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Improving EFL learners' self-confidence in English-speaking performance with World Englishes teaching

A tentative study from China

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Research Article

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of World Englishes teaching practice in improving EFL learners' self-confidence in English-speaking performance (SCIESP) with a mixed methodology design comprising both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were gathered through a survey with the Self-Confidence in English-speaking Performance Questionnaire, students' reflective notes, and focus group interviews. Two teaching classes with no significant difference in self-confidence were randomly chosen as the experimental class (EC) and control class (CC). The two classes shared the same teaching implication except that the EC had four lectures on World Englishes while the CC got four lectures on English History. After one semester the research team surveyed students' SCIESP again. The result showed a remarkable improvement in students' SCIESP in EC than in CC. It was found that World Englishes teaching contributed significantly to increasing students' SCIESP.

Introduction

English has evolved into a lingua franca in the modern world (Jenkins 2014), facilitating communication among speakers of different native languages. It serves as a means of connecting people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Nunan 2003). With the rise of the internet and online communication, English has become the dominant language for global interaction, enabling the exchange of information and ideas (Crystal 2004). It has gained its status in various domains, such as business, science, academia, technology, and international relations (Crystal 2004; Jenkins 2014). In this context, the demand to improve English learning is increasing in different countries. Mastering spoken English has received considerable importance and has become a priority for most instructors and students (Abdullah et al. 2021).

Confidence positively impacts language acquisition, especially in improving learners' English-speaking abilities. As Bandura (1997) emphasizes, learners who have confidence in their English abilities are more motivated, persistent, and willing to engage in language learning activities, leading to improved proficiency, especially in spoken English. Those who feel more confident are more likely to take risks, speak up, and focus on fluency rather than accuracy (Krashen 1981). When learners feel comfortable and confident expressing themselves, they are more likely to engage in conversations, participate in discussions, and practice using the language, which leads to improved English communication skills over time (Horwitz 2001).

A previous study (Yeh 2013) has discussed the role of Standard English and World Englishes in shaping the identity of EFL learners. The findings indicate that non-native English speakers initially experience marginality and struggle with identity within their native language context, which does not fully embrace their new English-influenced identity. Another study (Chang 2014) has discussed how power, politics, and the spread of Englishes influence students' perceptions and experiences of learning and using English. The analysis emphasizes integrating World Englishes into English curricula to cultivate critical learners and confident English users. Some experimental awareness-raising activities have been conducted to explore the impact on learners' attitudes toward speaking English and their accents (Kawashima 2019). The results indicated that participants' anxiety about speaking English decreased, and their perception of English with a native accent was positively altered.

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Given the limited research on the relationship between World Englishes and EFL learners' confidence, one important step for scholars is to conduct further empirical studies. These studies can involve different sample sizes, diverse contexts, and varied research methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between World Englishes education and learners' self-confidence.

To address the research gaps identified in the previous review and investigate the relationship between World Englishes and EFL learners' self-confidence, a mixed-methods study is conducted in this study. The aim is to explore the effectiveness of incorporating World Englishes teaching in enhancing EFL learners' SCIESP. The following questions guide this study:

1. What are the effects of World Englishes teaching practice on EFL learners' SCIESP?
2. How and to what extent does implement World Englishes teaching practice impact EFL learners' self-confidence?
3. Why does implementing World Englishes teaching practice impact EFL learners' self-confidence?

These guiding questions provide a basis for investigating the effects of World Englishes teaching on EFL learners' SCIESP.

Methodology

The study is experimental and approved by the Committee of Ethics and Integrity in Research with Humans at Minzu University of China. Participation is voluntary. All the participants in the study are adults. Data are collected in a normal educational setting, and the data are not sensitive in nature. Accidental disclosure would not place the participants at risk. In addition, no identifiers will link individuals to their responses.

Context and participants

China's educational landscape comprises a vast number of universities and colleges, with over 3000 institutions, out of which 827 have the quality to cultivate postgraduate students (National Bureau of Statistics 2022). In China's higher education system, it is a requirement for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to acquire proficiency in a foreign language, with English being the most commonly chosen language. Therefore, English language learning plays a significant role in the academic development of non-English major students in Chinese universities.

Within this educational context, the study focused on a specific group of postgraduate students from the Minzu University of China. The Minzu University of China not only serves as a national center for ethnic studies but also offers a wide range of programs in various disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, economics, law, and education.

