

English as a lingua franca in language teacher education in Argentina: unpacking teacher educators' voices

Inglés como lengua franca en la formación docente en Argentina: desentrañando las voces de las formadoras

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Abstract

This duoethnographic study examines how two teacher educators in an Argentine English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) programme have constructed their understanding of English as Lingua Franca (ELF) and sought to align their curricula accordingly. Recent debates have increasingly focused on tensions between neoliberal and social justice agendas, particularly regarding conceptualizations of English and pedagogical responses to the rise of English as a global language. Despite the growing influence of ELF and EIL, traditional views continue to dominate both theory and practice (Marlina, 2018; Rosa, 2021). While research has heightened the need for ELF-informed curricula and teacher education (Crowther et al., 2024; Matsuda, 2017), there remains a gap in understanding how ELTE programmes concretely foster such engagement. Through reflective dialogue and narrative inquiry, the study provides evidence of two teacher educators' epistemological and pedagogical shifts, institutional constraints, and the co-existence of diverse perspectives within the same programme. By centering educators' voices and professional agency, this research contributes to emerging work on transformative ELF pedagogies and offers critical insights into the local enactment of global English paradigms in ELTE. The study also underscores the value of duoethnography in examining intra-institutional perspectives and practices.

Key words: English as a Lingua Franca, English language teacher education, duoethnography, conceptualizations, practices.

Resumen

Esta dúo-etnografía examina cómo dos formadoras de docentes de inglés de un profesorado en Argentina han construido una concepción teórica y una pedagogía del inglés como lengua franca (ILF). Algunos debates recientes en el campo de la formación docente dan cuenta de las tensiones entre las agendas neoliberales y de justicia social, y la creciente repercusión de paradigmas como el ILF o lengua internacional. Aun así, persisten perspectivas más tradicionales sobre las lenguas a nivel teórico y pedagógico (Marlina, 2018; Rosa, 2021). La literatura revela la necesidad de integrar el ILF al currículo y la formación docente inicial (Crowther et al., 2024; Matsuda, 2017); sin embargo, cómo llevarlo a la práctica constituye un área de vacancia. A través del diálogo reflexivo y la indagación narrativa en torno al ILF, este estudio reporta los cambios epistemológicos y pedagógicos de las participantes, las limitaciones institucionales y la coexistencia de perspectivas diversas dentro de un mismo programa. Al centrar las voces y la agencia profesional de las formadoras, esta investigación contribuye al desarrollo de pedagogías transformadoras informadas por el ILF y ofrece una mirada crítica sobre las

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implementaciones locales en programas de formación de profesores de inglés. El estudio también resalta el valor de la dúo-etnografía para examinar perspectivas y prácticas intra-institucionales.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua franca, formación de docentes de inglés, dúo-etnografía, conceptualizaciones, prácticas.

Introduction

The growing body of scholarship on neoliberal vs social justice agendas in the field of English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) has brought about a multiplicity of discussion foci, including the status of English, English speakers and English-speaking culture (e.g., Matsuda, 2017; Rosa & Duboc, 2022), views on languages, multilingualism and translanguaging (e.g., Cogo, 2016; Karpava, 2025), among others. As the number of English users increases across contexts, varying and, sometimes, overlapping conceptualizations of English have emerged such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL), World Englishes (WE) and Global Englishes (GE). These discussions have resonated in the educational landscape and given rise to different pedagogical frameworks, leading to a paradigm shift in ELT (English Language Teaching) (Crowther et al., 2024; Marlina, 2018; Matsuda, 2017).

The ELF literature shows a surge of research developments, including the descriptive analysis of the phonological, lexicogrammatical and pragmatic features of ELF, the use of strategies for effective communication, ELF-informed ELT, and attitudes towards ELF, among others (see Jenkins et al., 2011 for an overview on these areas). Despite extensive ELF research since 2000, in a comprehensive review, Rosa (2021) criticizes its evolution and innovative practices and concludes that traditional views on English are still deeply ingrained in ELF theorisations. Along similar lines, several researchers have voiced their concerns regarding the contradictions and misconceptions (Marlina, 2018; Rosa & Duboc, 2022) that permeate ELF. From the perspective of pedagogy, the field is still in its infancy (Marlina, 2014). Multiple issues have also been raised, including the scarcity of materials (Marlina, 2018) and teacher research on implementation (Crowther et al., 2024; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Rose et al., 2021).

In the context of ELTE, ELF research reveals a pressing need for reliable frameworks that would equip pre-service teachers with epistemological and methodological foundations to enact an ELF-grounded praxis (Lopriore, 2023; Sifakis, 2007). Most studies encompass ways of promoting an awareness of ELF underpinnings and related pedagogical processes (e.g., Lopriore, 2023; Sifakis, 2019, 2023) as well as descriptive accounts of curricular innovations in in-service and pre-service contexts (e.g., Dinh, 2017; Selvi, 2017). Teacher educators have been called upon to revisit their ELF conceptualizations and operationalizations and re-assess their analytical approaches (Marlina, 2018) to actually walk the talk themselves in the process of preparing pre-service teachers. Sifakis (2019) questions research which merely focuses on whether teachers embrace a view on English from a global perspective or not, and demands further inquiries on to what extent and why they actually do so.

