observations revealed that the learning environment was characterised by a positive and supportive atmosphere for multilingualism and translanguaging practices. Students felt at ease using their native languages, such as Thai and Pattani Malay through code-mixing to communicate with their teachers effectively. In this lesson observation, a teacher (T) and two students (S1 and S2) engaged in a discussion related to the market. S2 posed a question to S1 about her favourite food and drinks from the market, to which S1 responded that she favoured 'หมาล่า' (a Thai word). The teacher sought clarification on the meaning of 'หมาล่า' as he was unfamiliar with the term.

S1:   *Any question?*

S2:   *What was your favourite food or drink in the market?*

S1:   *Maybe not food but is* หมาล่า *(mala). yes*

T: *I am sorry,* หมาล่า

S1:   หมาล่า

S2:   *What is* หมาล่า?

T: *What is* หมาล่า? *I donna. What is it?*

In another example, a teacher (T) and a student (S) conversed about the student's preferred beverage. The student mentioned 'อาย กอซอง,' a term in Pattani Malay transliterated into Thai, referring to drinking water.

T: *About the drink, what do you like?*

S1:   *Drink. Ahhh,* อาย กอซอง *water*

TS: *Just water*

S1:   *Yes, water*

T: *You said you like ABC Ice.*

S1.   *……*

T: *So, ABC ice is a drink or food?*

S1:   *drink*

T: *How much is it?*

S1:   *90 baht*

Conclusion

While the participants had positive attitudes toward English as a global language, recognising its significance for academic/professional success and premier status shaping admission/graduation criteria, they also acknowledged the importance of other foreign languages like Malay and Arabic. Consequently, translanguaging frequently occurs in diverse settings. Furthermore, factors such as gender, ethnicity and background do not directly impact English proficiency. However, rural-urban educational disparities still perpetuate inequality, and efforts to promote equality and LGBT inclusivity further complicate ELT. As a result, the study advocates shifting ELT toward intelligibility and comprehensibility over native fluency, exposing students to diverse English varieties, and inclusive hiring practices. The classroom atmosphere seems promising for promoting effective language learning with multilingualism and translanguaging. Furthermore, the participants held an optimistic view that English facilitates global communication and intercultural exchange. Yet fully integrating the global/intercultural citizenship concepts into ELT curricula remains challenging with limited understanding and requires further research into effective classroom integration.

4.2.e Southern Iraqi University

Introduction

Iraq has a population of over 45 million, and its ethnic groups consist of Arab 75–80 per cent, Kurdish 15–20 per cent, and the other five per cent (which includes Turkmen, Yezidi, Shabak, Kaka'i, Bedouin, Romani, Assyrian, Circassian, Sabaean-Mandaean and Persian). Islam is the religion of the majority of the country, at 95–98 per cent. The rest is 61–64 per cent Shia, 29–34 percent Sunni and one per cent Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Assyrian Church of the East) (2015 est.). It is a federal parliamentary republic that consists of 19 governorates. Iraq was occupied by the United Kingdom during World War I and was declared a League of Nations mandate under UK administration in 1920. Before this, it was part of the Ottoman Empire. Iraq attained its independence as a kingdom in 1932. It was proclaimed a 'republic' in 1958 after a coup overthrew the monarchy. With its eight-year-long war against Iran (1980–1988) and invasion of Kuwait in 1990 along with the 2003 war by the US-led coalition forces against 'Saddam's regime', Iraq has been living through a period of socio-economic and political instability.

This, in turn, has led to a broad range of legislation to consider the role and function of languages at the tertiary level in Iraq. Compared to other local languages (Kurdish, Turkmen, Syriac and Armenian), Arabic is still defined as the first official language of the majority of the Iraqi people. As such, it comes as no surprise to have Arabic assigned the main role in the language policy at the tertiary level in Iraq. Nonetheless, in the 'Reformation/transnational' education policy, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) has decided to include English as the medium of education across disciplines at the state and non-state (private) universities. Such a policy is considered a possible avenue to demarginalise Iraq after a very long economic blockade and the US-led military coalition against Saddam's regime. Compared to other foreign languages, English has come to shape essential parts of the curricula in such settings. It is among several other subjects within the national test (baccalaureate exam) for students to access higher education. Before attending university, students study English for at least 12 years.

In the 2022 – 2023 academic year, Iraqi universities admitted 197,724 students. As for Southern University, it is a state university that includes more than 1,438 (1,039 male and 399 female) teaching staff. Regarding the student cohorts, there are 18,912 undergraduate students (8,020 male and 10,892 female), and 1,624 postgraduate students (840 male and 784 female). In response to the standards of the internal quality management system and the pressure and interest in developing its position within the international ranking system as part of the MoHESR's top-down agenda, the university embraces English as MoI to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate content courses in arts and humanities, education, physical sciences, engineering and technology, clinical and pre-clinical studies and healthcare, law, social sciences, life sciences, computer science, business and economics, and psychology. As indicated on its website, this is part and parcel of its mission to create an academic environment that meets both local and international educational standards in terms of quality, a point that stimulates and stipulates demand for enhancing academics' proficiency in English.

Methods and participants

Data collection included a quantitative phase of 346 questionnaire responses (230 female and 116 male respondents). We also conducted semi-structured interviews totaling 26 hours, consisting of seven administration staff (two females and five males), 12 teachers (eight females and four males), 16 students (nine females and seven males), and two group interviews with students. Arabic is the language of most of the interviews. We further did ten classroom observations of which 13 hours and 25 minutes were recorded and supplemented with note-taking, teaching materials, and linguistics landscape data.