Regarding English language instruction, non-English major postgraduate students at the XX University of China typically engage in English classes for two terms. These classes allow students to develop their English language skills, including oral communication. While the exact number of instructional hours may vary, students generally attend three academic hours of English class per week. Additionally, students interested in further enhancing their English oral proficiency can enroll in specialized courses that focus on listening and speaking abilities.

The research team selected four teaching classes from the pool of non-English major postgraduate students enrolled in the 'Advanced Oral English Communication Course' as the previous sample for the study. These classes were chosen based on their SCIESP level, ensuring a mix of learners with moderate proficiency. The research team conducted an ANOVA test to examine whether there are significant differences in students' SCIESP among the four classes. Two teaching classes were regarded as the experimental class (EC) and control class (CC) based on their students' SCIESP, which showed no significant differences. The EC consisted of 34 participants, including 16 females and 18 males, while the CC had 32 participants, with 15 females and 17 males. These participants were selected as the study's participants.

Instruments

Three instruments, the self-confidence in English-speaking performance questionnaire, reflective notes, and focus group interviews, were utilized to collect data for this case study. The first instrument was used to collect quantitative data, and the last two instruments were used to collect qualitative data. The study believed that a combination of quantitative data and qualitative data can scientifically answer research questions.

The first instrument is the Self-Confidence in English-Speaking Performance Questionnaire. A self-designed Self-Confidence in English-Speaking Performance Questionnaire for Chinese Postgraduates was administered to assess the participants' SCIESP. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items that encompassed four key aspects: verbal communication (6, 10, 14, 16), non-verbal communication (2, 7, 8, 15), fear of evaluation (4, 5, 11, 12), and engagement in speaking activities (1, 3, 9, 13). Each item utilized a five-point Likert scale response format ranging from 'totally disagree' to 'absolutely agree', with values ranging from '1' to '5'. The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies (Abdallah and Ahmed 2015; Abdullah et al. 2021) and underwent a pilot test to ensure clarity and comprehensibility. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed, resulting in a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.865, indicating good internal consistency. The questionnaire can be seen in the Appendix.

The second instrument is Reflective Notes. Participants were encouraged to maintain reflective notes throughout the semester. These notes served as a means for students to record their thoughts, experiences, and suggestions regarding the course. Qualitative data was obtained by analyzing the reflective notes' content, providing valuable insights into the participants' subjective experiences and perceptions.

The third is Focus Group Interviews. A subset of participants, ten individuals who expressed representative or unique opinions regarding their SCIESP, were selected for

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focus group interviews. The interviews were conducted individually and covertly recorded to reduce interviewees' anxiety. The duration of each interview ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. Subsequently, the recorded interviews were transcribed for further analysis.

These three data collection instruments, quantitative and qualitative, aimed to comprehensively understand the participants' SCIESP. The integration of these instruments allowed for a holistic examination of the research question and facilitated a more specific analysis of the data.

Teaching process

The teaching intervention involved a semester-long course taught by one English teacher to EC and CC classes. Both classes used the same teaching method and followed the *Academic Oral English* (Xu 2021) as their textbook.

During the semester, the EC received additional instruction on World Englishes, while the CC learned the history of English. The EC attended four lectures (approximately eight academic hours) on World Englishes based on the textbook *World Englishes* (3rd edn.) by Melchers et al. (2019). These lectures covered topics such as the principles of linguistics, the spread of English, variations of English as a second language, and future trends. The EC students were assigned related tasks, including notes and discussions.

On the other hand, the CC attended four lectures on the history of English, based on the textbook *A History of English: An Introduction* (2nd ed.) by Gramley (2018). These lectures explored the development of the English language from Old English through Middle English to Modern English. Similarly, the CC students were assigned journals and discussions related to the historical aspects of English.

Throughout the teaching intervention, both classes followed the prescribed course structure and completed the tasks corresponding to the chapters covered in the textbook. The objective was to provide a consistent and comparable learning experience for both groups, with the only difference being the additional lectures on World Englishes in the EC and English History in the CC.