In spite of the gaps identified by leading scholars in the field, few studies investigate how ELTE programmes create the conditions for prospective teachers' increasing engagement with an ELF-informed curriculum and pedagogy. Given the importance placed on teacher reflection to support agency and professional development (Kumaradavidelu, 2012), it becomes necessary to explore teacher educators' developmental and decision-making processes. Narrative inquiry has been found to be an effective approach in helping trace, construct and reconstruct teacher educators' knowledge and professional experiences (Bair et al., 2022; Yuan,

2016). The aim of this duoethnography is to examine in what ways two teacher educators in charge of different disciplinary modules in an ELTE programme in Argentina have constructed an understanding of ELF and aligned their curriculum with an ELF perspective. Duoethnographic studies have gradually gained ground in the research field by mainly bringing researchers from different contexts together into dialogue (e.g., Hopkyns et al., 2024; Rose & Montakantiwong, 2018). However, in this study we seek to make a relevant contribution by unveiling how different teacher educator's views interact and co-exist within the same programme and reflecting on emerging implications.

Conceptual framework

In this section, firstly we briefly introduce the main discussions around the concept of ELF. Secondly, we review current research on ELF in pre-service Language Teacher Education.

English as a Lingua Franca

The concept of ELF extends far beyond traditional linguistic approaches, fundamentally challenging established paradigms of language use and communication behind the native-speaker hegemony (Rose & Galloway, 2019). EFL recognizes the fluid, negotiated nature of language interaction (Marlina, 2018) in a globalized world. Recent scholarship (Baker, 2018; Holmes & Dervin, 2016) has significantly expanded the understanding of ELF, shifting the focus from purely linguistic considerations to a more holistic approach that emphasizes intercultural communication, identity formation, and complex communicative strategies.

A fundamental characteristic of ELF is its approach to linguistic variation. Unlike traditional language learning models, ELF researchers like Jenkins (2015) argue that variations from native English are not inherently errors but potentially legitimate communicative strategies. This perspective represents a radical reimagining of language learning and use, acknowledging the creative potential of linguistic adaptation.

The pragmatic dimensions of ELF have become a critical area of investigation. Baker (2018) demonstrated how speakers engage in creative linguistic modifications, including strategic paraphrasing and nuanced negotiation techniques. Similarly, Cogo (2016) describes ELF as a translanguaging phenomenon in which language users deploy and exploit their full linguistic repertoire to make and negotiate meanings. These studies reveal how speakers' flexible linguistic practices enable mutual comprehension and effective cross-cultural dialogue. The global scale of English learning (Dearden, 2015) underscores the critical importance of ELF. We acknowledge both its profound implications for language education, international communication, and global understanding, and also its potential role in perpetuating language hierarchies, power dynamics and colonial practices (Hopkyns et al., 2024). Baker (2018) critically argues that ELF is potentially the most common medium of intercultural communication, yet remains underrepresented in intercultural communication literature. We believe ELF represents a sophisticated linguistic ecosystem, offering a dynamic, flexible and democratic model of communication.

ELF in language teacher education

ELF theorisations have resonated in the educational field, and have marked a shift in ELT (Marlina, 2018; Matsuda, 2017). A wide array of ELF-oriented pedagogical frameworks exists under different names (Matsuda, 2017). In brief, they all suggest that ELTE curricula should a) recognize current views on the pluricentricity of English (Marlina, 2018), b) provide pre-service teachers with principled practical recommendations (Matsuda, 2017), and c) promote questioning the monolithic view of English (Kachru, 1976) and monolingual ideology (Rose & Galloway, 2019) as well as embracing decolonial practices (Hamid, 2023; Rosa & Duboc, 2022). Furthermore, these frameworks align with intercultural inclusive perspectives (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2017). Resignifying ELTE through the lens of ELF involves preparing prospective language teachers to integrate new understandings, skills and attitudes into language teaching and learning. Such an enterprise urges teachers-to-be to embody a new way of thinking and doing.

Bayyurt and Sifakis (2017) proposed a three-phase model of EIL-aware teacher education, encompassing: exposure, critical awareness and action plan. The first two phases are closely intertwined and suggest engaging teachers in experiential learning and criticality. The same principles feed the action plan stage, which comprises lesson planning, delivering and evaluation. The model offers sufficient opportunities for teachers to move from rhetoric to actual practice, since the exposure and critical awareness phases do not remain at a theoretical level, but prompt teachers to experience EIL, to then develop a more comprehensive foundation for decision making and action taking. The model does not impose EIL, but promotes teachers' dialogical interactions among their beliefs and experiences and various contextual variables. Along similar lines, Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman's (2017) situated meta-praxis model of EIL teacher education defines praxis as a comprehensive fluid construct which integrates teachers' understandings, identities and situated actions, and like Bayyurt and Sifakis' (2017), their model emphasizes the importance of critical reflection.

