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ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE

ILF E A BASE NACIONAL COMUM CURRICULAR:
O PAPEL FUNDAMENTAL DA FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES NA CONSTRUÇÃO E IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DESSE DIÁLOGO

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ABSTRACT: The current Brazilian National Core Curriculum (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018) adopts English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a guiding concept for English Language Teaching (ELT) across the country's basic education system. While the measure has sparked debate and controversy, ELF's inclusion in the document is generally seen as an innovative step. However, its implementation has brought significant challenges, especially for teachers who often lack a clear understanding of the concept or how to incorporate ELF-aware practices into their classrooms. These challenges underscore the pivotal role of teacher education in effectively integrating ELF into ELT in local contexts. Drawing on preliminary data from the research study *BNCC, ELF, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective (CNPq),* this paper examines how two groups of teachers, pre-service and in-service, respond to the challenges posed by the ELF-BNCC interplay. It explores their views on how this dialogue might evolve over time, emphasizing the importance of adopting a critical and decolonial lens in their daily practice**.** Initial findings suggest that younger, pre-service teachers are more at ease with ELF and its practical applications, while more experienced, in-service teachers, despite facing challenges rooted in traditional ELT paradigms, are beginning to reconsider their beliefs and classroom practices. As they work to understand ELF's pedagogical implications, many come to see it as a powerful tool for decolonizing ELT in Brazil. By positioning teacher education as a crucial link between policy and classroom practice, this paper advocates the need to equip educators not only with an understanding of ELF, but also with the critical tools to engage with it in meaningful, context-sensitive ways.
KEYWORDS: ELF. Brazilian National Common Core. ELT. Teacher Education.

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RESUMO: A atual Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018) adota o inglês como língua franca (ILF) como princípio orientador para o ensino do idioma na educação básica brasileira. Embora tenha gerado debates, sua inclusão no documento é geralmente reconhecida como inovadora. No entanto, a implementação do ILF tem se mostrado desafiadora, especialmente para professores(as) que carecem de uma compreensão clara do conceito e de orientações práticas para aplicá-lo em suas salas de aula. Esses desafios apontam para o papel crucial da formação docente na integração do ILF ao ensino de inglês em contextos locais. Com base em dados preliminares da pesquisa "BNCC, ELF e Formação de Professores sob uma Perspectiva Crítica e Decolonial" (CNPq), este artigo analisa como dois grupos de professores, em formação inicial e continuada, respondem aos desafios propostos pelo diálogo ELF-BNCC. O estudo explora como esse diálogo pode evoluir ao longo do tempo, destacando a importância de se adotar uma abordagem crítica e decolonial na prática pedagógica. Os achados iniciais indicam que professores em formação inicial se sentem mais à vontade com o ILF e suas aplicações, enquanto professores mais experientes, em formação continuada, apesar de certa resistência, começam a reconsiderar suas crenças e práticas. À medida que buscam compreender as implicações pedagógicas do ILF, muitos passam a vê-lo como uma ferramenta poderosa para a decolonização do ensino de inglês no Brasil. Dessa forma, este artigo destaca a necessidade de capacitar educadores não apenas com a compreensão do ILF, mas também com as ferramentas críticas necessárias para aplicá-lo de forma sensível ao contexto local.
Palavras-chave: ILF. BNCC. Ensino de Língua Inglesa. Formação de professors.

INTRODUCTION

As of 2017, Law No. 13,415 introduced significant reforms to Brazil's educational system, including a restructured framework for lower and upper secondary education (*Ensino Fundamental II/Ensino Médio*) and the official release of the final version of the National Common Curricular Base (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* – BNCC) (Brasil, 2018). In earlier drafts, foreign language (FL) instruction was encompassed under the broader curricular category of "Modern Foreign Languages" (*Línguas Estrangeiras Modernas* – LEM). However, in a surprising move, even to scholars who had been critically monitoring and analyzing the document, the final version narrowed this category exclusively to "English" (*Língua Inglesa* – LI).

Such a shift, which made English the only mandatory FL in Brazilian schools, both public and private, according to Rosa e Duboc (2022), reflects market-driven interests and a neoliberal rationale, flagrantly reducing the acquisition of the additional language

to its utilitarian function. However, pointing toward a more ideologically engaged direction, it is also said to provide access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for such engagement, fostering students' critical agency and active citizenship, while expanding opportunities for interaction and mobility, among other potential benefits.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Siqueira, 2022), I do not in any way question the importance of the English language in the contemporary world nor the significant gains for students, especially those from the socioeconomically disadvantaged classes of our society, who have mastery of the so-called global lingua franca of today. But when we see efforts to invest in public policies aimed at valuing and guaranteeing democratic access to language programs anchored in multilingual education, the colonial option (Sousa Santos, 2019), as reflected in laws like the one mentioned above, leads us to conclude that this only reveals the shortsightedness of the public officials responsible for language policies in our country, bluntly reaffirming their submission to the forces of monolingualism and coloniality that remain so prevalent in our society.