Data collection

The data collection involved administering the self-confidence questionnaires, collecting reflective notes, and conducting focus group interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants both before the start of the course and after the course. They completed it voluntarily, responding to each item using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'totally disagree' to 'absolutely agree'. Items 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16 in the questionnaire assess students' positive SCIESP. For example, item 6 is 'I can speak English well even if the audience is large'. A choice of 'A. *Absolutely agree*' in this question means learners are very confident in speaking English publicly, and a choice of '*E. Totally disagree*' means learners are not confident in speaking English publicly. For these items, therefore, the response options A, B, C, D, and E correspond to the values 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Conversely, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 14 evaluate students' negative SCIESP. For example, item 1 is 'Although I prepare a speech in English well, I need help to deliver the speech fluently in my class.' A choice of 'A. *Absolutely agree*' in this question means learners are not confident in delivering English publicly in class, and a choice of '*E. Totally disagree*' means learners are very confident in delivering English in class. In these items, therefore, the response options A, B, C, D, and E correspond to the values 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

The reflective notes expressing the students' thoughts, opinions, and suggestions regarding the course were collected periodically. The researchers gained insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences related to their SCIESP.

Ten students were selected randomly for the focus group interviews. The interviews were conducted with participants' consent. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis to ensure a relaxed and open environment.

Data analysis

The data analysis encompassed quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data using statistical software, qualitative analysis of the reflective notes and interview transcripts to identify themes and patterns, and an integrated interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives.

The data collected through the self-confidence questionnaire were subjected to quantitative analysis. The responses to each item were coded numerically, with values assigned to different response options. The data were then entered into statistical software SPSS. The Descriptive analysis, T-test analysis, and ANOVA analysis were employed to examine differences between groups or to evaluate the impact of the teaching intervention on self-confidence.

The reflective notes and interview transcripts were analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative data were carefully reviewed, coded, and categorized. Coding involves identifying recurring themes, concepts, or patterns in the data.

The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated and triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Researchers compared and contrasted the numerical data from the questionnaires with the qualitative insights derived from the reflective notes and interviews. Convergence or discrepancies between the two types of data were examined to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' SCIESP and the impact of the teaching intervention.

Findings

After the data were evaluated, the research team put the data into the computer. The analysis results revealed learners' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance before and after their World Englishes education.

The pre-test results

Before the start of the semester, the research team tested students' self-confidence in their SCIESP in five teaching classes. The results are as follows (Table 1).

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Table 1. Learners' self-confidence in five classes in the pre-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
C 1	34	46.21	2.837	.487	45.22	47.20	41	51
C 2	35	66.51	6.199	1.048	64.38	68.64	48	76
C 3	30	47.93	3.532	.645	46.61	49.25	41	55
C 4	32	47.09	3.104	.549	45.97	48.21	41	54
C 5	33	47.30	3.486	.607	46.07	48.54	40	58

The data reveal that the mean scores of students' SCIESP in Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, Class 4, and Class 5 are 46.21/80, 66.51/80, 47.93/80, 47.09/80, 47.30/80, respectively. Except for students in class 2, other students' mean scores of SCIESP are at about the middle level. A previous study has reported that Chinese students need more confident in their English acquisition (Yao 2010, 2019, 2022). The current study has a similar finding to it.

The research team compared the scores of students' SCIESP between different classes and got the following results (Table 2).

The data reveal that the mean score of students' SCIESP in class 2 is significantly higher than the mean scores in other classes (the p values between class 2 and other classes are all 0.000). In contrast, the mean scores of students' SCIESP in other classes are not significantly different from each other.[1] The research team, therefore, excluded class 2 from the classes.

The research team analyzed the scores and sub-scores of students' SCIESP (that is, the scores of students' self-confidence in verbal communication, the scores of students'

Table 2. The differences of learners' self-confidence in five classes

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	−20.308	1.155	.000**	−23.70	−16.92
	3	−1.727	.808	.313	−4.08	.63
	4	−.888	.733	.927	−3.02	1.24
	5	−1.097	.778	.832	−3.36	1.16
2	1	20.308	1.155	.000**	16.92	23.70
	3	18.581	1.230	.000**	14.99	22.17
	4	19.421	1.183	.000**	15.96	22.88
	5	19.211	1.211	.000**	15.68	22.75
3	1	1.727	.808	.313	−.63	4.08
	2	−18.581	1.230	.000**	−22.17	−14.99
	4	.840	.847	.981	−1.63	3.30
	5	.630	.886	.999	−1.94	3.20
4	1	.888	.733	.927	−1.24	3.02
	2	−19.421	1.183	.000**	−22.88	−15.96
	3	−.840	.847	.981	−3.30	1.63
	5	−.209	.818	1.000	−2.58	2.17
5	1	1.097	.778	.832	−1.16	3.36
	2	−19.211	1.211	.000**	−22.75	−15.68
	3	−.630	.886	.999	−3.20	1.94
	4	.209	.818	1.000	−2.17	2.58