Table 6 Demographic data of survey participants

Category	Frequency	%
Gender/Biological sex		
Male	230	66
Female	116	34
Others	NA	NA
Majority or minority ethnic group		
Majority ethnic group (ARABIC)	300	87
Don't know/ none	46	13
Languages spoken		
Majority L1 (Arabic)	316	91
Additional languages (English)	266	86
Others (Persian, German, French, Turkish, Japanese)	26	8
None	17	6
Socioeconomic status		
Higher	115	34
Lower	150	43
NA	81	23
School locations		
Urban	170	52
Rural	157	48

Findings

RQ1 Roles of English and other languages in policy, practice and de/colonialisation in HE

In interviews, the belief that British English in particular is preferred in comparison to other Englishes as the first immediate choice for a multitude of purposes in communication is commonly shared among most of the participating teachers across their disciplines.

The English I feel so close is 'Queen's English' or 'Oxford English' and they both are neither Northern nor Southern so they are of the centre like London accent which may be close to all local Englishes or even for international speakers of English. (A science teacher)

The teacher further added that English is the prime key for the university to be open to the world universities as documented in the following extract.

As a university, we need staff that can communicate in English with the world universities and this is a kind of getting our university closer and open to other world universities […]

Similarly, teaching in English is conceived as 'the only' language through which individuals in medicine can demonstrate their disciplinary understanding, knowledge and belonging.

in embryology all our lectures are in English pure English it is a must this is the syllabus decided by the ministry […] Arabic falls short as regards our terminologies and other disciplinary-specific content …

English is the 'most common and reliable language' for knowledge dissemination, and having access to germane and up-to-date resources through technology in higher education was the shared

belief among all interviewees (teachers and students) across their academic settings. In line with this, those who did not have access to English were disadvantaged. As a content teacher in physics explained, her lack of proficiency in English restricted her chance to have direct access to her PhD in one of the Malaysian universities.

How important the role of students' L1(s) compared to that of English was found as a tug of war for the teachers. This is to say that although teachers reported their positive stance towards the dominance of English as an academic lingua franca, they still prefer translingual pedagogies for an in-depth and more detailed content knowledge explanation and understanding as voiced by a content teacher in economics.

> there is a 'gap' between English as MoI and what you have to teach to cover all the content of the course but you may sacrifice the cognitive side of the students if you just keep English-only […] that's why you feel forced to use Arabic […]

RQ2 ELT/English and empowerment, marginalisation and gender in HE

The administration participants in the Strategic Planning, and Registry Units confirmed that both English and gender have less impact on the teacher and student recruitment in the university. For them, the standard is professionality for the teacher and the average grade of the students. However, both English and gender were highlighted as influential factors on the ground by other participants. At the managerial and administration level, gender emerged as an issue with limited space, opportunities and roles assigned to women. In a comment on whether English has ever participated in winning or losing any job opportunity, scholarship, or administration position in her university, the participant teacher in physics expressed this view.

> I still keep my regular contact with some of my [women] colleagues in Al-Kufa University and got to know that they were assigned different admin roles like Head of the Department and dean assistant and that university you know is of a conservative community compared to ours but you know I think the issue is not with the university I think here our women do not dare to speak up to voice their rights and needs

However, constraints other than proficiency in English, such as sociocultural conventions, family, lack of institutional support and self-image are also highlighted by the university ex-president:

> As the first woman to be assigned the role of the university president in Iraq, I think what we as women need is not only English but a space for self-reliance and self-trust and this must form the foundation of our family education before having it in our schools women need to feel and practise what leadership is […] so my success in such an important admin position had nothing to do with the languages I speak although that was important for me but what was more important is my family and husband support and the positive stance on the part of my staff I used to be surrounded with in a very conservative community you know

RQ3 Global citizenship and English language education

The survey data revealed mixed familiarity with global citizenship. However, the majority of responses (65 per cent) indicated wanting to become global citizens. As far as the role of foreign and/or local languages in developing individuals' global citizenship, the data showed that the majority of respondents denoted their strong agreement (84 per cent) on the importance of English in such a process. On the other hand, respondents showed their disagreement (19 per cent) regarding the positive role Iraqi local languages play in the process of developing global citizenship.

The question about whether English lessons have content or discussion on global affairs demonstrated another split with 47 per cent of the respondents agreeing that English lessons contained such discussions while 53 per cent did not. However, the majority (70 per cent) claimed to become more respectful of others' ideas due to the influence of English classes. Following the link between English and global citizenship, a female ELT teacher expressed the following:

> Global citizenship as I understand it means to be open for others […] in terms of breaking the sexual, cultural, racial, or social, or whatever else as individual or group restrictions and I think English is the tool for all that. It is unfair to think about comparing Arabic or other languages to English it is nonsense. English is the first international language.