As Duboc (2017) pointed out in her critical analysis of the latest version of the BNCC, this is a considerable setback that could, at the very least, generate a deleterious marginalization of other languages within foreign or additional language pedagogy and, logically, threaten multilingual education initiatives in Brazil. In her view,

> the deliberate – and authoritarian – choice of English as the [sole] modern foreign language stands in opposition to the multilingual and intercultural orientation intended in the document [BNCC] and so valued by the contemporary global society, running the risk of falling into the traps of monolingual and colonialist logic [...], whose harmful effects have already been denounced by postcolonial studies and by (including Brazilian) theorists of Critical Applied Linguistics (Duboc, 2017, p. 8).[2]

Besides these changes to the disciplinary component, the BNCC surprisingly adopts the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a central framework for English

[2] Original in Brazilian Portuguese: *A escolha deliberada – e autoritária – da Língua Inglesa como a língua estrangeira moderna apresenta-se na contramão da orientação plurilíngue e intercultural pretendida no documento e tão cara à sociedade global contemporânea, correndo o risco de cair nas armadilhas da lógica monolíngue e colonialista [...], cujos efeitos nocivos já vêm sendo denunciados por estudos pós-coloniais e por teóricos (brasileiros, inclusive) da Linguística Aplicada Crítica*. (All translations are my responsibility).

Language Teaching (ELT), a move that has sparked heated debate and, as probably expected, a lot of controversy, despite being recognized by some scholars and a good number of practitioners as a somewhat progressive and forward-thinking step.

As years have passed, the *de facto* implementation of the National Curriculum has unveiled challenges of different kinds, especially for teachers, who frequently lack a clear understanding of the ELF concept or how to incorporate ELF-aware[3] practices into their classrooms. These challenges, in my view, highlight the pivotal role of teacher education in effectively integrating ELF into ELT in local contexts. This is due to the fact that changes and adaptations are needed in both pre-service and in-service teacher education, since teaching English from a lingua franca perspective leads us to question various notions traditionally upheld by the concept of English as a foreign language (EFL) which along the years have in many respects become outdated and thus call for revision and updating.

Drawing on partial data from a research study entitled *BNCC, ELF, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective, sponsored by CNPq,* this paper examines and discusses how two groups of Brazilian teachers, novice and experienced, respond to the challenges posed by the BNCC (Brasil, 2018), especially with regard to the adoption of the ELF concept, which still needs to be thoroughly unpacked in terms of practical applications. Here, I explore participants' views on how the ELF-BNCC dialogue might evolve over time, emphasizing the importance of adopting a critical and decolonial lens in their daily practice. Initial findings suggest that younger, pre-service teachers, are more at ease with ELF and its practical applications, while more experienced, in-service teachers, despite facing challenges rooted in traditional ELT paradigms such as EFL and its well-established tenets, are beginning to reconsider their beliefs and classroom practices. As both cohorts work to understand ELF's pedagogical implications, many come to see it as a powerful tool for decolonizing ELT in Brazil. By positioning teacher education as a crucial link between policy and classroom reality, I shall argue that it must now recognize and embrace the need to equip ELT educators not only with a clear understanding of ELF, but also with the critical tools to engage with it in meaningful and context-sensitive ways.

[3] I use the concept of ELF-awareness here to refer to the process of engaging with ELF research and developing one's own comprehension of the ways in which ELF can be integrated in one's own teaching reality (see Sifakis; Bayyurt, 2018).

1 BNCC AND ELF: ALIGNMENTS AND MISALIGNMENTS

As previously mentioned, Brazil's basic education is currently governed by a National Curriculum which, in the case of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), imposes English as the sole language and introduces the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF). This is based on the argument that we are dealing with a denationalized language which, due to its spread throughout the world and the extensive variation it now encompasses, no longer aligns with fixed national identities, traditional norms and certain past notions that have long sustained the globally recognized industry known as ELT.

It is important to mention that the BNCC, as mandated by law, now serves as the foundation for curricular guidelines nationwide, informing the development of state and municipal curricula in alignment with the national document. regardless of the specific linguistic needs of each educational context in one of the world's largest and most diverse countries. In fact, at this point, the imposition of English, largely driven by neoliberal agendas that frame it as the language of science, communication, technology, international businesses, globalization, professional success, etc., means that students are required to learn English first, while all other languages, whether spoken in Brazil or not, have been relegated to a secondary and largely marginal status, at best considered optional. This is, for example, the case of Spanish, which in many contexts had begun to dispute with English offers in regular schools.

It would be naïve on our part to disregard the fact that, given the current global power and dominance of English, no language policy concerning the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages could afford to overlook the importance of ensuring access to English for students in basic education, especially in the public sector. Initially through the brutal expansion of the British Empire, and later as the world increasingly came under the political, cultural, and military influence of the United States, English has, perhaps unsurprisingly, achieved a level of global hegemony unmatched by any other language. As Mohanty (2009) points out, English has shifted from being the language of colonization to the language of neo-imperialism, offering the world a wide range of justifications for its urgent acquisition. Brazil is no exception in this power dynamic, where English emerges as a tool (or perhaps even as a weapon) in the pursuit of a linguistic capital which positions its users as key players in a highly competitive global agenda.