** means the mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

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self-confidence in fear of evaluation, the scores of students' self-confidence in non-verbal communication, and the scores of students' self-confidence in speaking activity.) of class 1, class 3, class 4, and class 5 and found that all the scores and sub-scores were normal distributed. Then, the research team analyzed the data with T-tests. Table 3 reveals the differences in learners' sub-score of self-confidence between class 1 and class 4.

The test results reveal that the mean scores for verbal communication are 12.06 and 12.38 for class 1 and class 4, those of fear of evaluation are 10.47 and 10.59, those of non-verbal communication are 12.15 and 12.47, and those of speaking activity are 11.53 and 11.66, respectively. The T-test result shows the p values are 0.391, 0.653, 0.447, and 0.776 in verbal communication, fear of evaluation, non-verbal communication, and speaking activity, respectively. All of them are more than 0.05. That is to say, students' mean scores of the four sub-fields of self-confidence are similar to each other in Class 1 and Class 4. Therefore, Class 1 and Class 4 were selected as the experimental class and control class in the study.

World Englishes education can promote students' SCIESP

The same teacher taught students in EC and CC with the same teaching method for one semester. At the end of the semester, the research team examined students' SCIESP in both EC and CC again. After analysis, the research team found changes in students' SCIESP and the differences in students' self-confidence between EC and CC after one semester.

Students' SCIESP did not change in the CC

At the end of the semester, the research team tested the students' SCIESP in CC and compared the results with the students' self-confidence in the pre-test. The results are as follows (Table 4).

The data reveal that after a semester, the mean value of students' SCIESP in CC decreases from 47.09 to 46.72. However, the difference is not significant, as the p-value is 0.627. Thus, there is no significant change in the students' SCIESP.

Students' self-confidence in different sub-fields changes in different directions. The mean values of students' self-confidence in verbal communication and non-verbal communication in their English-speaking performance decreased, and those in fear of evaluation and speaking activity increased.[2] The T-test results show that the p values in students' self-confidence in verbal communication, fear of evaluation, non-verbal communication, and speaking activity are 0.80, 0.467, 0.581, and 0.490, respectively. All of them are more than 0.05. Comparing the pre-test and post-test results can conclude that there is a lack of significant differences observed in students' self-confidence levels across the four sub-fields: verbal communication, fear of evaluation, non-verbal communication, and speaking activity.

Students' SCIESP increases significantly in EC

With the same method, the research team analyzed the differences in students' SCIESP and the four sub-fields between the post-test and the pre-test in EC. The statistics results reveal the roles world Englishes education plays on the students' SCIESP. The results are presented as follows (Table 5).

The data reveal that after one semester, the EC students' SCIESP increased from 46.21 to 51.50. The T-test result shows that the difference is significant, as the p-value is 0.00, less than 0.01. After one semester, there was a significant increase in the self-confidence of EC students in their English-speaking performance. To ascertain the specific aspects in which the students' self-confidence increased significantly, the research team examined the changes in students' self-confidence in the four sub-fields after one semester, yielding the following findings. All the mean values of students' self-confidence in fear of evaluation, non-verbal communication, speaking activity, and verbal communication increases.[3] The T-test results show that the p values in students' self-confidence in fear of evaluation, non-verbal communication, speaking activity, and verbal communication are 0.000, 0.001, 0.007, and 0.014, respectively. The first three of them are less than 0.01, and the last one is less than 0.05. That is to say, the mean values of students' self-confidence in all four sub-fields have increased significantly in EC. From high to low,

Table 3. The differences of learners' sub-score of self-confidence between class 1 and class 4 in pre-test

	Mean							95% Confidence Interval	
	Class 1	Class 4	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
verbal communication	12.06	12.38	-.864	64	.391	-.316	.366	-1.047	.415
fear of evaluation	10.47	10.59	-.452	64	.653	-.123	.272	-.667	.421
non-verbal communication	12.15	12.47	-.766	64	.447	-.322	.420	-1.161	.518
speaking activity	11.53	11.66	-.286	64	.776	-.127	.444	-1.013	.760

