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ELF E FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES: SUPERANDO BARREIRAS IDEOLÓGICAS PARA PRÁTICAS DE ENSINO CONSCIENTES DE ELF

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ABSTRACT: The emergence of English as a global lingua franca (ELF) has heightened the need for reconceptualizing English language teaching (ELT), urging a re-evaluation of fundamental issues such as learners' goals, the notion of language ownership, the concept of linguistic competence, and the approach to error correction. While several frameworks have been proposed to integrate ELF into ELT (e.g., Dewey; Patsko, 2018; Kemaloglu-Er; Bayyurt, 2019; Sifakis; Bayyurt, 2018), deeply rooted ideologies continue to impede the full adoption of ELF-aware pedagogies. As Lowe (2020) argues, these ideologies serve as "counterframes" that hinder progress toward more inclusive and ELF-aware teaching approaches. Through a critical examination of these ideological barriers, drawing on examples from pre-service English teachers, this paper seeks to illustrate how certain entrenched ideologies –including native-speakerism and standard language ideology– function as significant obstacles to adopting an ELF-informed perspective. It argues that, to bridge the gap between theory and practice, teacher education must emphasize a critical approach that empowers prospective English teachers to question and challenge these deeply rooted beliefs. By fostering a more nuanced and critical understanding of English as a dynamic, global means of communication, teacher education can better equip future educators to embrace ELF-aware pedagogies that align with the diverse and multilingual contexts in which English is used today.

KEYWORDS: ELF; ELF-aware teaching; teacher education; native speakerism; standard language ideology.

RESUMO: A emergência do inglês como uma língua franca global (ELF) aumentou a necessidade de reconceituar o ensino da língua inglesa (ELT), exigindo uma reavaliação de questões fundamentais, como os objetivos dos aprendizes, a noção de posse da língua, o conceito de competência linguística e a abordagem da correção de erros. Embora várias abordagens tenham sido propostas para integrar o ELF no ELT (por exemplo, Dewey; Patsko, 2018; Kemaloglu-Er; Bayyurt, 2019; Sifakis; Bayyurt, 2018), ideologias profundamente enraizadas continuam a impedir a adoção plena de pedagogias sensíveis

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ao ELF. Como argumenta Lowe (2020), essas ideologias funcionam como "counterframes" que dificultam o avanço em direção a abordagens de ensino mais inclusivas e conscientes do ELF. Por meio de uma análise crítica dessas barreiras ideológicas, com exemplos de futuros professores de inglês, este artigo busca ilustrar como certas ideologias profundamente enraizadas – incluindo o nativismo e a ideologia da língua padrão – funcionam como obstáculos significativos para a adoção de uma perspectiva informada pelo ELF. O artigo argumenta que, para reduzir a lacuna entre teoria e prática, a formação de professores deve enfatizar uma abordagem crítica que capacite os futuros professores de inglês a questionar e desafiar essas crenças profundamente enraizadas. Ao promover uma compreensão mais refinada e crítica do inglês como um meio de comunicação dinâmico e global, a formação de professores pode preparar melhor os futuros educadores para abraçar pedagogias sensíveis ao ELF, alinhadas aos contextos diversos e multilíngues nos quais o inglês é usado hoje.

Palavras-chave: Inglês como Língua Franca (ILF); Ensino consciente do Inglês como Língua Franca; Formação de professores; Nativismo linguístico; Ideologia da língua padrão.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of English as a global lingua franca (ELF) has fundamentally transformed the landscape of English Language Teaching (henceforth, ELT), compelling educators and scholars to rethink traditional pedagogical approaches. With the vast majority of English speakers now being non-native, the growing recognition of ELF highlights the need for a comprehensive re-evaluation of key concepts within ELT, such as linguistic competence, error correction, and the very ownership of the language itself. While theoretical frameworks advocating for ELF-informed teaching have gained traction (e.g., Dewey; Patsko, 2018; Kemaloglu-Er; Bayyurt, 2019; Sifakis; Bayyurt, 2018), deeply embedded ideological barriers continue to hinder their widespread implementation. Among these, the persistent belief in native-speakerism –the notion that native speakers represent the ideal models for language use and teaching– remains a significant obstacle. Such ideology not only perpetuates discriminatory hierarchies but also limits the pedagogical potential of ELF-aware practices in classrooms worldwide (Llurda; Calvet-Terré, 2024).