A closer look at the BNCC reveals that the introductory section of the 'English Language' component for *Ensino Fundamental II* (Lower Secondary) clearly aligns with the previously mentioned characteristics of a global scenario increasingly driven by the demand for English. Moreover, it expands on these ideas by arguing that learning English "can provide everyone access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for engagement and participation, contributing to [the development] of students' critical agency and the exercise of [their] active citizenship" (Brasil, 2018, p. 241). Due to this, according to the document, a formative character is established here, framing English learning within a perspective of conscious and critical language education, grounded in three key implications to the curriculum:

> [The] first implication is that [the formative nature of language learning] requires a reassessment of the relationships between language, territory, and culture, given that English speakers are no longer found only in countries where English is the official language. [...] Some concepts no longer seem adequate for understanding a language that has "gone viral" and become "hybridized," such as the concept of foreign language, which has been strongly criticized for its Eurocentric bias. [...] The approach taken by the component in the BNCC prioritizes **the social and political function of English** and, in this sense, recognizes it in its status of **lingua franca**. [...] The second implication concerns the broadening of the concept of literacy – or more precisely, **multiliteracies** – as conceived [...] within social practices [...] that connect and intertwine different semiotic systems and languages. [...] The third implication relates to teaching approaches. Recognizing English as a lingua franca entails understanding that certain beliefs – such as the notion that "there is a better English to be taught" – must be questioned. It calls for addressing local uses of English and related linguistic resources from the perspective of building a linguistic repertoire, which should be analyzed and made available to students for their use, always taking into account the condition of intelligibility in the linguistic interaction (Brasil, 2018, pp. 241–242, emphasis in original).

Broadly speaking, the adoption of the ELF concept by the BNCC as a backdrop for the developments proposed within the description of the component 'English language' can be seen as an innovation. However, as Duboc (2019) clarifies, at first sight, it gives us the impression that its insertion has practically been parachuted into the component, since it was not present in previous versions of the document nor in any other regulatory document for Brazil's national regular education. This, to some extent, may explain why many teachers showed (and still do) to be unfamiliar with the term and its developments. In this sense, it is also important to consider, as Rosa, Duboc and Siqueira (2023) note, that although the expression "to fall from a parachute" in Portuguese suggests something sudden and unexpected, implemented without preparation or planning, "the parachute itself is, in fact, a device that allows for a softened landing – in other words, when used

intentionally and with planning, it leads to the exact opposite of the usual meaning of the expression" (p. 10). Thus, by acknowledging the polysemy of the expression, the authors explain that, depending on who is using the parachute or who is observing it descend toward the ground, different interpretations may emerge, and they add:

> From the perspective of Brazilian scientific production on ELF and its effects on certain agents in the educational field temporarily acting as *policy makers*, we are dealing with those who wear the parachute, whose fall is foreseen, calculated, and planned. On the other hand, from the perspective of the many English teachers who, overnight, came across the term ELF in a regulatory document of the ill-fated curricular component MFL [Modern Foreign Language) – now just English – we are dealing with those who watch the fall (Rosa; Duboc; Siqueira, 2023, p. 10, italics in the original).

Another important point regarding the insertion of the concept of ELF in the BNCC to be explored reveals a certain misalignment, concerns a clear contradiction between what is advocated in the initial part of the component's introductory text – where certain theoretical premises aimed at a different understanding of the English language are discussed, and the didactic frameworks presented later in the practical section basically describing linguistic content. According to Duboc (2019), a perspective I fully endorse, this is fundamentally an epistemological conflict, which she critically addresses as follows:

> In the introduction, the social and political function of language is emphasized, seemingly expanding, at first glance, beyond the technicist and instrumental function often attributed to the foreign language. [...] If, on the one hand, the considerations presented in the introductory text align with concepts and categories relevant to rethinking the status of English in contemporary times; on the other hand, the analysis of the year-by-year didactic frameworks paradoxically reveals lapses into content rigidification which, despite the document's professed adherence to a spiral curriculum design, echo an updated discourse that masks traditionally taught language content within a logic of linearity and hierarchy (Simple Present in 6th grade > Simple Past in 7th grade > Future Forms in 8th grade)[4] (Duboc, 2019, p. 17).

As we can see, such observation clearly identifies and illustrates the aforementioned conflict, and, very pertinently, Duboc (2019, p. 17) prompts us to reflect once again by posing the following question: "How can a document embrace the creative, hybrid, and

[4] Within the Brazilian educational system, the *Fundamental II* level comprises 6th (*6º ano*) to 9th (*9º ano*) grades.

local uses of English in its status of a lingua franca if the document itself organizes topics, knowledge objects, and skills in a linear and hierarchical way, with examples of fixed and stable linguistic content?"[5] In fact, this and many other questions are extremely necessary at this point and should be explored as the development of different state and municipal curricula derived from the BNCC progresses throughout the country.

Within this same vein of discussion, other points are raised, for example, by Santana and Kupske (2020), who draw attention to the strangeness that the term ELF still causes to teachers and what may arise from this entire process. As the authors emphasize, "the publication of the document does not guarantee that a proposed concept, such as ELF, will not be understood as just another new idealization that will not go beyond the conceptual level; nor does it guarantee that the term ELF will not, for example, be applied in practice merely as a synonym for EFL" (Santana; Kupske, 2020, p. 163).

In other words, as these and other authors advise, we cannot ignore the fact that the shift in guiding principles from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) brings to light various theoretical and practical mismatches, with direct implications for classroom practice, many of which are still notably little understood by English teachers, the frontline agents in our schools and, consequently, the first to be affected by such changes. Due to this, it is worth posing another question: are our teachers, especially those in basic education, prepared for these changes in the field of EFL in light of the demands imposed by contemporary times?