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Table 4. The differences of learners' self-confidence between pre-test and post-test in CC

	Mean							95% Confidence Interval	
	Pre-test	Post-test	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
verbal									
communication	12.38	11.69	1.778	61.919	.080	.688	.387	−.086	1.461
fear of evaluation	10.59	10.78	−.731	61.955	.467	−.188	.256	−.700	.325
non-verbal									
communication	12.47	12.25	.555	62	.581	.219	.394	−569	.1.006
speaking activity	11.66	12.00	−.694	61.233	.490	−.344	.495	−1.334	.646
Self-confidence	47.09	46.72	.489	61.963	.627	.375	.767	−1.158	1.908

Table 5. The differences of learners' self-confidence between pretest and posttest in EC

	Mean							95% Confidence Interval	
	Pretest	Posttest	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
verbal									
communication	12.06	12.97	−2.538	65.919	.014*	.912	.359	−1.629	−.194
fear of evaluation	10.47	12.50	−5.808	66	.000**	−2.029	.349	−2.727	−1.332
non-verbal									
communication	12.15	13.53	−3.388	63.857	.001**	−1.382	.408	−2.197	−.567
speaking activity	11.53	12.50	−2.799	65.642	.007**	−.971	.347	−1.663	−.278
Self-confidence	46.21	51.50	−7.122	64.669	.000**	−5.294	.743	−6.779	−3.809

** means the mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level; * means the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

the change amounts of the mean value of students' self-confidence in the four sub-fields are fear of evaluation, non-verbal communication, speaking activity, and verbal communication.

Differences in students' SCIESP between EC and CC after one semester

To compare the differences in students' SCIESP between EC and CC after acquiring English-speaking abilities for one semester, the research team examined the values of self-confidence in the post-test. The result is presented as follows (Table 6).

The data reveal that the mean values of students' SCIESP in EC and CC are 51.50 and 46.72, respectively. The T-test results show that the difference is significant, as the p-value is 0.000, less than 0.01. That is to say, students' SCIESP in EC is significantly more potent than that of CC after World Englishes education for one semester.

The differences in students' self-confidence in sub-fields between EC and CC vary from each other. The mean values of students' self-confidence in verbal communication of EC and CC are 12.97 and 11.69, respectively. The T-test results show that difference is significant ($p = 0.001 < 0.01$). The mean values of students' self-confidence in fear of evaluation of EC and CC are 12.50 and 10.78, respectively. The T-test results show that difference is significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.01$). The mean values of students' self-confidence in non-verbal communication of EC and CC are 13.53 and 12.25, respectively. The T-test results show that difference is significant ($p = 0.001 < 0.01$). The mean values of students' self-confidence in the speaking activity of EC and CC are 12.50 and 12.00, respectively. The T-test results show that difference is not significant ($p = 0.223 > 0.05$). The results

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Table 6. The differences of learners' self-confidence between EC and CC in posttest

	Mean							95% Confidence Interval	
	EC	CC	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
verbal									
communication	12.97	11.69	3.378	63.298	.001**	1.283	.380	.524	2.042
fear of evaluation	12.50	10.78	5.014	64	.000**	1.719	.343	1.034	2.404
non-verbal									
communication	13.53	12.25	3.344	64	.001**	1.279	.383	.515	2.044
speaking activity	12.50	12.00	1.233	56.856	.223	.500	.406	−.312	1.312
Self-confidence	51.50	46.72	6.159	63.981	.000**	4.781	.776	3.230	6.332

** means the mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

mentioned above reveal that after accepting World Englishes education for one semester, students' self-confidence in EC is significantly more potent than that in CC in the aspects of verbal communication, fear of evaluation, and non-verbal communication. However, students' self-confidence in EC is similar to that in CC in the aspect of the speaking activity.

Discussion

World Englishes education and students' SCIESP

After analyzing the data collected by questionnaire investigation, the study finds that postgraduate students in China need more confidence in their English-speaking performance before the beginning of the study. After getting a World Englishes education for one semester, students' self-confidence in English-speaking performance has improved significantly. However, their self-confidence in speaking activity in English-speaking performance does not increase significantly.