In particular, the influence of native-speakerism and related ideologies, such as the standard language ideology, has been shown to impede the adoption of ELF-aware teaching practices. While these ideologies continue to shape teacher beliefs and instructional methods, recent research suggests that teacher education can play a pivotal role in challenging these ingrained perspectives. Such ideologies act as what Lowe (2020) terms as "counterframes", constraining progress toward ELF-aware pedagogies. This

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paper explores how these ideologícal frameworks, especially native-speakerism and standard language ideology, manifest in the realm of ELT, and examines the implications for teacher education. By advocating for a critical, ELF-informed approach in teacher training, this work argues that future educators must be equipped not only with linguistic knowledge but also with the tools to question and deconstruct deeply rooted assumptions that continue to shape English language instruction.

1 ELF-AWARENESS IN ELT

The global spread of English has led to a significant shift in the way English is taught and learned. Once seen primarily as the language of native speakers, English is now recognized as a global lingua franca, used predominantly for communication among non-native speakers. This transformation has raised pressing questions about how to teach English in a way that reflects its current role as a global tool for communication. Given the increasing multilingual use of English worldwide, this new reality calls for a shift in pedagogical approaches that were traditionally grounded in native-speaker norms and standards.

An ELF-aware approach in ELT responds to this shift by rethinking not only the content of language teaching but also the underlying assumptions that shape how English is taught. The goal of adopting an ELF-aware perspective is not to replace existing ELT practices but to enhance them by acknowledging the diversity of English use globally (Sifakis *et al.*, 2018). In this view, the purpose of ELF-aware teaching is to enrich current pedagogies by expanding their scope to include the realities of how English is spoken, understood, and used across the world, especially in contexts where non-native speakers predominate.

The fundamental shift in perspective required for ELF-aware teaching begins with acknowledging that English is no longer the sole domain of native speakers. Instead, English is a flexible and dynamic means of communication that transcends national boundaries. Research on ELF interactions highlights that communication in English often occurs between non-native speakers, with mutual intelligibility being prioritized over conformity to native-speaker norms (Seidlhofer, 2003). This perspective shifts the focus of ELT from an emphasis on native-like competence to one that values effective communication across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. It also challenges the

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longstanding assumption that native-speaker norms –especially in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary– are the gold standard for language learners.

In practical terms, adopting an ELF-aware approach requires a thorough reconsideration of teaching materials, instructional practices, and assessment methods. In this light, it is crucial to examine the materials used in ELT to determine whether they reflect the global realities of English use. For instance, many textbooks and curricula continue to feature native-speaker models of language use, often overlooking the increasing diversity of English varieties around the world (Kiczkowiak, 2021). This trend can be observed not only in general ELT but also in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where similar native-speaker biases persist (Calvet-Terré; Llurda, 2025). In contrast, an ELF-aware approach encourages educators to integrate a broader range of English varieties into the classroom, showcasing the fluidity and flexibility of the language. This includes recognizing that learners may encounter a variety of English accents, dialects, and communication styles in real-world interactions and should be equipped to engage with these variations confidently.

As Galloway (2018) and Seidlhofer (2003, 2021) point out, one of the key elements of ELF-aware teaching is the recognition that English learners do not need to mimic native speakers in order to communicate effectively. Instead, the focus shifts to developing intelligibility, fluency, and communicative competence. ELF-aware teaching prioritizes communicational goals over accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. Native-like pronunciation is not necessary in ELF contexts; instead, learners are encouraged to focus on achieving intelligibility—making sure that their speech is understood, even if it differs from native speaker norms. This approach fosters an environment in which learners feel empowered to use English in ways that suit their own linguistic backgrounds and communication needs (Llurda; Calvet-Terré, 2024).

In this light, ELF-aware pedagogies also reconsider the role of error correction. In traditional ELT, errors are often treated as deviations from standardized norms and are corrected immediately to align learners' language use with the "proper" model. However, ELF-aware teaching takes a more nuanced approach, suggesting that errors should only be considered problematic when they hinder communication (Sifakis; Tsantila, 2020). This shift allows teachers to focus on the communicative purpose of language use, rather than treating every mistake as a flaw that needs to be corrected. Such an approach is

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particularly important in ELF contexts, where learners are more likely to interact with other non-native speakers who may share similar challenges.