The answer to such a general question may be much more complex than we imagine, particularly when I came across some other doubts from the participants of the study mentioned here. I add here some of them: "What is ELF? How practical is it for my 40-minute class reality?"; "How can I teach ELF if I don't even know what it is?"; "What actually changes in my classroom with the adoption of ELF?"; "Now, with ELF, is everything possible? I don't correct students anymore?"; "What type of training and recycling will I need to work with ELF?"; "With ELF, should I disregard American and British English and instead embrace 'Brazilian English'?"

[5] In the original: *Como pode um documento acolher os usos criativos, híbridos e locais do inglês em seu status de língua franca se o próprio documento organiza, linear e hierarquicamente, temas, objetos de conhecimento e habilidades, com exemplos de conteúdos linguísticos fixos e estáveis*?

Bearing this in mind, and taking these questions into consideration, I will explore in the following section some data extracted from the cited research study in order to attempt to grasp participants' understanding of ELF and the implications of its adoption by the BNCC. I will also examine whether they feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective (in contrast to an EFL perspective) and whether the professional education they have received (in-service) or are currently receiving (pre-service) meets the demands emerging from this new scenario.

2 ELF AND BNCC: HEARING BRAZILIAN TEACHERS

Entitled *English as a Lingua Franca, BNCC, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective,* this project, for which I am the lead researcher, is funded by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). The excerpts analyzed here are part of a longer questionnaire, one of the data collection instruments used in the study. The main goal of the work is to promote advanced studies on ELF and its political-pedagogical implications for our language education context, aiming at the professional development of student-teachers and in-service teachers in the city of Salvador, Brazil, and its metropolitan area. It is important to highlight that many English teachers in Brazil start their careers without a university degree. So, it is quite common for them to enroll in teacher education programs (Letras courses) after gaining some teaching experience, especially those working in the private sector.

The study encompasses 12 local English teachers (n=12), selected through personal invitation, with 6 pre-service and 6 in-service teachers. In terms of gender, there are 10 women and 2 men, with ages ranging from 21 to 55 years. The teaching experience varies from 1 to 30 years. The instruments used for data collection are: (1) questionnaires, (2) focus groups, and (3) non-participant class observations. In terms of educational contexts for each cohort, four of the pre-service teachers are currently enrolled at UFBA's language research and extension programs, two teach at elite private schools, while all the in-service teachers are employed in regular state public schools.

The data explored in this paper consists of three questions extracted from one of the questionnaires, where the broader issue involves participants' familiarity with the ELF concept, its developments and implications along with their reactions towards the adoption of ELF by the National Curriculum. It also explores if and to what extent they

think they are prepared to teach their ELT classes under an ELF perspective. More specifically, here are the questions posed to participants that I will explore:

Question 1: *How familiar are you with the ELF concept, its developments and implications?*

Question 2: *How do you evaluate the adoption of the ELF concept by the National Curriculum (BNCC)?*

Question 3: *How do you evaluate your formal education in terms of preparing you to become an English teacher today? Do you feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective as recommended by the National Curriculum?*

In terms of data analysis and discussion, it is important to mention that for each question, some direct quotes from the participants will be presented. However, due to space constraints, only excerpts from a select few respondents will be included. Each teacher is identified by the letter T and a number from 1 to 12. *In-service teachers* are numbered from 1 to 6, and *pre-service teachers* from 7 to 12. Questions and answers were originally written in Portuguese, so the translation to English is my responsibility. The analysis is primarily descriptive, incorporating some inferential statistics, and is grounded in the theoretical framework outlined above.

The initial question to address is: *How familiar are you with the ELF concept, its developments and implications?* Based on the responses, in-service or more experienced teachers seem to be LESS FAMILIAR with the term ELF. For example, T1 admitted to not having read much about the concept, but due to its inclusion in the National Curriculum, he recognizes the need to study the topic: *I haven't really read much, but I want to improve my knowledge about it*. T2, in her turn, argues that she has some familiarity with the ELF concept, and that its adoption by the National Curriculum has motivated her to conduct more in-depth studies on the topic: *I have been trying to update myself on the ELF concept and its implications, so I could say that I have some familiarity with the term*. T3 says she is fairly familiar with the term ELF, but, in her view, the insertion of the concept in the BNCC is basically an action to use a concept that is in vogue at the moment, without much clarity as to practical actions and implications: *I am sort of familiar with the term, but I think it was inserted in the National Curriculum more as part of a "concept update" than as a proposal for pedagogical practice*.

Pre-service or less experienced teachers on the other hand appear to be MORE FAMILIAR with the ELF concept, as the topic is commonly addressed in their current university programs, particularly in Applied Linguistics courses. T7, for instance, says she is well-versed in ELF due to its growing significance in ELT: *I'm very familiar with the concept of ELF due to its growing importance in ELT*. Equally, T9 assumes her familiarity with the concept and points out that ELF already plays an important role in her everyday ELT practices: *I'm very familiar with ELF*; *I think it directly influences my pedagogical practice*. T10 shares a similar perspective, noting that although she has limited experience with the BNCC as a novice teacher, she is familiar with ELF through her undergraduate studies and participation in the "ELF Brasil-UFBA" research group: *Despite my limited experience, ELF is familiar to me due to the opportunities offered in my university course, the disciplines, and the research group I participate in*. Overall, of the six in-service teachers, only two expressed confidence in their familiarity with ELF. In contrast, five pre-service teachers out of six reported being familiar with the concept.