In a comment on global citizenship and the role of ELT textbooks, another female ELT teacher shared the following:

> Definitely, ELT textbooks have nothing to do with this [global citizenship]. As I said before, the

*course that I teach does not allow them to do
that. Even the structures are traditional and
formal and related to Standard English
vocabulary, structures and the formal uses of
such stuff.*

RQ4 Decolonial ELT practices

The textual analysis of the teaching and assessment materials collected from different content disciplines supports the position and function of English as an academic lingua franca reported in the questionnaire and teacher and student interviews. The researcher also identified participants' (teachers' and students') translingual/transmodal discourses across their different content classrooms to express their disciplinary membership (Figure 23). However, observed ELT practices did not seem to reflect this. There was a stark difference between the complex nature of the linguistic and modal content across academic disciplines compared to that in ELT materials used in this context. That is, while the ELT materials were more oriented toward Anglophone and European sociolinguistic and cultural norms and habits, transmodality was the salient feature of the participants' academic discourses across their content units. This suggests that greater consideration of translingual/ transmodal academic practices is needed in supporting students in this HE setting.

Conclusion

Participants in this context showed their positive stance towards and preference for English as a lingua franca for academic and non-academic communication and knowledge gain. Further, English was not the only factor that helped to (dis-)empower individuals. Gender issues emerged as self-/ social and institutional constraints that might interweave for the participants to win or lose roles in this context. The reported belief sets evidenced a relationship between English and global citizenship and understanding. In this respect, English was perceived as the common tie for different cultures to meet and possibly challenge current gender/sex inequalities. In ELT practices, there was a concern that there was a large mismatch between participants' complex translingual/transmodal Englishes across their academic disciplines and the use of simplistic and stereotyped ELT materials.
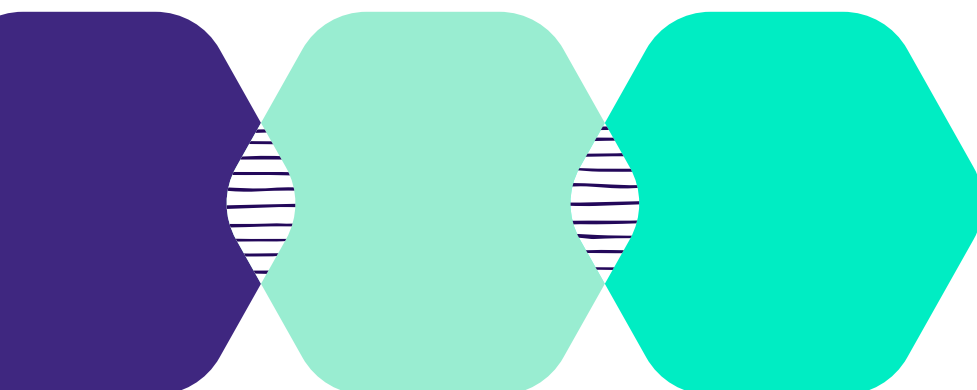
5 Discussion and implications

1. What are the roles of English and other languages in policy and practice in these settings? How do these roles relate to processes of de/colonialisation of HE?

In answer to RQ1, the importance of English was a feature of all sites and all data sets, with students having multiple years of English schooling before entering university and undertaking compulsory English courses in all institutions. Additionally, English was an entry requirement either through an individual exam or as part of general exams in all sites apart from Mexico. English had also spread into content subjects, for instance, in various sciences in Iraq, even when programmes were not officially English medium. Furthermore, participants seemed positive about this extensive role for English, consistently rating it as an important subject across all settings and groups. Motivations for wanting to study English were a mixture of symbolic (e.g., intercultural experiences and exchanges) and material (e.g., future careers and further education) across all sites and for diverse student groups. Students, teachers, and administrators reported viewing English as a vehicle to connect academically, culturally and economically with global communities and as a language that could provide future opportunities in these areas. However, these positive attitudes may be influenced by voluntary participation in this project, meaning only those students who were interested in English chose to take part. It is important to note that these positive attitudes to language learning were not confined to English. In all sites, students felt it was important to study other languages. Multilingualism was an official part of the university language policies in Mexico, Colombia, and Thailand with the national language, English, and local/ethnic languages all having a place and status. In the language university in Vietnam, another language in addition to English was compulsory for English majors.

Despite this extensive ELT experience and provision, students were frequently unhappy with their proficiency in English and many felt it was not adequate for their studies, especially among female students (as seen in the questionnaire data). This may be partly due to attitudes to English in which Anglophone Englishes, specifically the US or UK, were rated as most useful and preferred. Even in Iraq and Mexico where local uses of English were rated highest, Anglophone Englishes were still highly rated. The negative impact of native speaker English models as an unrealistic and irrelevant goal is now well documented (for example, Jenkins et al., 2018). Nonetheless, attitudes to 'nativeness' were complex. In all sites, the majority of students indicated that speaking like a native English speaker was not a priority. Qualitative data from the interviews suggested that students were aware of the global role of English and, hence, that much English use did not involve native English speakers. Moreover, nativeness was rated the least important aspect of a good English teacher at all sites with teaching methodologies, knowledge and experience consistently rated higher. This would suggest a mixed role for English in regard to decolonisation in HE with English viewed as providing opportunities to all students. However, it is not clear to what extent these opportunities empower students to challenge current aspects of globalisation that potentially disadvantage them or, in contrast, simply provides them with opportunities to better join neo-liberal processes of globalisation and individual, rather than community, gain. Furthermore, ambiguous attitudes to English still remain with some recognition of its global role and local ownership but also continued prestige attached to native English speakers and cultures.

2. To what extent does ELT and English allow or restrict access to opportunities of empowerment for different groups of students in their way to and through HE in these settings?

a. Who is (positioned as) 'marginalised' in each setting and how does this category relate to English and other languages?