The integration of ELF-awareness into teacher education is therefore central to the successful implementation of these principles. As Sifakis and Bayyurt (2018) outline, ELF-aware teacher education programs should involve multiple phases, starting with raising teachers' awareness of the ELF literature and exposing them to authentic ELF interactions. Teachers need to understand the global spread of English and the diverse contexts in which it is used. This phase helps them recognize the variety of English accents and uses in real-life communication, as well as the importance of accommodation skills in fostering effective communication among non-native speakers.

In the second phase of ELF-aware teacher education, teachers are encouraged to reflect critically on their own teaching practices and assumptions about English. This involves examining whether the materials they use acknowledge ELF and whether their instructional practices align with the diverse needs of their learners. Teachers should consider whether the target interlocutors in their teaching materials reflect the multilingual nature of English use and whether their pedagogical models represent a range of non-native speakers as legitimate users of English. This reflection helps teachers move beyond traditional Anglophone models and embrace a more pluralistic view of English.

The final phase of ELF-aware teacher education focuses on action: how to apply ELF-awareness in the classroom. Sifakis *et al.* (2018) argue that teachers should incorporate activities and materials that expose learners to real-life ELF interactions. For example, teachers can integrate videos, recordings, and discussions that feature non-native speakers using English in a variety of contexts. These resources help students recognize that English is not owned by any single group of speakers and that proficiency is not synonymous with conforming to native-speaker norms. Instead, successful communication is about mutual intelligibility, accommodating different English varieties, and fostering a shared understanding among speakers.

In essence, ELF-awareness in ELT requires a paradigm shift that redefines what it means to be "fluent" in English. Teachers must critically examine their own teaching practices and engage with the global reality of English use. By incorporating ELF-awareness into teacher education, future educators can better prepare their students for

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the diverse linguistic environments they will encounter, moving beyond the limitations of native-speakerism and embracing English as a dynamic, flexible tool for global communication. In this way, "ELF will eventually appear a desirable goal rather than a poor version of an idealised NS model" (Llurda; Mocanu, 2019, p. 175).

2 IDEOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO ELF-AWARE EDUCATION

2.1. NATIVE-SPEAKERISM

In the landscape of ELT, native-speakerism represents one of the most entrenched ideologies that perpetuate a narrow and exclusionary view of English language proficiency. This ideology, which holds that Native English-Speaking Teachers (henceforth, NESTs) embody the ideal linguistic and pedagogical standards, continues to undermine the diverse ways in which English is used around the world. Rooted in the belief that native speakers possess an inherent superiority in language competence and teaching skills, native-speakerism creates a rigid divide between NESTs and NNESTs. Even though a majority of English teachers and users globally are non-native speakers of the language, the pervasive notion that NESTs are the most qualified educators positions NNESTs as second-class professionals. This ideological hierarchy has profound implications for teaching practices, hiring policies, and learners' expectations within ELT (Selvi *et al.*, 2024).

The enduring presence of native-speakerism in ELT is evident across various spheres of ELT, including discriminatory hiring practices and the design and implementation of teaching materials that prioritise native-like proficiency as the gold standard. For example, many institutions continue to advertise English teaching positions with an implicit or explicit preference for NESTs, reflecting a deep-seated bias that equates "native" status with teaching expertise (Kiczkowiak, 2020; Paciorkowski, 2022). Such practices marginalize highly qualified non-native teachers and often limit their career advancement, reinforcing the myth that only those with native-like accents or fluency can effectively teach English. This situation has led to what Phillipson (1992) termed the "native-speaker fallacy", the erroneous belief that NESTs are inherently better equipped to teach English, an assumption that has profoundly shaped ELT practices for decades.

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Holliday (2005) expanded on this concept, arguing that native-speakerism in ELT not only elevates native speakers as models of language proficiency but also culturally positions them as the bearers of an "authentic" form of English. This framework links language proficiency to cultural authenticity, fostering an "us" versus "them" mindset that marginalizes non-native speakers both as teachers and as users of the language. By elevating native speakers, this ideology ignores the global multilingual nature of English, wherein non-native speakers now vastly outnumber their native counterparts.

The pervasive focus on achieving native-like proficiency is not only unrealistic but counterproductive. Learners are often led to believe that their English learning journey will culminate in emulating a "native" speaker, ignoring the functional, communicative competence that is crucial in real-world contexts. As a result, many students set unrealistic goals of fluency that mirror native speech patterns, sidelining the practical language skills they would actually need to succeed in diverse, multilingual contexts where English operates as a lingua franca, in which intelligibility and adaptability are valued far more than adherence to native norms (Seidlhofer, 2011). Consequently, this ideology distorts learners' expectations, shaping them to view English through a lens that prioritizes accent, pronunciation, rather than communicative effectiveness in a variety of international and intercultural settings.