As for the second question, *How do you evaluate the adoption of the ELF concept by the National Curriculum (BNCC)*?, the more experienced teachers were evenly split in their assessment of the adoption of ELF in the BNCC: three viewed it as a positive step, while the other half saw it as challenging. When justifying her response, T2 stated: *I believe the term was inserted in the BNCC as a way of using current concepts, as well as interculturality and multiliteracies*. T4, in turn, said that *incorporating ELF into our practice means going beyond linguistic topics and addressing social, cultural and political issues; it is about empowering our students to use a language that allows them to connect with the world,* whereas T6 reported that *the concept was added to the BNCC because it is in line with the idea proposed in the document of considering the plurality of native and non-native speakers, as well as prioritizing communication rather than accuracy in the use of the language*.

In the group of pre-service teachers, the majority – four of them – acknowledged that the insertion of ELF in the National Curriculum was a challenging step, while one viewed it positively and another considered it a right decision. Some of the reflections from this group of teachers are presented here. T7, for example, affirms: *I have some resistance in implementing this concept in a traditional educational environment like ours as there is still an overemphasis on Standard English and a reluctance or neglect to*

recognize linguistic variety. For T11, *the adoption of ELF by the BNCC makes me see progress in challenging the traditional EFL vision, but I believe there is still a long way to go before this happens effectively*. T12, in turn, says that *ELF should be implemented despite the problems surrounding a context as complicated as that of Brazilian education, which not only does it face discrepancies in materials and resources between private and public schools, but also the colonized and rooted vision in the minds of the majority of Brazilians regarding the study of English and what is considered fluency and proficiency*.

As we can see, the responses are quite insightful and touch on various aspects, not only regarding what these teachers know and feel about the concept of ELF, but also the challenges they may face due to deeply rooted beliefs and dogmas related to ELT. These challenges also include resistance from students and other stakeholders, such as parents, coordinators, school directors, teacher educators, etc., who may still hold a colonized mindset shaped by the longstanding traditions of the ELT industry, which is largely grounded in the EFL perspective, with all its expectations and implications. In other words, regardless of each group's level of expertise and experience, the presence of ELF in the BNCC is generally perceived as challenging. However, it is also seen as something that, if better understood and implemented according to the specificities of each context, can surely have a positive impact on classroom practice.

Regarding the final (double) question, *How do you evaluate your education in terms of preparing you to become an English teacher today? Do you feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective as recommended by the National Curriculum?*, I begin with the second part by highlighting that three different responses emerged across both groups: YES, PARTIALLY, and NO. Among the in-service teachers, the responses were evenly distributed, with two of the six participants aligning with each of the three categories. In the pre-service cohort, the majority (four) chose 'partially,' while the remaining two selected 'yes'. The good news here is that none of them considered themselves unprepared to teach English from an ELF perspective.

When it comes to reflecting on their formal education and training to become English language teachers in today's world, all in-service teachers admitted that, in retrospect, their university courses did not adequately prepare them for the current challenges faced by English language professionals. According to them, much of what they know is the result of personal effort to learn, adapt, and grow in their careers, especially

when it comes to new theories and alternative perspectives in teaching and learning. T2, for instance, states: *My initial training was not very efficient, but my curiosity and desire to learn were very strong. However, I don't feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective yet.* T3, in turn, says: *In my context, everything I know or have learned was due to my own initiative – not because it was offered to me; zero preparation for this new reality.* T4 expresses a similar view: *My training and development took place mostly during my graduate studies (MA and PhD), where I had the opportunity to focus on these issues. Today, I feel prepared to engage in teaching practices from an ELF perspective.*

The novice teachers, on the other hand, expressed a more positive view of their formal education. In their responses, they affirmed that their courses, to some extent, broadened their understanding by addressing topics such as ELF and the development of ELF-aware materials,[6] as illustrated by T9's response: *During my undergrad, internships and additional training courses I was able to acquire experience and knowledge to create materials and use tools and strategies aligned with an ELF perspective*.

Despite this more optimistic view, it is important to consider that much work remains to be done especially in the field of teacher education. As evidenced by the responses of T10 and T12, many future teachers complete their undergraduate courses feeling that, even though they have been exposed to ELF-related theories and recent developments in ELT, the reality they encounter, especially in regular schools, presents significant challenges that go far beyond language proficiency or familiarity with contemporary concepts and practices. This is illustrated in T10's response: *I'm not sure if I'm prepared to apply ELF in my reality. Despite having had theoretical contact with ELF studies, I feel that the lack of resources and support from the institution are still difficult obstacles to implement such a practice*. In that sense, T12 expresses a similar concern: *Not completely. I feel that during my initial training there was a lack of more real and practical examples, thinking about the reality that we find not only in terms of resources and/or equipment to promote more dynamic classes, but also the mentality that you will find in the classroom regarding learning English in our regular schools.*

[6] By ELF-aware materials I mean teaching resources designed and/or adapted to reflect English as it is used among speakers from diverse *linguacultural* backgrounds. Such materials are expected to consider and privilege diversity, flexibility, real-world variation, and communication strategies rather than fixed native-speaker based norms.