It may also be that students' low confidence in English levels was related to feeling disadvantaged and 'marginalised' in previous experiences of ELT. The relationship between English, marginalisation and dis/empowerment for different groups of students, as previously discussed, was conceptualised variously among different sites and groups. For instance, distinctions between gender and sex were not always straightforward to translate (for example, into Arabic), nor was it always deemed appropriate to ask participants about such distinctions. Similarly, socioeconomic status was defined in different ways in different sites depending on a range of factors including income, family profession, and housing. Thus, the research teams had to balance avoiding imposing external categories while also trying not to uncritically reproduce existing inequalities. Nevertheless, with this caveat, many of the categories investigated proved salient. In particular, the findings indicate that low socioeconomic status, minority ethnicities and rurality appeared to be categories that most frequently occurred in teachers' and administrators' concerns about marginalisation and ELT, and, similarly, led to students regarding themselves as marginalised.

b. **Are sex and gender identities mediating factors in language-related processes of dis/empowerment, marginalisation, and mobility?**
Although gender was not strongly linked to English, issues related to gender and HE emerged. In all sites, there were more female participants in arts and humanities and fewer in natural sciences which is a concern given that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects typically lead into higher paying careers. In Iraq, participants reported frustrations about the roles open (or not) to female academics (a problem also reported in Thailand). Nonetheless, these were often related to wider societal issues and discrimination rather than English or language education. In Mexico, policies to encourage women into HE resulted in high numbers of female students; however, there were still worries that this did not necessarily lead to material or cultural gains post-education. In relation to sexuality, while there were policies to promote equality and

inclusiveness for LGBTQ students in the Thai setting, students still faced challenges in the wider community.

c. **What additional social, material, academic or geographical factors emerge as mediating factors in language-related processes of dis/empowerment, marginalisation and mobility?**
An intersection between ethnicity, socioeconomic status, rurality and opportunities emerged strongly in the survey data and was also borne out in the case studies. Students from lower socioeconomic groups (all settings), Indigenous students (Colombia and Mexico), rural areas (Colombia, Mexico and Vietnam), and public vs private school (Colombia) faced challenges in gaining experiences of using and learning English, leading to perceived lower levels of English proficiency compared to their more privileged peers. Even when survey responses suggest there were not significant differences, interviews with students, teachers and administrators told a different story. This was illustrated in Vietnam with supposedly equal ELT provision for all students before HE, but in practice rural schools not having the resources (teachers, internet access) to be able to consistently provide classes. Yet, there were also positive experiences. For instance, in Thailand, Pattani-Malay minority L1 speakers had opportunities for educational experiences in well-regarded bilingual schools and subsequent career opportunities in Malaysia. In Mexico, English was seen as a platform to the wider world for students to counter essentialist touristic images of their culture and identity. More research is needed to explain what factors enable or restrict experiences of empowerment, as there was not always evidence that perceptions of potential empowerment through English led to actual material or symbolic benefits.

3. **To what extent are the elements of global citizenship incorporated into English language education in policy and practices? How are culture(s), diversity and cohesion conceptualised, approached and experienced in these settings?**

There were mixed reactions to global citizenship and global citizenship education (GCE). In Vietnam and Thailand, the majority of students reported

familiarity with the concepts and an identification with them, although their understanding was sometimes limited. However, global citizenship was much less well-understood in Mexico and Colombia and, furthermore, students were less likely to identify with it. Yet, in all sites, elements related to GCE were present in teaching including environmental issues, social justice, economic crises and global conflicts. Crucially, links were frequently made between local and global issues. For instance, in Thailand there was an orientation towards and positive attitudes to GCE among students and administrators. Similarly, in Mexico aspects of GCE were part of national education policies and again there were positive attitudes from students. Furthermore, in all sites there was a strong link between English and global citizenship with English seen as a medium for connecting with the rest of the world. Despite this, in ELT classes there appeared to be much less focus on GCE, and a continued orientation towards Anglophone cultures rather than global issues was observed. This is perhaps not unexpected given that GCE is a relatively new approach and one that teachers may have little knowledge or experience of.

4.   What pedagogical orientations and practices are found to be successful in decolonising English in ELT and empowering students in these settings?

Alongside GCE, other teaching approaches that could potentially decolonise English were observed in ELT classrooms. Materials were a prominent area, with the rejection of Anglophone textbooks and the use of materials developed by teachers with references to local settings and students (Colombia and Mexico), or adaptation of Anglophone texts to make them more relevant (Vietnam). Tasks also involved activities outside the classroom making connections to global communities outside the 'Anglophone bubble' (Vietnam and Thailand). However, this was not always the case, for instance, in Iraq the use of Anglophone materials and textbooks still dominated despite its obvious irrelevance to students' uses of English. Even in settings where teachers reported adapting materials, it was seen as a challenge (Vietnam and Thailand) and the default approach was often Anglophone contexts and norms. Another observed feature was extensive multilingualism and translanguaging in classes. Students and teachers used a variety of languages, ethnic, national and English, in learning activities and even in assignments. The extent to which this was officially 'sanctioned' was not always clear though, and while multilingual education policies were in place in many settings, the application to ELT classrooms was not well-established. Furthermore, the overall approach to ELT and English was still Anglophone orientated in many of the observed classes with frequent references to Anglophone settings, communicative and linguistic norms even when teachers were making their own materials (for example, Colombia). This would suggest that while potentially decolonial teaching practices and perspectives were present, they were not mainstream in ELT practices.

These findings lead to a range of policy and practice implications.