Furthermore, native-speakerism significantly influences teaching materials and curriculum design, which are often geared toward the norms of Inner Circle varieties of English, such as British or American English. This emphasis on specific varieties of English fails to account for the multilingual and multicultural nature of English as it is used globally today. As a result, students are often ill-prepared to engage with English in its global context, where interactions occur predominantly among non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2015). By perpetuating the notion of a single "correct" form of English, ELT materials promote a limited view of language proficiency, disconnected from how English functions in the world. These materials do not equip students with the necessary skills to navigate ELF interactions, where communication often occurs between speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, each bringing their own communicative norms and strategies to the conversation (Seidlhofer, 2011; Kohn, 2024).

The persistence of native-speakerism also has consequences for language assessment, where non-native speakers are often evaluated according to native-like

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criteria, leading to unfair assessments of their language abilities. The undue emphasis on accent, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary choice can disadvantage learners who demonstrate high functional proficiency in English but do not conform to native-like norms. This focus on "idealized" native-speaker standard overlooks that fluency and intelligibility –rather than native-like pronunciation or accent– are the true indicators of successful communication in ELF contexts. As a result, learners may fail to recognize that they, too, are legitimate users of English, and may internalize the belief that they must "correct" their language to meet the unattainable standard of native proficiency.

In this light, traditional approaches to language teaching, deeply rooted in native-speakerist ideology, often prioritize adherence to prescriptive norms of grammar, pronunciation, and use that are considered representative of native varieties of English. This leads to a disproportionate focus on accuracy, particularly native-like pronunciation and grammar, rather than on communicative effectiveness. In ELF contexts, where English is used as a bridge between speakers of diverse linguistic backgrounds, intelligibility and clarity are far more crucial than conforming to native-speaker norms. Yet, in many classrooms, error correction tends to reinforce the belief that deviations from these norms constitute mistakes that must be corrected. Consequently, learners may develop a distorted understanding of what language proficiency truly involves, believing they must sound like native speakers to be understood or accepted. This fixation on native-like standards discourages learners from experimenting with language and hinders their ability to use English flexibly in real-world communication. An ELF-aware approach to error correction, on the other hand, would focus on ensuring that communication remains effective and intelligible, rather than enforcing conformity to prescriptive norms. By shifting the focus from native-speaker accuracy to communicative competence, teachers can better prepare learners for authentic ELF interactions, where the primary goal is mutual understanding, rather than rigid adherence to native-speaker norms (Seidlhofer; Widdowson, 2019; Grazzi, 2024).

Native-speakerism continues to serve as a formidable barrier to the integration of ELF-aware pedagogies in ELT. The challenge extends beyond simply integrating ELF as an additional framework in language teaching; it involves dismantling the deeply entrenched beliefs that shape our perceptions of who qualifies as a legitimate speaker and teacher of English. A move towards ELF-aware pedagogies requires not only the revision of teaching

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materials and practices but also a profound shift in how we conceptualize language competence itself. By embracing a more inclusive understanding of English that values linguistic diversity and communicative effectiveness over the pursuit of native-like competence, ELT can evolve into a field that truly reflects the role of English as a global lingua franca.

2.2. STANDARD LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Standard language ideology, which posits a uniform, prestigious variety of a language as the "correct" or ideal form, continues to play a significant role in language teaching and assessment. This ideology is grounded in the assumption that a standardized form, often tied to written language and the speech of upper-middle-class groups, represents the ideal mode of communication. Lippi-Green (2012) challenges this perspective, arguing that the standard variety is typically codified by dominant institutions, which impose it as the norm while relegating other language varieties –such as regional dialects or non-standard forms– to inferior status. As a result, non-standard speakers are often viewed as linguistically "deficient", even though their forms are fully legitimate within their respective communities.