These reflections remind us that one of the greatest challenges lies in the prevailing mentality surrounding various aspects of ELT. In this sense, we are once again led back to consider the notion of ELT as an essentially colonial enterprise, a genuine product of colonialism (Pennycook, 1998), and as we have discussed on several occasions, there is an urgent need to decolonize its underlying assumptions and deeply ingrained conceptions, so that we can move beyond the traditional EFL model, which is rooted in an ethnocentric view of language and culture. This shift, as one might agree, calls for the implementation of, among other changes, a critical, decolonial, and ELF-aware perspective to ELT – one that actively challenges and dismantles the barriers maintained by a legion of gatekeepers who must come to terms with the fact that sustaining such conventional ELT orientations is no longer viable, as they have become increasingly obsolete.

It is precisely within this context, considering the Brazilian educational landscape, where the concept of ELF is adopted in the National Curriculum for the 'English' component, that I recognize and advocate for the crucial role of teacher education in building and implementing this dialogue. This is what I will explore in the following section.

3 TEACHER EDUCATION AS A CATALYST

Based on the theoretical elaborations and the analysis of selected data from the aforementioned research project, I now put forward the thesis that teacher education is to serve as a catalyst in enabling the effective articulation between ELF and the BNCC in the Brazilian context. Despite the inherent tensions involved in embedding a complex and fluid concept such as ELF into the text of the curricular document that clearly diverge from the inclusive, hybrid, and mixed nature of the phenomenon, and the linearity and hierarchical organization of content that represents a clear incongruity in relation to the principles of an ELF perspective (see Seidlhofer, 2011; Kiczkowiak; Lowe, 2018; Kordia, 2019, etc.), many of the precepts found in the BNCC for the English component "are worthy of recognition for their attempt to break away from conventional practices" (Duboc, 2019, p. 19). Thus, the already cited epistemological conflict should not be seen as something that cannot be overcome or, at the very least, effectively managed. That is why I think it is essential to work with teachers at both pre-service and in-service levels.

Once they feel confident and aware of what lies ahead in terms of teaching English from an ELF perspective, whether in theoretical or practical terms, they will recognize (and act upon) the fact that there are always opportunities for rupture, either through spaces of maneuver (Morgan, 2010) or through the curricular and programmatic fissures that emerge in everyday classroom practice (Duboc, 2015).

Before turning our attention to the teachers themselves, I would like to focus on teacher education, paying closer attention to the role of teacher educators within this increasingly challenging landscape of ELT. As a de-nationalized language, English, which today has more non-native speakers than native ones, presents a number of characteristics that must be considered when engaging in the process of teaching and learning it. These include high levels of hybridity, significant diversity among its users, and, most importantly, the potential it offers speakers to engage in constant and meaningful intercultural interactions with interlocutors from across the globe, representing a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The first step to be considered in this particular issue is the proposal to conceive teacher education as a space for *unlearning*, that is, an environment where we, as teacher educators, are willing to engage in a reflective process leaving behind certainties and, with humility, revisiting and rethinking the political, ideological, epistemic, and pedagogical foundations upon which we base our practices in *Letras* programs across the country. In this sense, we move away from what futurist author Alvin Toffler predicted in the final decade of the last century, when he stated that the illiterate of the 21st century would not be those who cannot read or write, but those who are unable to learn, unlearn, and relearn. As posed by Sifakis (2014), *learning* relates to experience, the creation and reinforcement of habits; *unlearning* involves challenging existing knowledge and creating space for novelty; and *relearning* points to engaging in actions that rebuild connections and realign directions. These premises, I believe, can be connected to what Walsh (2018) conceives as a decolonial praxis, in which *learning to unlearn in order to relearn* is a core component of decoloniality. Among other insights, Walsh reinforces the importance of viewing our daily practice as "pedagogical scenarios of learning, unlearning, relearning, reflection, and action" (Walsh, 2018, p. 88), reminding us that what matters most is achieving an engaged, emancipatory, and liberatory pedagogy. In other words, we must abandon a lot of our certainties and unlearn in order to learn and think otherwise.

As such movements take place within teacher education, it is only natural that many of these changes begin to shape teachers' daily practices, given that they are being educated on new bases, especially when we consider the different issues that must cut across the area as a whole if we are to foster educators capable of developing critical and decolonial attitudes. It is along these lines that Duboc (2023), challenges us to think and do ELT otherwise. Drawing on lessons from decoloniality, the author argues that it is impossible to "denounce coloniality if one is not able to identify and interrogate coloniality from the inside out" (Duboc, 2023, p. 138). So, in this sense, our goal as ELT professionals working in a field heavily influenced by colonial forces is ultimately to interrupt coloniality (Menezes de Souza; Duboc, 2021).

A similar correlation can be made with the common pursuit of the critical educator, or, as some prefer, the critical pedagogue. As we know, we do not form critical teachers overnight (and no one becomes critical in an instant), especially if we, as teacher educators, are not willing to serve at the very least as examples – and perhaps even as sources of inspiration – for both current and future colleagues we are to work with. In other words, how can we expect the teachers we prepare and work with to adopt a critical-decolonial stance if our own posture, beliefs, and behaviors often embody the very opposite of the expectations and principles we aim to promote?