6 Policy implications

- Better recognition of challenges faced by different groups of learners and the need for extra support in English classes at university. For instance, taking steps towards understanding the needs and limitations of students with lower socioeconomic means, with unreliable access to technology or internet connection, or those whose physical participation on campus may be affected by forces such as local conflict or climate disasters, would be crucial to identify strategies that help level learning conditions (e.g., provision of laptops, internet dongles, opening hours of university resource rooms for quiet independent study time).

- Consideration of entry requirements based on English assessment scores, which may discriminate against students with less access to English and ELT before university. For example, in contexts where English is not a medium of instruction for a range of degrees (e.g., history, engineering, geography), it may be irrelevant and potentially discriminatory to make their English learning record, scores or level an influential factor in the entry criteria.

- Critical re-examination of the extent to which making English courses and/or exit English

exams a compulsory criterion to graduate is relevant, necessary and fair.

- A move away from Anglophone ELT and Englishes, especially for assessment, due to their lack of relevance to students' own English use and the potentially disempowering native speaker model. Although the development of alternative approaches is complex and not free from constraints, Global Englishes and decolonial approaches could entail a move towards acknowledging language as a social and political practice that learners can reshape and appropriate to communicate semantic, pragmatic and cultural meanings relevant to them, alongside the need to prioritise meaning-negotiation across diversity and international intelligibility rather than mere native-speaker imitation, and the positive evaluation of students' diverse multilingual repertoires as a strength (see Harding and McNamara, 2018; Jenkins, 2020).

- Both national and university level policies which recognise and support multilingualism should be developed, including incorporating translanguaging practices into 'good' teaching, while also supporting the desire of many students to study English.

Implications for the ELT classroom

- Critically incorporating GCE (global citizenship education) perspectives (e.g., Byram et al., 2017; Gaudelli, 2016) into ELT content and tasks is especially relevant to ELT curricula in these settings due to the diverse range of students. The social justice perspectives of GCE are important in highlighting diversity across and within cultures, as well as issues of discrimination (symbolic and material) as regards gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class and rurality. GCE perspectives can help students and teachers contextualise these issues in wider situations and make connections with communities with similar issues in other settings. This is a potentially more relevant and empowering perspective than a focus on

Anglophone cultures and English speakers (Baker and Fang, 2019).

- The learning and use of English should be understood as translingual practice taking place in multilingual (and often unequal) settings. This means recognition of and a place for minoritised and majority national languages, as well as any other 'foreign' languages in students' repertoires, alongside English resources. A move towards more plurilingual pedagogies (Lau and Van Viegen, 2020), will benefit students and teachers by allowing them to use all their linguistic and communicative resources (Garcia and Li, 2014). As seen in this project and in other research, translanguaging is a common bottom-

up practice in classrooms and needs to be systematically incorporated into teaching (Cenoz and Gorter, 2022). These approaches should also be accompanied by critical analysis of the values assigned to different named languages and 'non-standard' uses of language (for example, Jaspers, 2018), providing spaces in classrooms for discussion and supporting this with more equitable approaches to languages in policies.

- Teachers and institutions should critically engage with the implementation of a Global Englishes perspective (Rose and Galloway, 2019). This means English is taught as a variable linguistic resource predominantly used as a multilingua franca for intercultural and transcultural communication. Global Englishes teaching would further recognise the value of flexible use of linguistic resources, communicative strategies and intercultural communication skills. Again, this provides a more relevant and potentially empowering

alternative to monolingual native English speaker norms, and adds decoloniality scope to address lingering imbalances and discriminations among speakers and uses.

- In ELT classrooms, culture should be explored from an intercultural and transcultural perspective where culture is seen as fluid and adaptable and the national scale is just one of many (Baker, 2022). Cultural content in teaching materials should include references to students' own cultures and other relevant cultural groupings. Anglophone cultures should be de-centred in the curricula and dominant discourses on culture, especially at the national scale, should be critically considered.

- To achieve the above aims, more use of locally developed and focused materials and assessment is needed as a replacement for Anglophone -centric ELT materials and assessment (Jenkins, 2020; Sifakis, 2019).

Teacher education implications

- Raising teachers' awareness of the global role of English for intercultural and transcultural communication is a core part of teacher education (Sifakis and Bayyurt, 2018). This should include awareness of the multilingual, multimodal and multicultural resources and translanguaging, transmodal and transcultural process of communicating through global Englishes (Ishikawa, 2020; Baker and Ishikawa, 2021) and other languages in their linguistic repertoire (Garcia and Li, 2014; Cenoz and Gorter, 2022). This offers a potentially more empowering perspective on English related to how teachers themselves use English, rather than a monolingual 'native English speaker' Anglophone orientation that may be very alien to teachers.

- Encouraging teachers to see the value in multilingual English teachers with local knowledge rather than the currently prestigious monolingual Anglophone 'native speaker' English teacher which still dominates ELT discourses (e.g., Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Llurda and Calvet-Terré, 2022; Selvi et al., 2023)

- Decolonial pedagogies which value teachers' local knowledge and pedagogic histories (Canagarajah, 2023) including incorporating local cultures, languages, and ways of learning and knowing.

However, it is important to point out that this is not a methodology, a single set of principles, or a fixed set of knowledge for teachers to adopt. Instead, it is better approached from post-methods and post-normative perspectives, for example:

- Given the diversity of Englishes globally, teachers should be introduced to a post-normative approach in which notions such as 'correct' language use and 'errors' are contextually decided (Dewey, 2012).