Unconfident in their English-speaking performance

The study finds that in the pre-test, students in both EC and CC need to be more confident in their English-speaking, which is similar to a previous study (Yao 2010). Traditionally English education in China pays more attention to students' reading and writing abilities but ignores students' listening and speaking abilities (Ma and Wang 2021). Thus, 'dumb English' (learners with good reading and writing skills but limited listening and speaking skills in a foreign language) has become a massive problem in English education in China for many years (Tian 2017). Students' opinions on their reflection notes verify the findings as well. In the first week of students' reflection notes, over half of all students expressed that they needed more confident in their oral English and felt nervous when speaking English. 'I know my speaking English is not good and when I speak English in my classroom I cannot control my heart beating. I hope to improve my oral English abilities but frankly speaking, I do not know how to improve it. Maybe I do not have the ability to speak English well' (male, 21 years old, majoring in science). Another student (female, 22 years old, majoring in Engineering) writes the following statement: 'I always worry about my English pronunciation and grammar. English has a long history and it has its strict system. Without the language environment, I am not sure that I can speak English fluently'. Students lack confidence in their acquisition, which is harmful to their English learning and, much worse, will injure them in their psychology. It is an urgent task for English teachers in China to help students cultivate self-confidence in their English-speaking performance.

World Englishes education can improve students' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance

The study finds that World Englishes education can improve students' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance, which is a new finding in the study of World Englishes and the study of self-confidence in foreign language acquisition. Some previous studies (Yao 2018; Zuckermann and Walsh 2011) have reported that the identity of language ownership, the sense of being accepted by a language group, and the aims of language communication are the most critical factors in language acquisition. Edwards and Roger (2015), Ozdemir and Papi (2021), and Su (2021) have reported the relationship between learners' language proficiency and their self-confidence in language acquisition. Su (2021) has reported that when students perceive their English proficiency to be low, their confidence in speaking English decreases while their anxiety increases. Edwards and Roger (2015) have concluded that there is a cyclical interaction between L2 self-confidence, willingness to communicate, and L2 proficiency and listening comprehension skills, along with an awareness of other carriers of meaning, which are central to the development of linguistic self-confidence. Ozdemir and Papi (2021) have found that a fixed second language mindset positively predicts second language speaking anxiety, while a growth second language mindset positively predicts second language speaking self-confidence. World Englishes teaching emphasizes that

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English is a global language rather than a language solely 'owned' by native speakers (Norton 2017). World Englishes teaching focuses on developing learners' communicative competence rather than adhering strictly to native-speaker norms (Rose et al. 2021). It exposes learners to a variety of English accents, dialects, and linguistic features; by acknowledging and appreciating the diversity of English language use, learners gain confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in different contexts and with speakers from various linguistic backgrounds (Sahan et al. 2022). For reasons mentioned above, those who get a World Englishes education for one semester can improve their self-confidence in their English-speaking performance.

Students' opinions from their reflection notes or interviews can verify the findings in the questionnaire. Twenty-eight students in EC mentioned the theme of 'my confidence in oral English has improved' in their reflection notes. For instance, one participant (female, 23 years old, majoring in education) states, 'I feel more confident and at ease when speaking English with my foreign friends. I focus on expressing my idea now. Before I knew the concept of World Englishes, I always focused on the grammar mistakes I made and feared that I spoke Chinglish.' Another participant (male, 22 years old, majored in education) gives the following opinion: 'After I know it will be ok when I use some Chinglish, and it will be ok when my expressions are not native, I feel relaxed, and I am willing to speak more and tell my ideas.' Findings in previous studies, as well as opinions from students' reflection notes, have explained why World Englishes education can improve students' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance.

One semester's World Englishes education does not improve students' self-confidence in speaking activity in their English-speaking performance

World Englishes education can improve students' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance, as well as some sub-kinds of their self-confidence, such as verbal communication, fear of evaluation, and non-verbal communication. However, students' self-confidence in speaking activity remains the same after students get World Englishes education for one semester, which is another new finding in World Englishes study, English-speaking study, and self-confidence study. The speaking activity usually takes place in public fields, which requires students to use not only their speaking abilities but also their communication abilities (Lu 2015). Traditional Chinese culture highlights the characteristics of modesty and humbleness but ignores the ability to speak publicly. Living and learning in this kind of cultural environment results in difficulty for students in China to cultivate their abilities and interests in speaking activities, even in their first language, let alone in a foreign language.

