

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background of the study, research problem, research objective, scope and limitation, research significance, and definition of the key terms.

#### 1.1 Background of Study

In the age of globalization, English has become the predominant medium of communication across diverse linguistic and cultural boundaries. This transformation has given rise to the concept of English as an International Language (EIL), which emphasizes English's role as a global tool for communication, independent of native-speaking norms (Kurniawan, 2024). Unlike traditional perspectives that prioritize British or American English, EIL acknowledges the legitimacy of multiple English varieties, including those from non-native speaking contexts. These varieties, collectively referred to as World Englishes, can be categorized using Kachru's (1991) framework into three circles: the Inner Circle, comprising countries where English is spoken as a native language (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom); the Outer Circle, representing nations where English serves as a second language and holds institutional importance (e.g., India, Nigeria); and the Expanding Circle, which includes countries where English is learned as a foreign language and primarily used for international communication (e.g., Japan, Indonesia).

This pluralistic approach reflects the evolving role of English as a lingua franca, where its users adapt the language to their specific cultural and communicative needs. University students, as active participants in international exchanges, are frequently exposed to these diverse varieties of English, whether through academic collaborations, global media consumption, or social interactions (Tang & Calafato, 2024). However, despite this exposure, students often exhibit preferences and biases that favor Inner Circle norms, particularly American and British English (Ulum, 2023). This tendency may hinder their ability to engage effectively in multicultural settings, where non-native varieties of English are increasingly prominent.

EIL emphasizes the functional role of English in global communication, moving away from traditional notions of ownership by native speakers. This shift highlights the importance of intercultural understanding and respect for diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in English language teaching (Marlina, 2023). In this context, aspects such as intelligibility, adaptability, and mutual understanding are prioritized over adherence to native speaker norms. This perspective challenges conventional English language education, which has historically emphasized native-like proficiency, urging educators instead to prepare students for real-world intercultural communication. For university students, understanding and embracing the diversity of English varieties is essential to navigate the complexities of a globalized world.

Research on university students' responses to EIL reveals complex attitudes shaped by cultural background, prior exposure to diverse accents, and influences

from global media. For instance, a study by Yavuz (2020) found that Turkish preparatory school students preferred native-speaker accents, associating them with prestige and correctness, while viewing non-native accents as less desirable. Similarly, Takahashi (2013) noted that Japanese university students often favored American and British English, reflecting the dominance of Inner Circle norms in English language education. He and Zhang (2010) further highlighted how learners in China grappled with tensions between adopting native norms and embracing local adaptations of English, demonstrating the challenges of moving beyond traditional hierarchies.

Despite the growing body of research, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing literature focuses on specific regions or limited contexts, leaving room for further exploration into how university students respond to EIL across diverse settings. Factors such as exposure to non-native English in media, intercultural interactions, and institutional policies on English language teaching remain under examined. Addressing these gaps is critical for developing inclusive pedagogical practices that reflect the realities of English as a global language and foster students' readiness for international communication.

This study aims to explore university students' responses toward different varieties of English within the framework of English as an International Language (EIL). It focuses on how students react to and engage with various English accents, highlighting their attitudes, preferences, and the sociolinguistic factors that shape these responses. By examining these aspects, the study contributes to the broader

discourse on World Englishes and supports language teaching practices that embrace linguistic diversity and better prepare learners for global communication.

## **1.2 Research Question**

In regard to the research background above that has already been discussed, this is the problem of the study:

1. What are Indonesian university students' response to EIL varieties in learning English?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

To answer the research problem, the researcher states the objective of the study as follows:

1. To explore university students' responses toward the varieties of English as an International Language (EIL), particularly in relation to pronunciation, accent preference, and classroom experiences in an English learning context.

## **1.4 Research Significance**

Given that the data for this research is sourced from university students, the findings may offer valuable insights for subsequent studies conducted by university students, lecturers, and educators. The research will provide university students

with a useful case study, while lecturers may use the insights to further investigate the topic. Additionally, the findings could help educators recognize and accept the presence of diverse accents in English language instruction.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations**

As previously noted, this research examines university students' response to English as an International Language (EIL) varieties. The study will involve students majoring in English teaching from University of Muhammadiyah Malang. This cohort is selected due to their greater familiarity with the language, which is expected to provide more nuanced insights into their response of EIL varieties.

### **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

1. English as an International Language (EIL) – EIL refers to the global use of English among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, emphasizing intelligibility over native-speaker norms (Matsuda, 2018).
2. Varieties of English – Different forms of English spoken worldwide, including native, second-language, and foreign-language varieties, shaped by sociolinguistic and cultural influences (Kirkpatrick, 2020).
3. World Englishes – A framework recognizing the legitimacy of English varieties across different regions, challenging native-speaker dominance (Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020).

4. University Students' Responses – Students' attitudes, reactions, and preferences toward different English varieties, shaped by exposure, cultural background, and educational experiences (Jenkins, 2017).
5. Attitudes Toward English Varieties – Evaluative judgments students hold about different English varieties, affecting their willingness to engage in communication (Galloway & Rose, 2018).