In language teaching, this ideology has fostered an emphasis on instructing learners in a singular, "correct" version of the language, typically the standardized variety. Teachers are often trained to prioritize grammatical accuracy, formal language use, and strict adherence to prescriptive norms, reinforcing the notion that linguistic competence is measured by conformity to these standards. Standardized language tests further entrench this perspective by penalizing deviations from the "correct" form, regardless of their impact on intelligibility or communication. This creates a paradox: learners are encouraged to conform to an idealized linguistic standard that does not align with the realities of global communication, where English functions as a lingua franca among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This tension between standardization and communication has sparked significant criticism from sociolinguists and applied linguists. Scholars like Blommaert (2010), Lippi-Green (2012), and Fairclough (2015) argue that standard language ideology not only undermines the legitimacy of non-standard forms but also reinforces social hierarchies by equating language proficiency with conformity to dominant linguistic norms. In multilingual contexts, particularly those involving ELF, the very notion of "error" becomes

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contentious, as linguistic variation is a natural and functional aspect of global communication rather than a deviation from a fixed standard.

The enduring influence of standard language ideology profoundly shapes approaches to error correction in language teaching. From this lens, many educators focus on identifying and "correcting" deviations from the standardized variety, often perceiving any non-standard form as an error. This creates a rigid framework where learners' language use is constantly evaluated against prescriptive norms, regardless of the context or communicative effectiveness of the form in question. Such an approach marginalizes learners who use non-standard varieties or whose so-called errors stem not from misunderstandings but from diverse linguistic backgrounds and communicative styles.

In multilingual settings, where speakers may blend various linguistic resources to convey meaning, this approach can be counterproductive. It may discourage learners from experimenting with the language, inhibiting creativity and authentic communication. Moreover, it reinforces the notion that there is only one "correct" way to speak, ultimately undermining learners' confidence and their sense of linguistic identity. As a result, error correction risks becoming less about fostering meaningful communication and more about enforcing linguistic conformity as a marker of social hierarchy. To move beyond this limitation, educators must adopt a more inclusive, flexible view of error correction –one that recognizes the legitimacy of different linguistic forms and values the communicative function of language over strict adherence to standardized norms.

At the heart of this critique is a call to deconstruct the social hierarchies that standard language ideology has long perpetuated. By framing non-standard varieties as "incorrect" or "inferior", this ideology has reinforced power structures that privilege certain social groups while marginalizing others. Language education, therefore, holds a critical dual role: it has the potential to either perpetuate these inequalities or help dismantle them. To achieve the latter, language teaching must move beyond an exclusive focus on standardized forms and instead foster respect for linguistic diversity, both in the classroom and in the broader social context. This involves not only reimagining curricula and assessments but also fostering an inclusive view of language that acknowledges the legitimacy of all linguistic varieties and recognizes their value in real-world communication.

To this end, a growing body of applied linguists advocates for moving beyond the prescriptive focus on standardized language toward a more descriptive approach that acknowledges and embraces linguistic diversity. Researchers in ELF studies emphasize that language teaching should reflect the dynamic, fluid nature of language use in the global context. For instance, Canagarajah (2007), Garcia and Li Wei (2014), and Pennycook and Otsuji (2018) highlight the importance of recognizing and valuing the varied forms of English spoken by multilingual speakers, who often adapt the language to meet the communicative needs of their specific contexts. This approach advocates for a pedagogy that is not bound by rigid norms but instead embraces the flexibility and creativity inherent in language use.

Ultimately, challenging standard language ideology is essential for creating a more equitable and inclusive approach to language teaching. This shift demands educators to critically examine the assumptions that have long underpinned language education, particularly the notion that there is a single, "correct" way to use a language. By adopting a more flexible, context-sensitive approach to instruction, teachers can empower learners to communicate effectively in a multilingual world, one where linguistic diversity is not merely tolerated but actively valued and celebrated.

3 A CASE IN POINT: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON ERROR GRAVITY

A case in point that further illustrates how entrenched ideologies such as native-speakerism and standard language ideology continue to influence perceptions of English language errors among future educators is the study reported in Calvet-Terré and Llurda (2023), conducted with 569 pre-service teachers of English from various universities in Spain. The primary objective of the study that is relevant here was to explore how these pre-service teachers perceive and evaluate non-standard forms of English, particularly how their educational backgrounds –shaped by factors such as study-abroad experiences, exposure to ELF-related courses, and their year of study– affect these perceptions.

The study was designed to examine the attitudes of these students towards four non-standard English sentences, each deviating from the prescriptive norms of Standard English. These sentences varied in both intelligibility and grammatical conformity. Participants rated the severity of each sentence on a 5-point scale, from 1 (least serious) to 5 (most serious), based on how "erroneous" they perceived them to be. The sentences

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differed in both grammatical structure and clarity of meaning: two were relatively intelligible despite their grammatical deviations, while the other two were less intelligible, with one being completely unclear. By presenting participants with carefully constructed sentences that vary in grammaticality and intelligibility, the research sought to reveal the ideological underpinnings behind what is perceived as a serious "error"— and why.