Findings from an interview with students and students' reflection notes provide additional depth and context to the findings above, enriching our understanding of the reason why the World Englishes education does not have a significant positive impact on learners' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance in a speaking activity. A student (female, 22 years old, majoring in Pharmacy) expressed the following opinion in an interview: 'I believe my English-speaking ability is good, but I do not like speaking publicly. I major in Pharmacy and hope to be a pharmacist after my graduation. Speaking in public is an ability required by politicians but not by pharmacists. I am nervous and not confident in speaking activities.' Another student (female, 22 years old, majoring in Accounting) expresses the following viewpoints in his reflection notes: 'My English is good, at least among my classmates. However, I would not say I like any speaking activities in English. I do not think I must attend any speaking activities in English, not only when I am a student now but also when I begin my work after my graduation. As I do not like to speak English publicly and do not have the opportunity to speak English publicly, I am not confident in any speaking activities in English.' Other students express similar viewpoints in their reflection notes or the interview as the two students.

Implications to policymakers and English teachers

The study finds that World Englishes education can improve students' self-confidence in their English-speaking performance, which is beneficial to their English acquisition and their psychological health. Thus, policymakers and English teachers must change their minds and popularize World Englishes education among postgraduate students in China.

Firstly, policymakers of governments are required to modify the current language policies and education policies, giving English varieties other than British English and American English the necessary positions. Traditionally, education policies in China highlight British English and American English. Most English textbooks in China are written in there two English varieties. Therefore, almost all English learners in China believe that British English and American English are standard varieties and that other English varieties need to be incorrected. This opinion is rooted in speakers' minds in China. It is necessary for policymakers to change their minds and permit other English varieties to enter into English textbooks and give all kinds of English varieties (including the variety of Chinese English) the same position and reputation in education.

Secondly, university managers are required to offer English teachers the opportunity to train World Englishes. It is only a short time since the World Englishes transferred to China. Current English teachers in China were educated in traditional English education. Most of them need more knowledge of World Englishes. Some English teachers even do not have positive attitudes towards World Englishes. They need help to teach World Englishes directly. Thus, university managers are required to help English teachers establish scientific viewpoints towards World Englishes, master knowledge of World Englishes, and get the ability to teach World Englishes.

Thirdly, English teachers in China are required to alter their viewpoints towards World Englishes and learn knowledge and teaching methods of World Englishes. As said above, most current English teachers were educated in traditional English education. They have formed their opinions

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towards the varieties of British English, American English, and other Englishes. They must set up new viewpoints towards different English varieties. At the same time, they are required to learn knowledge about World Englishes and the methods to teach World Englishes. These changes are indeed complex tasks for English teachers to finish, especially for old teachers. As World Englishes education is beneficial to students' English-speaking acquisition and their health in psychology, English teachers have to finish their tasks.

Conclusion

The study aimed at examining the effects of World Englishes teaching practice in improving EFL learners' SCIESP. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives and yielded valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of the learners.

The study contributes to the existing body of research on World Englishes. The integration of quantitative and qualitative analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences and perceptions, strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings.

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of World Englishes education on students' SCIESP, several limitations are to be considered. These include the limited sample size, reliance on self-reported measures, and the relatively short duration of the study. Therefore, caution should be exercised in generalizing the findings, and further research addressing these limitations is needed to enhance our understanding of the broader implications of World Englishes education.

Notes

1 All the p values are more than 0.05.

2 The mean values of students' self-confidence in verbal communication and non-verbal communication in their English-speaking performance decreased from 12.38 to 11.69 and from 12.47 to 12.25, respectively, and those in fear of evaluation and speaking activity increased from 10.59 to 10.78 and from 11.66 to 12.00, respectively.

3 The mean value of students' self-confidence in fear of evaluation increases from 10.47 to 12.50; that in non-verbal communication increases from 12.15 to 13.53; that in speaking activity increases from 11.53 to 12.50; and that in verbal communication increases from 12.06 to 12.97.