- Due to the range of teaching contexts for ELT, teachers can be encouraged to adopt a post-methods approach (or validated in their use of this if they are already doing it) by which teachers make use of an eclectic range of pedagogies best suited to their settings (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

- Combining elements of these different approaches aid teachers in taking alternative perspectives on English as a subject and developing own approaches and materials adapted to their own settings (for example, the ENRICH project http://enrichproject.eu/).

7 Conclusion

These five case studies of ELT provision for diverse student bodies in middle- and low-income HE settings show a key role for English in education. Furthermore, students reported positive attitudes towards English believing it provided them with material (careers) and symbolic (intercultural interaction and experiences) opportunities. However, despite extensive ELT provision, many students were still unhappy with their English proficiency. Moreover, many factors of potential marginalisation investigated including gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, rurality and L1 impacted students' experiences of ELT. Socioeconomic status and ethnicity emerged as particularly influential and were strongly correlated with limited opportunities for English education and use. ELT practices and policies in the studied HEIs showed elements of decolonial perspectives including recognition of multilingualism, translanguaging in classrooms, locally made and focused materials, and activities which encouraged connections to global (rather than Anglophone) communities. However, there was still a strong orientation towards Anglophone Englishes both in classroom practices and in assessment. We would recommend that HEIs develop policies that support students whose background results in English levels which may be lower than their more privileged peers. We would also recommend teaching approaches in ELT classrooms that are less focused on Anglophone English models, methodologies and materials, and pay greater attention to local multilingual and multicultural uses and needs for English.

Inspired to seek decolonial transformations in your ELT spaces? We want to hear from you!

Join a Facebook group of ELT practitioners interested in applying decolonial strategies to share ideas and discuss benefits and limitations.

You can also get in touch with us via our institutional emails at **W.Baker@soton.ac.uk** and **S.Moran-Panero@soton.ac.uk** or in **Instagram: mp_sonia**

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Example questionnaire

An English language version of the questionnaire. This was translated into the relevant L1 in each setting and some of the questions adapted to better reflect local contexts.

English Language Education Survey

Please answer all the questions. There are no right or wrong answers to this, you should answer what you think. Your answers are confidential, and you will not be identified.

Part 1. General education and language education background

Please provide short answers

1. Years at school _____

2. Locations of schools (urban or rural) _____

3. Type of school (private/public, religious/secular)? _____

4. Were any scholarships awarded or positive action programmes part of your schooling/university? Yes/No

5. Years of learning English _____

6. How many hours a week did you learn English on average?

7. Private English language tuition? Yes/ No

8. Did you have to take an English exam before beginning your university programme of study? Yes/ No

9. Did you take any preparatory English classes before beginning this university programme? Yes/ No

10. Did you use English outside of school? Yes/ No

11. Do you have experiences travelling abroad? Yes/ No

    ● If yes, which languages did you use?_____

12. Was English a compulsory language in your education? Please tick

Primary school

_____ Compulsory _____ Optional _____ Not offered/available

Secondary school

_____ Compulsory _____ Optional _____ Not offered/available

Higher Education

_____ Compulsory _____ Optional _____ Not offered/available

13. Was/Is demonstrating/achieving a particular English level a graduation requirement in your education –

- Secondary school? Yes/ No

- Higher education? Yes/ No

14. Have you ever applied or considered applying to a grant/scholarship/educational scheme where speaking English or having an English certificate was one of the key entry criteria? Yes/ No

- If yes, how many times? _____

- Were there any conditions attached to English as a requirement (e.g. a CEFR level, a certificate, a specific variety, etc.)? If so, what were they? _____

- Did you succeed in getting the grant/scholarship on any of these occasions? Yes/ No

15. Have you ever benefited or gained an opportunity beyond education because of your English? – Yes/ No?

16. Have you ever missed out on an opportunity or been excluded from a group or activity because of English? – Yes/ No?

17. Going beyond yourself as an individual, has English ever acted as a barrier for groups of people you identify with (e.g. ethnicity, gender)? Yes/ No

- If Yes, name the(se) group(s) _____

18. Going beyond yourself as an individual, has English ever acted as a tool for self-betterment/progression for groups of people you identify with (e.g. ethnicity, gender)? Yes/ No

- If Yes, name the(se) group(s) _____

Part 2. Current English use

1. How would you rate your English proficiency High, medium, or low _____?

2. Are you happy with your current level of English? Yes/ No

3. Are you currently attending English classes? Yes/ No

4. If yes, tick all that apply

    a. part of the degree

    b. outside the degree

    c. compulsory

    - optional

5. Is your English language use assessed in your exams or assignments (in content modules)? Yes/ No

6. Is English necessary for your content classes/other subjects? Yes/ No

7. Do you think your English proficiency is adequate for your study? Yes/ No

8. Do you currently use English outside of English classes (e.g. social media, gaming, with family etc…)? Yes/ No

    a. If yes, where? _____

Part 3. Perceptions of English and ELT

1.   Is studying English important for you – Yes/ No?

Please circle your response to the statements below about the importance of studying English for you, with 1 indicating strong agreement and 5 indicating strong disagreement.