Importantly, these sentence types were carefully selected to reflect error categories that frequently occur in ELF contexts. That is, errors such as omission of the third person singular "-s" or use of double negatives often surface in ELF interactions without obstructing comprehension. Yet, they are consistently penalized in formal education.

The results, with mean scores detailed in Table 1, were consistent with the prevailing ideologies of native-speakerism and standard language ideology. The first two sentences, though non-standard in their features, were still intelligible and received relatively high gravity ratings, indicating that participants recognized them as significant errors. Sentences like "He sing well" and "She didn't do nothing" exemplify non-standard structures that, while deviant from standard grammar, remain easily comprehensible to English speakers. However, it is worth noting that the rating for *He sing well* (3.84) was surprisingly high in comparison to *She didn't do nothing* (3.11), despite the former being arguably more intelligible. This discrepancy suggests that participants' responses are influenced not solely by considerations of communicative efficiency, but by a deeply ingrained grammatical hierarchy that privileges conformity to prescriptive norms, especially those reinforced through formal education. Specifically, the third person singular "-s" appears to carry symbolic weight: its absence is interpreted not simply as a surface-level grammatical omission, but as a signifier of linguistic inadequacy or lack of proficiency. This highlights the symbolic significance attributed to certain "errors", revealing an underlying linguistic ideology that elevates form over communicative function.

Table 1. Mean score of perceived error gravity

Sentence	Perceived Error Gravity Mean
a. She didn't do nothing	3.11

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b. He sing well	3.84
c. The father of my mother is not at all	3.92
d. My book is not feel anything	4.29

In contrast, the last two sentences –*The father of my mother is not at all* and *My book is not feel anything*– were perceived as significantly more serious errors by the study's participants. These two sentences received the highest average error gravity scores, with 3.92 and 4.29 out of 5, respectively. This indicates that the participants, most of whom are training to become English teachers, found these constructions particularly problematic.

This suggests that when intelligibility breaks down, as in the case of sentence (d), participants do penalize the utterance more severely – but what is significant is that unintelligibility is not the only driver of perceived error. Both sentences deviate from standard grammar *and* fail to clearly convey meaning, especially in the absence of contextual cues. The sentence *My book is not feel anything*, in particular, was almost entirely unintelligible to respondents.

However, it is critical to emphasize that intelligibility alone does not fully account for the severity ratings. Sentence (c) – "The father of my mother is not at all" – despite being partially interpretable (some participants understood it to mean "My grandfather is not here"), still scored nearly as high as the entirely unintelligible sentence (d). This points to a default punitive response toward syntactic structures that are perceived as deviant, even when they do not significantly impede comprehension.

In this light, one of the more revealing findings in the study emerged when comparing the perceived gravity of *He sing well* with *The father of my mother is not at all.* Surprisingly, despite the stark difference in intelligibility between the two –*He sing well* being grammatically incorrect but entirely clear in meaning, and *The father of my mother is not at all* being both ungrammatical and semantically confusing– the participants rated them almost equally. The difference in their average scores was only 0.08 points, a margin so small that it suggests other forces at play beyond intelligibility. This finding exemplifies ideological filtering in action: certain non-standard features –such as the omission of the third person singular -s– trigger disproportionately negative evaluations due to their symbolic role in the construction of 'correct' English. This unexpected result points toward the deep internalization of traditional grammatical rules, particularly the

enforcement of third person singular '-s' in English (*"He sings well"*). This feature is often presented as a fundamental marker of correctness in English language teaching, and thus its omission appears to trigger a strong negative response, even among advanced learners and pre-service teachers who might otherwise tolerate intelligible, non-standard forms. What emerges, then, is an educational reflex driven less by considerations of communicative adequacy and more by entrenched linguistic ideologies.

An analysis of these responses offers valuable insight into how pre-service teachers' attitudes are shaped not merely by their linguistic knowledge, but by their socialization into dominant ideologies surrounding language correctness and ownership. Their evaluations of error severity reveal an implicit alignment with native-speaker norms, even when such norms contradict principles of communicative effectiveness. The findings imply that certain errors retain a disproportionate weight in educational contexts due to their symbolic association with correctness, rather than any real impact on communication.