It is no secret that many of us remain tied to the ideological, epistemological, and pedagogical dogmas of the past, maintaining an almost dogmatic loyalty to certain EFL-sustaining principles, such as the native-speaker model, monolingualism, hegemonic cultural references, ethnocentrism, prestige accents, excessive normativity, and the exclusion of English varieties from the classroom, among others. As we know, these principles no longer resonate within ELT under ELF, World Englishes, and Global Englishes perspectives, nor across various fields of language studies as they once did. After all, as previously pointed out, "[...] a good deal of our taken-for-granted ELT practices have been threatened with the prospect of being declared obsolete for the simple reason that they do not take into account some of the most significant characteristics of [English as lingua franca]" Rajagopalan (2004, p. 113-114)[7]. Due to this, as the author further

[7] While Rajagopalan refers to the concept of World English (WE) in the original text, I interpret his description of the global spread and diversification of English as closely aligned with the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which is why I adopt ELF in the citation.

argues, "those of us who accept the notion of [ELF] need to go back to the drawing board and rethink our entire approach to ELT, no matter what the specific context we happen to find ourselves working in." (Rajagopalan, 2004, p. 112).

As I have been proposing here, going back to the books and rethinking many aspects related to our professional life, is not a task that concerns only teachers, but primarily teacher educators, who, I believe, also play a leading role in this increasingly challenging endeavor of teaching English to the world. With this in mind, and taking the idea of a critical and decolonial teacher education as a backdrop, I bring here a set of questions (see Table 1 below) intended to support reflection on decision-making processes that might, in some way, help turn our views as teacher educators toward more democratic horizons and, above all, toward possibilities for rethinking and reshaping ELT. In other words, to conceive and do ELT otherwise.

Table 1 - Questions for reflection from the teacher educator's perspective

(1) What epistemological, political, and ideological foundations should we adopt in our teacher education practice? (2) Which beliefs should be deconstructed, and which should be embraced? (3) What conception of language should prevail in our theoretical approaches? (4) What mentalities, assumptions, and postures should be decolonized? (5) Which practices and models need to be questioned, expanded, or discontinued? (6) Which cultures, accents, and worlds (both English-speaking and others) should be prioritized in the classroom?	(7) What curricular and programmatic revisions and updates should be undertaken? (8) What assessment systems should we adopt, adapt, or create? (9) Which materials are most suitable to select for new realities? (10) What pluralities should we embrace, and what other lenses should we use? (11) Which literatures in English should be made available in teacher education practices? (12) What dialogues should we cultivate with our peers, fellow teacher educators, and other researchers?

Elaborated by author

For sure, these questions are far from exhaustive, especially because they must be asked and expanded from a local perspective, involving both teacher educators and teachers who, together, can reflect on and plan both a teacher education process and pedagogical practices that respond to the needs of their specific contexts and, consequently, of their learners.

Bearing this in mind, I would like to expand further on my proposal to provoke my fellow teacher educators by advancing the argument that, if we aim for English language teacher education that is aligned with the demands of contemporary times, particularly within Global South contexts, we must begin considering a relearning from new onto-epistemological foundations. That is, as aforementioned, we should recognize that it is possible to conceive and do teacher education otherwise. In light of this, I attempt to outline below some challenges that I consider essential when reframing teacher education in dialogue with the concept of ELF (Table 2). In this context, and assuming the role of a catalyst, teacher education must ensure that English teaching from an ELF perspective, as advocated by the BNCC, can only be effectively implemented if changes and adaptations are made at multiple levels. Teacher education, in my view, is essential for turning this dialogue into concrete action.

Table 2: Challenges for reframing teacher education in dialogue with ELF

• Conceive Teacher Education (TE) as a space for unlearning, learning, and relearning through critical perspectives, recognizing language teaching as a political act; • Take TE as central in integrating ELF-based ELT practices, while accounting for the complexity and diversity of local contexts; • Approach ELF and its developments through a critical, local, and potentially decolonial lens within TE programs; • Emphasize locally grounded understandings of ELF, focusing on its context-specific, idiosyncratic use in varied educational settings; • Value interculturality by encouraging students' to engage in translingual practices and make full use of their multilingual and multicultural repertoires in the classroom; • Explore ELF's potential to decolonize ELT, recognizing that decolonizing ELT is intrinsically connected to decolonizing TE and vice-versa;	• Reject monoglossic ideologies, native-speakerism, accentism, etc., by actively decolonizing beliefs, attitudes, concepts, practices, curricula, methodologies, and assessment systems; • Critically evaluate global ELT materials produced by the industry under an ELF lens; prioritize the use and development of local materials that avoid neutral, decontextualized themes and instead center socially relevant, real-world issues; • Decolonize and expand ELF scholarship by welcoming and legitimizing a diversity of voices, especially those historically marginalized or silenced, across educational policy, research, and pedagogy; • Provide access to a plurality of ELF research and findings, stimulating teachers to draw on these resources in order to think and do ELT otherwise (Duboc, 2023).

Elaborated by author

At the same time, I consider it equally relevant to the ongoing discussion to briefly present Duboc's (2023) suggestions, who, drawing on Duboc and Siqueira (2020),

presents some decolonial attitudes or gestures that, in her view, can serve as inspiration for both English teachers and teacher educators. These actions potentially indicate concrete ways to challenge behaviors and attitudes characterized by Anjum and Shah, (2024, p. 11) as "colonial compliance and pedagogy of complacency" which remain so prevalent in our academic and professional environments:

> i. fostering epistemic disobedience and de-linking, […] making noise in the well-established Western modes of knowing toward our detachment from the ties of Western-based ideas;
>
> ii. thinking otherwise, that is, "developing constant and vigilant analysis of what is known and, mainly, who knows in attempts to change not only the content of the conversation but also the terms of the conversation" (Duboc; Siqueira, 2020, p. 238);
>
> iii. decolonizing between the cracks: rather than a revolutionary move, I still find it necessary to acknowledge teachers' potentialities in those small places and spaces within classroom practices, the cracks, the gaps, the fissures of the curriculum, so to speak, as fruitful opportunities to interrogate and interrupt racial micro-aggressions;
>
> iv. *andar perguntando*: the expression inspired by Mexican Maya-people Tojolabal cosmology […] is in line with Freire's pedagogy of the question toward a genuine horizontal dialogue in which multiple perspectives are ethically acknowledged. One of the implications of this decolonial gesture lies in its potential to go beyond content-based language classes in which classrooms become arenas for meaningful debates around real social problems (Duboc, 2023, pp. 139-140).