I personally find studying English important because…	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. It (English) will allow me to get good grades at university.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It will allow me to pass exams.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I will need it for further study.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I will need it for my future career.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It will allow me to meet and communicate with more and varied people from many different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It will allow me to travel to many different countries and to learn about different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
8. It will allow me to meet and communicate with native speakers of English and learn about their culture.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It will allow me to share my culture with foreigners.	1	2	3	4	5
10. It will allow me to have a fun and enjoyable experience.	1	2	3	4	5
11. It will help me express who I am and how I want to be seen to others	1	2	3	4	5
12. Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of the English language.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I will feel that I have accomplished something great.	1	2	3	4	5

14. What makes a good English teacher? Rank them all in order of importance with **1 the most important**.

- a native English speaker
- a local teacher with good English proficiency
- any teacher with knowledge and experience of using and teaching English
- any teacher with excellent teaching methodology

15. Do you think there is a hierarchy of usefulness/importance among the items listed below? If so, rank them with **1 being the most useful or important**.

- Local English (English spoken in my country)
- American English
- British English
- Australian English
- Indian English
- English as a lingua franca or international language

- A mix of different kinds of English

- No preference

- Other: Explain _____

16. Do you think the following items can be ranked in terms of which you **like/favour** the most? If so rank them in order of pleasantness with **1 being your most preferred**.

- Local English

- American English

- British English

- Australian English

- Indian English

- English as a lingua franca or international language

- A mix of different kinds of English

- No preference

- Other: Explain:_____

17. If you have a conversation in English with speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, which of these items help you to understand each other? Rank them all in order of importance with **1 the most important**.

- Knowing about the way other English speakers use English, whether they are native or non-native speakers (e.g. their accent grammar and vocabulary).

- Knowing about the cultural norms of the speaker you are communicating with, regardless of where they are from.

- Knowing about the cultural norms of native English-speaking countries.

- Knowing about the way native English speakers use English (e.g. their accent, grammar and vocabulary).

- Knowing about the relationship between language and culture.

- Knowing about intercultural communication (communication between people from different cultures).

18. Are there other languages beyond English that you think are more important for you to learn ? Yes/ No

- if yes, which language(s)? _____

19. Are you attending foreign language classes, other than English? Yes/ No

- If yes, which language(s)? _____

20. Tick the following statement that best describes how you feel (choose just one in each pair)

Pair 1

- When I speak with people who understand different languages that I use, I like to mix languages (given local example here e.g. mixing English and Spanish).

- When I speak with people who understand different languages that I use, I like to use only one language (given local example here e.g. just use English or Spanish (not mix).

Pair 2

- When I am using English, I generally want to pass as a native speaker
- When I am using English, passing for a native speaker is generally not a priority for me

Part 4. Global citizenship understanding and perceptions

(Global citizenship means citizenship beyond the nation; that is involvement in communities from the local to global level)

1. Have you heard of the term *intercultural* or *global citizen*?

    _____ Yes

    _____ No

    _____ Not sure

2. Do you consider yourself an intercultural or global citizen?

    _____ Always

    _____ Often

    _____ Sometimes

    _____ Never

    _____ Don't know

3. If never or don't know, would you like to be a global/intercultural citizen?

    _____ Yes

    _____ No

    _____ Not sure

Please circle your response to the statements below with *1 indicating strong agreement and 5 indicating strong disagreement*.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. Travelling and getting experiences abroad is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Experience of intercultural communication (at home or abroad) is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Learning about other cultures is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Learning about the cultural practices of my own country is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Speaking English is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5

9. Speaking other foreign languages (not English) is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Speaking other local languages (e.g. indigeneous, Creole, etc) is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
11. An interest in global social issues (for example poverty, environmental protection, democracy, human rights, gender, racism) is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Taking an active role in global social issues and trying to improve the world is important for becoming a global/intercultural citizen.	1	2	3	4	5

13. Do your English classes include content and/or discussions about global issues? Yes/ No

a. If your answer is YES, tick the topics that are addressed in your English classes *(tick all that apply)*:

- poverty
- environment
- democracy
- human rights
- gender
- racism
- other _____

14. What sources of those listed here do you consider have helped you to become (more) aware of gender and equity *(tick all that apply)*?

- General education experiences (e.g. class discussions, learning materials (books, handouts), presentations by peers in class, teacher talks).
- English language classes
- The media (TV programs, radio, podcasts, websites, social media)
- My own personal experiences
- Family
- Friends
- None
- Other: _____

15. Have your English classes impacted the way you relate to others? Yes/ No

    If your answer is YES, in what ways *(tick all that apply)*?

    - I am more sensitive to cultural differences

    - I am more respectful of others' ideas

    - I am flexible in my communication with others

    - I do not judge others by my own values

Part 5. Demographic information

Please provide short answers

1. Age _____
2. Gender _____
3. Sex assigned at birth _____
4. Nationality _____
5. Ethnicity _____
6. Race _____
7. Area where you reside currently _____
8. Area where you come from (hometown) _____
9. Family/parents income (provide choice e.g. 10,000 or less, 10001–20000, 20001–30000 etc… Or class working, middle, upper) _____
10. Parents' occupation _____
11. Religion _____
12. Languages spoken as L1 and additional languages (may need to define L1) _____
13. Subject currently studying (major) _____

Please leave your contact details (name, email and/or phone number) if you would be willing to take part in an interview on this subject.

Appendix 2: Example interview questions

Interview questions for lectures in the Vietnamese site. These were translated into the relevant L1 in each setting and adapted for local relevance and for different groups of participants (administrators, teachers, students).