Furthermore, Calvet-Terré and Llurda (2023) revealed that exposure to ELF courses had a statistically significant but limited mitigating effect on severity ratings, particularly for sentence (b), suggesting that ideological beliefs are deeply entrenched and not easily shifted through brief pedagogical interventions. This indicates the need for sustained critical engagement in teacher education programs to challenge the authority of native norms and promote a more pluralistic orientation toward English.

These insights reinforce the argument that ideological barriers continue to hinder the integration of ELF principles in teacher education. Despite academic recognition of ELF's legitimacy, pre-service teachers remain largely governed by standard language ideology, which positions native-speaker English as the unquestioned ideal. Overall, the results of this study underscore the persistence of native-speakerism and standard language ideology in shaping ELF perceptions. Although the field increasingly acknowledges English as a global lingua franca, with diverse varieties spoken fluently and effectively by non-native speakers worldwide, this recognition has yet to fully permeate teacher education. The strong preference for standard English forms, as well as the harsh judgments against intelligible but non-standard usages, demonstrate that many pre-service teachers in Spain still view native-speaker English as the benchmark of correctness. This mindset goes beyond a matter of habit or lack of awareness; it is a

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reflection of systemic discourses that perpetuate linguistic hierarchies through curriculum design, assessment practices, and teacher education.

To address these challenges within the Spanish educational context, teacher education programs must adopt a more explicitly critical framework. This entails not only incorporating ELF-aware content but also actively engaging pre-service teachers in reflective dialogue about their own language ideologies and the broader sociolinguistic implications of English use. For example, courses might include analysis of authentic ELF interactions, critical reflection on standard language tests, tasks in which students assess intelligibility and communicative success rather than grammatical conformity and critically interrogate the privileging of native-speaker norms. If future educators continue to assess language use primarily through the lens of conformity to native norms, they may struggle to recognize and validate the legitimate, functional uses of English that emerge in global, multicultural contexts. The study highlights the urgent need for pedagogical reforms that challenge these persistent ideologies and prepare teachers to embrace a more pluralistic understanding of English use worldwide.

FINAL REMARKS: TOWARDS CRITICAL THINKING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The integration of an ELF-aware perspective into ELT largely depends on the training of pre-service teachers. As the future professionals who will shape students' understanding of English, pre-service teachers hold a crucial role in either reinforcing native-speakerist orientations or advocating for a more inclusive view of English as a global lingua franca. As Dewey and Pineda (2020) argue, pre-service teachers undergo a complex and gradual process of change, during which their inherited beliefs and practices give way to more progressive orientations. This transition is particularly evident as students advance in their studies, as they begin to recognize and critically assess the role of English in global communication. Calvet-Terré and Llurda's (2023) research indicates that as pre-service teachers progress further in their education, they are less susceptible to the influence of the native-speaker myth, which stands as a key ideological barrier in ELT. However, this transformation does not occur automatically; it requires deliberate intervention to foster critical thinking and reflection about the ways in which English is taught, learned, and adapted to meet its evolving role as a global lingua franca.

One of the key challenges in teacher training is the deeply ingrained nature of native-speakerism, which continues to dominate many language teaching paradigms. As outlined

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by Phillipson (1992), this ideology positions NESTs as the ideal models of language proficiency and pedagogy. Such beliefs persist despite the fact that non-native speakers now vastly outnumber native speakers, both as learners and teachers of English. Pre-service teachers are often exposed to this dominant ideology, leading them to view native-like proficiency as the gold standard. For non-native teachers, this can contribute to feelings of inadequacy or foster an internalized "impostor syndrome" (Bernat, 2008). In order to challenge this bias, teachers must first recognize its presence and critically reflect on how it shapes their teaching practices. This requires a fundamental shift in their understanding of what it means to be a competent user and educator of English, a shift that is crucial for advancing towards an ELF-aware pedagogy.

As Dewey (2014) argues, teachers need to be encouraged to develop critical awareness, a quality that can only be nurtured through continuous reflection on their professional beliefs and practices. To support this, teacher education programs must offer pre-service teachers opportunities for self-examination, prompting them to question established assumptions about language and its teaching. This goes beyond merely recognizing the diversity of English varieties; it requires asking deeper questions about the implications of these varieties in the classroom. For instance, teachers must critically evaluate whether emphasizing native-speaker norms in their curriculum truly meets their students' needs or whether it reinforces outdated ideas about language ownership and proficiency. As teachers develop critical awareness, they come to understand that English is not a rigid, prescriptive system, but rather a dynamic language spoken by a wide range of multilingual and multicultural speakers in diverse contexts. This shift in perspective is vital for breaking free from the constraints of native-speakerism.