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Appendix

Self-Confidence in English-Speaking Performance questionnaire for Chinese postgraduates

Dear ladies and gentlemen (亲爱的同学们),

Thank you very much for attending the research project "The Effects of World Englishes Education on Students' Self-confidence in English-speaking Performance". We believe your opinions on the following questions will contribute significantly to English education in China. Please give out your authentic viewpoints on the following questions. (非常感谢您参加The Effects of World Englishes Education on Students' Self-confidence in English-speaking Performance研究项目。我们相信您对以下问题的看法将对中国的英语教育大有裨益。请就以下问题发表您的真实观点。)

This research project has received ethical approval from Minzu University of China. The following safeguards apply to you and to the information you share. (本研究项目已获得中国民族大学的伦理批准。以下保障措施保障您和您分享的信息的安全。)

a) Your information will remain confidential. (您的信息将被保密。)
b) You do not have to share any personal information about you and you will not be identifiable in any research outputs. (您无需提供任何个人信息，您的身份也不会在任何研究成果中被识别。)
c) There is no risk of significant harm to you in completing this survey. (完成本调查不会对您造成重大伤害。)

If you choose to continue with this questionnaire, you are giving consent for your information to be used ethically and responsibly. For detailed participant information about the project, please contact Hongmei Cao at caohongmeiqh@163.com or Chunlin Yao at yao_chunlin@126.com. (选择继续填写本问卷则表示您同意我们以符合道德和负责任的方式使用您的信息。如若需要该项目的详细信息请联系曹红梅老师caohongmeiqh@163.com或姚春林老师yao_chunlin@126.com。)

If you change your mind and want to stop sharing your opinion with the research team, you can withdraw from the project at any time without any reason. (如果您改变主意，不想再与研究小组分享您的意见，您可以随时退出本项目，无需任何理由。)

Thank you! (谢谢)

Name (姓名): _____ Gender (性别): _____
Ethnic Group (民族): _____ Studying Major (专业): _____
Studying Class (班级): _____ Age (年龄)
Email address (电子邮箱): _____ Post Address (通讯地址): ____

There are 16 statements followed by five options each. Please read the statements and the options carefully and choose the one that matches your conditions best. Remember, there is no right or wrong in any of the options. Select the one that fits you best. (调查问卷包括16道问题，每个问题后有5个选项。请仔细阅读语句和选项，选择最符合您条件的一项。请记住，任何选项都没有对错之分。请选择最适合您的一项。)

1. Although I prepare a speech in English well, I need help to deliver the speech fluently in my class (虽然我做好了准备，但我仍需要帮助才能在课堂上流利地讲英语). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
2. I always look at my feet when I give a speech in English (用英语演讲时我总会看着自己的脚). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
3. I refrain from participating in English-speaking activities in the classroom with a large number of students (在有很多学生的课堂上，我不愿意参加说英语的活动). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
4. I become hesitant when my English-speaking teacher corrects my mistakes (当老师纠正我的错误时我会犹豫不决). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
5. I become nervous for a long time before an English oral examination comes (从英语考试前很长时间我就变得紧张不安). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
6. I can speak English well, even if the audience is enormous (即使当着很多听众我也能讲好英文). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
7. I feel I need to be more confident when I need to make eye-to-eye contact with my audience (当需要与听众对视时我会变得不自信). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
8. I don't feel comfortable with my posture when I am giving a speech in English (用英语演讲时，我对自己的姿势感到不自在). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
9. I am confident speaking English when I have individual presentations (个人演讲时我对自己的英语非常自信). ()
   A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
10. I feel confident when I speak in English (我对自己的英语口语很自信). ()
    A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
11. I feel confident when I take part in oral examinations in English (我对参加英语口语考试非常自信). ()
    A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
12. I feel confident when no one pays attention to my mistakes while I am speaking (如果没有人注意我发言时的错误，我就会感到自信). ()
    A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
13. I like to be the head of any speaking group activities (我喜欢在任何演讲小组活动中担任组长). ()
    A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
14. I never feel sure of myself when I speak in English (当我用英语发言时，我从来没有自信过). ()
    A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)
15. I prefer to express myself in both language and posture in my English class (在英语课上，我更喜欢用语言和姿势来表达自己). ()

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A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)

16. I can communicate in English fluently someday (总有一天我能够用英语自由交谈). ()

A. Absolutely agree (完全同意); *B. Agree* (同意); *C. Neither agree nor disagree* (不同意也不否认); *D. Disagree* (不同意); *E. Totally disagree* (完全不同意)

Sign (your name) (签名)
Date (日期): (month)/ (day)/ (year)



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