Lecturers

1. Basic introduction + information

2. How long have you been teaching English? What skills/aspects of English do you teach?

3. Why did you want to become an English teacher?

4. In your opinion, what makes a good English learner? And a good English teacher?

5. What do you think about the recruiting policy in your faculty/university? Do you think English can be an inclusive/excluding element in that policy? Why?

6. What do you think about the way the ELT programme is constructed in your faculty?

7. How useful/helpful are your English textbooks?

8. What are programme objectives for your students in terms of English proficiency and employability?

9. What is the most challenging for you in your teaching practice?

10. What is the most beneficial/rewarding for you in your teaching practice?

11. Do you have any preferences in terms of the kinds of English to be taught?

12. What kinds of English do you think your students need?

13. To what extent do you think that cultural dimensions are part of your English courses? If yes, what kind of cultural knowledge do you think should or should not be prioritized as part of the syllabus in your classes?

14. How important (do you think) is learning English for your students?

15. How much importance do you think your students assign to English?'

16. How does your ELT programme prepare students for their future after graduation?

17. For what purposes do you think your students will use English beyond the classroom/graduation, if at all?

    a. Domains, contexts and scales: professional, informal.., global/local etc.

    b. pragmatic, identificational purposes? E.g. to what extent do you think that English can be a helpful resource and/or an obstacle for students to express themselves or construct their identities? How? Or why not?

18. How possible is it for your students to use English outside classroom?

19. How much do you think English can actually help your students' future trajectories?

    a. At university? In what ways?

    b. After graduation? In what ways?

    c. Do some students need it more than others? Who and why?

20. Do you notice differences in the learning journeys of your students alongside sex and gender categories? And other dimensions in your student populations? And in terms of how they see/relate to/ evaluate English?

21. Have you ever had a particular case of a student or groups of students who benefited especially from learning English in mind? What happened?

22. Have you had any case of a student/groups of students who have reported to not benefit or become more marginalized/excluded because of English? Why? in what ways?

23. Based on what criteria do you assess your students' English speaking & writing skills?

24. Do you think that your students in one class share the same level of English proficiency?

25. If some of your students struggle, fail or drop out from English courses, what do you think the main issues tend to be behind that? How common/rare is this?

26. Do you think they have equal access to English and technology?

27. Are there other languages beyond English that you think are more important for your students to learn?

28. How do you define the term 'global citizens'? What do you think a global citizen should have? Do you have any preparation for your students to be global citizens?

Appendix 3: Example classroom observation protocol

Classroom observation protocol from Thailand

Checklist	Answer/Tally	Dialogue
Language use of teachers		
What types of English?		
ELF?		
Accommodation strategies		
- *Code-mixing*		
- *Code-switching*		
- *Repetition*		
- *Paraphrasing*		
- *Let it pass*		
English accent		
Intercultural communication		
The roles of other languages		
- *Thai*		
- *Malay*		
- *Arab*		
- *Pattani dialect*		
- *Others*		
Body language		
Etc.		

Checklist	Answer/Tally	Dialogue
Language use of teachers		
What types of English?		
ELF?		
Accommodation strategies		
- Code-mixing		
- Code-switching		
- Repetition		
- Paraphrasing		
- Let it pass		
English accent	**Thai accent**	
Translanguaging	Specify duration from _____ to _____ [tallies] *** When students need to discuss or talk with friends, they always use Thai.	
- Thai		
- Malay		
- Arab		
- Pattani dialect		
- English		
- Others		
Reaction	☐ Positive / ☐ Negative *** Students talk and discuss with friends cheerfully and happily	
Intercultural communication		
The roles of other languages	Specify duration from _____ to _____ [tallies]	
- Thai		
- Malay		
- Arab		
- Pattani dialect		
- Others		
Body language		
Etc.		

Checklist	Answer/Tally
Teaching and Learning Content (Are there any of the areas we are investigating dealt with in the class?)	
Global issue inclusion in English classes	Yes ☐
	No ☐
Building global/intercultural citizenship awareness through implementing global social topics/issues	
- poverty	
- environmental protection	
- democracy	
- human rights	
- gender	
- racism	
- etc	
Building global/intercultural citizenship awareness through activities/assignments	
- poverty	
- environmental protection	
- democracy	
- human rights	
- gender	
- racism	
- etc	
Decolonialism of ELT	

Country representation of cultural contents in ELT class materials

Countries	Product	Person	Practice	Perspective	Place
- Non-native English Speaking Countries					
- ASEAN Countries					
- Thailand					

Notes:

Product refers to the physical cultural contents, including man-made products such as movies, songs, folklores, books, novels, comics, inventions, food, etc., that depict a particular national culture.

Person refers to popular or renowned figures (singers, artists, writers, poets, nationally and internationally famous figures, athletes, heroes, etc.), who convey a certain national culture.

Practice refers to cultural elements in the form of rituals, celebrations, traditions, activities and cultural practices.

Perspective refers to the way certain groups of people regard something that can be compared and contrasted from other cultures, and that are relevant to the formation of attitudes, notions, values, myths, and beliefs.

Yuen, K-M. (2011). The representation of foreign cultures in English textbooks. *ELT Journal, 65(4)*, 458-466.
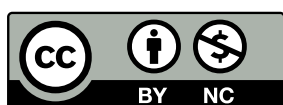
Place refers to notable or alluring sites, national landmarks, or tourist attractions.

Nomnian, S. (2013a). Thai cultural aspects in English language textbooks in a Thai secondary school. *Veridian E-Journal, 6(7)*, 13-30.

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