To support this shift, Dewey and Pineda (2020) emphasize the importance of fostering a progressive orientation among pre-service teachers, one that enables them to connect theory, research, and practice in ways that challenge traditional pedagogical frameworks. As Dewey (2014) suggests, narrative inquiry is a powerful tool for promoting critical reflection. Through narrative inquiry, teachers can engage in self-examination and reassess their beliefs and practices in response to the realities of ELF communication. This approach encourages teachers to reflect on how their own experiences and assumptions influence their teaching, enabling them to adopt a more flexible, context-sensitive approach to language instruction.

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At the heart of an ELF-aware pedagogy is the recognition that English serves as a global tool for communication among people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, teaching English should not be confined to promoting native-like proficiency but should prioritize fostering communicative competence across a range of contexts. As Sifakis and Bayyurt (2018) outline, ELF-aware teacher education follows a three-phase approach, starting with exposure to the expanding body of ELF literature and real-world examples of ELF communication. This exposure phase helps teachers recognize the global relevance of English and the importance of effective communication skills in diverse settings. However, the process must extend beyond mere exposure; teachers need to develop critical awareness of how these insights apply to their specific teaching contexts. This phase encourages teachers to reflect on their prior assumptions about language acquisition, the role of native speakers, and the relevance of Standard English for their students. Only through such reflection can teachers begin to question the deeply ingrained assumptions that continue to shape language teaching practices.

The final phase of Sifakis and Bayyurt's approach –*action plan*– requires teachers to translate their reflections into practice by critically evaluating and revising their teaching materials. This process enables teachers to align their materials and practices with the global role of English as a lingua franca. However, many current teacher training programs, particularly in Spain, fall short in supporting pre-service teachers as they transition from exposure and critical awareness to action. While some programs introduce ELF concepts, they often fail to provide adequate opportunities for teachers to apply these ideas in real-world teaching contexts, especially during practicum experiences. The lack of meaningful integration between theory, research, and practice means that pre-service teachers may graduate without a clear understanding of how to incorporate ELF principles into their teaching.

In this light, Miao *et al.* (2025) found that while brief exposure to diverse Global English varieties in an 8-week intervention led to short-term improvements in listening comprehension, the effects were not sustained over time. This highlights a significant challenge in integrating ELF perspectives. Although initial exposure can enhance learners' comprehension skills, these improvements may not be long-lasting unless sustained engagement and more production-oriented instruction are incorporated. This reinforces the need for teacher training programs to incorporate not only awareness-raising

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activities but also opportunities for active engagement with diverse English varieties in real-world contexts.

To bridge this gap, teacher education programs must offer more opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in sustained, reflective practice. Teachers should be encouraged not only to explore how ELF concepts can be integrated into classroom activities and materials but also to reflect on broader issues such as the cultural assumptions embedded in their teaching resources, the role of Standard English, and whether their materials adequately represent the diverse contexts in which English is used. By guiding pre-service teachers through critical reflection on these issues, teacher education programs can help them develop the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of English as a global lingua franca. Such an approach will empower them to design teaching practices that are more inclusive and aligned with the sociolinguistic realities of contemporary English.

The findings from Calvet-Terré and Llurda (2023) study further underscore this need. They reveal how deeply internalized ideologies –such as the prioritization of native-like forms and intolerance toward intelligible yet non-standard usage– persist even among pre-service teachers nearing the end of their training. These insights emphasize that simply introducing ELF concepts is insufficient; without targeted opportunities for critical reflection and guided application in authentic teaching contexts, these ideological barriers remain largely unchallenged. Therefore, teacher education programs in Spain must actively address such findings by embedding systematic reflection, practice-oriented ELF tasks, and ongoing mentorship.

Ultimately, fostering ELF awareness in pre-service teachers extends beyond adapting teaching materials; it involves transforming how teachers perceive the role of English in the world. If teacher education programs equip future educators with the tools to critically reflect on their own practices, challenge dominant ideologies like native-speakerism and standard language ideology, and embrace the diversity of Englishes, they will be better prepared to create inclusive, communicative learning environments that prepare students for real-world interaction in a multilingual world. In this way, pre-service teachers will play a central role in reshaping the landscape of ELT to reflect the global nature of English, and in equipping their students with the skills they need to communicate effectively and confidently in diverse, cross-cultural interactions.

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