It is important to clarify that the points I raise here are not to be interpreted as a "witch hunt," nor should they suggest that everything accomplished so far in the field of English teacher education is completely outdated and therefore must be discarded. On the contrary, new knowledge builds upon existing knowledge, and in science, every advancement shall acknowledge its origins while pointing toward new directions as part of an ongoing process that is to keep moving forward.

My expectation is that these reflections serve as a starting point for us, scholars, researchers, and ELT professionals, to critically examine whether, and to what extent, we may be clinging to our comfort zones, neglecting aspects of our duties that need to be, at minimum, updated. In other words, I basically seek to offer a glimpse of what we, as

contemporary English teacher educators, can access in order to perhaps embark on an inner journey, whether as professionals and/or active citizens, to ultimately decide what makes sense for us and our daily practices. It is my belief that by engaging in critical reflection on our work, we can determine how relevant or obsolete different conceptions are within our particular contexts as "making room for reflexivity in already packed curricula poses many challenges and questions" (Morán Panero, 2024, p. 121).

CONCLUDING WORDS

The main objective of this paper was to explore the thesis that teacher education plays a crucial role as a mediator in the dialogue between the National Curriculum (BNCC) and its approach to the newly introduced component, English (*Língua Inglesa*), now the only mandatory foreign/additional language in the Brazilian educational system. By acknowledging the political function of English, the BNCC has then adopted the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which, according to document, implies that certain beliefs historically associated to the EFL tradition should be contested and reframed.

Taking into account some responses to questions related to this theme, provided by participants (pre-service and in-service teachers) in the research study *BNCC, ELF, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective*, I arrived at a few conclusions I would like to share in this final session of the article.

First, ELF and ELF-related studies are gradually, yet steadily, being incorporated into teacher education agendas and curricula in both undergraduate and graduate courses in Brazil, and I must admit that the BNCC has played a role in reinforcing this trend. Despite this, the concept of ELF remains somewhat unclear for many teachers, and due to various pedagogical, institutional, structural, and cultural factors, teaching English from an ELF perspective is still perceived as a significant challenge.

Second, younger (pre-service) teachers appear to be more open to ELF and its practical developments, while more experienced (in-service) teachers, in spite of being challenged by the constraints of traditional ELT tenets, are starting to reimagine their teaching practices as they explore the political and pedagogical dimensions of ELF. Although not explored in depth, both groups recognize the potential of ELF as a powerful

element for decolonizing ELI and for rethinking and reframing teacher education more broadly.

On a final note, I would like to point out that the coloniality of the English language, much like that of ELT, both enduring legacies of colonialism, remains a well-documented reality, long subjected to critique, resistance, and, at this point, calls for reform. While many of the issues discussed here may not directly impact teachers across all contexts, it is crucial to recognize that teaching English today goes beyond merely transmitting a language of considerable power, influence, and value.

Particularly in Global South contexts, these practices represent acts of resistance and disobedience against the hegemonic forces that maintain the abyssal divide between legitimized knowledge producers from the Global North and the perpetual consumers from other parts of the world. By advocating for the crucial role of teacher education in facilitating the integration of ELF into everyday classroom practices, as outlined in the BNCC, this approach becomes, among other things, a step toward decolonizing ELT. With this in mind, I see teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, as a fundamental space for this transformative process. In fact, it is within teacher education that we can actively challenge hegemonic structures and move toward more inclusive, contextually relevant teaching practices.

The small portion of data from my ongoing study with non-native teachers of English in Brazil, once again, suggests that change is already on the horizon in both teaching perspectives and teacher education as a whole. This is particularly evident as the long-established principles of ELT are increasingly viewed as neither untouchable nor immutable and, in many cases, as already mentioned, are now considered outdated, if not irrelevant. By reinforcing this potential for change, I would say that it is long overdue to recognize that teaching English today is far more than mere language instruction, it is a profound act of agency, resistance, and redefinition in the face of enduring colonial legacies. In this sense, it is crucial to acknowledge that the urgency of rethinking ELT through critical and decolonial lenses has never been greater. Many of us, as teachers and teacher educators worldwide, clearly assume that the persistent coloniality of English and ELT demands critical engagement, resistance, and transformative pedagogical action.

All in all, working alongside movements that envision a rewarding process of unlearning in order to relearn in every sense can in many ways demonstrate that teaching and learning English in these contemporary times goes way beyond putting together organized and well-founded pedagogical tasks, it is a mission for life, since we are all the time dealing with and impacting the lives of many people. As a Global South scholar – at least within ELF studies today – I see our diverse Global South ELT contexts as a privileged arena where this revolution holds great potential to unfold and develop. I extend here my invitation to anyone who would like to join us in this exciting and promising endeavor.

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