Following Matsuda (2017), ELTE programmes may realize a global view of English to varying extents with innovations being introduced at different levels of curriculum development. In the context of pre-service ELTE in Cyprus, Selvi (2017) examined the challenges of the elective course "Global English". After introducing a critically-oriented instructional design, the author describes the difficulties and the tensions arising from the course implementation. In particular, Selvi (2017) raised concerns as regards framing the course within the entire curriculum due to both teacher educators' diverse conceptual perspectives and attitudes towards EIL, including unawareness, resistance and reluctance. Besides, he concluded that pre-service teachers' lack of sufficient background disciplinary knowledge could restrict the course objectives and contents to the theory phase, leaving aside the practical applications and reflections on implications. Broadly stated, the challenges identified could be faced in other similar contexts.

Similar descriptive accounts are reported by Dinh (2017), El Kadri et al. (2017) and Vettorel and Lopriore (2017) in Vietnam, Brazil and Italy, respectively. The three pedagogical experiences represent groundbreaking work in ELTE. The interventions proposed place ELF awareness-raising and reflective tasks at the center of the instructional design to empower prospective teachers to make context-embedded decisions. Apart from discussing similar challenges to those identified by Selvi (2017), Dinh (2017) reveals student-teachers' concerns regarding the applicability of the ELF perspective in light of multiple constraints. Both El Kadri et al. (2017) and Vettorel and Lopriore (2017) acknowledge limitations and challenges from the teacher educators' perspectives as content creators and materials developers. El Kadri et al.

(2017) discuss some limitations of the teaching unit, including a partial focus on key ELF issues as well as a lack of agentic tasks such as problem-solving and lesson planning for an effective theory - practice articulation. In their study, Vettorel and Lopriore (2017) recognize the difficulties in shifting viewpoints in language teacher education due to resistance, work overload and the different roles and functions ascribed to English by different stakeholders.

Despite the steady growth in research on ELF appropriations and pedagogical implementations, research developments remain abstract (Dinh, 2017; Selvi, 2017), scattered (Crowther et al., 2024) and anecdotal (Rose et al., 2021). Teacher education programmes play an important role in challenging traditional approaches and promoting transformations (Waddington, 2024), but the opposite may also hold true. Therefore, examining teacher educators' understandings, reflections, practices and actions is essential to shed light on whether an actual paradigm shift is underway. In Argentina, to the best of our knowledge, although ELF is a familiar concept at a theoretical level, there is a dearth of research and systematic cross-curricular applications. ELF has also been reported as relatively new discussion foci elsewhere in the region (El Kadri et al., 2017). Against this backdrop, we aim to answer the following research question: How do teacher educators conceptualize ELF and embody their curriculum and practices with an ELF-oriented perspective in a pre-service ELTE programme in Argentina?

Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodological framework employed in our study. We will delineate the rationale for selecting a duoethnographic approach, describe the data collection techniques, and explain our analytical strategy. This methodological design was specifically built to address our research question.

Research design

This study employed a duoethnographic approach: an emergent qualitative methodology where two researchers juxtapose their contrasting experiences through dialogic narrative and collaborative meaning-making (Habibie & Sawyer, 2024). The core purpose is to generate dynamic insights by allowing researchers to explore their relationship to a specific theme, in this case, ELF teacher preparation. The approach intends to foster introspection and critical reflexivity (Burleigh & Burm, 2022), where researchers simultaneously act as participants and investigators. Through dialogue, we aimed to untangle, disrupt and reconstruct our assumptions about ELF theorizations and interrogate our pedagogical practices in preparing pre-service teachers for ELF while critically examining the broader meta-narratives influencing our professional identities. Following Werbinska (2020), duoethnography enables the reconstruction of professional identities and generating novel insights.

Research context and participants

This study explores an ELTE programme in Argentina. The research authors are in charge of Language, Phonetics and Phonology and TESOL methodology courses in this programme, providing an insider's perspective on language teacher education. The professional positioning enables a nuanced examination of institutional approaches to preparing future language teachers.

To contextualize our dialogue, we provide some first-person-descriptions.

Author 1: My name is Gimena San Martín. I hold a graduate degree in ELT and an MA in Applied Linguistics. I have been a Language Teacher Educator since 2012. I have integrated ELF into TESOL methodology modules mainly from a political and educational perspective.

Author 2: My name is Ana Cecilia Cad. I hold a graduate degree in teaching English as a foreign language. I have been working as a Language Teacher Educator since 2014 while I also work as a language and pronunciation professor in institutions of higher education. I have integrated topics related to ELF in my classes, mainly in the phonetics and phonology module.

Data collection and codification

The study employed written and oral dialogue to explore our personal and professional experiences with and interests in the teaching and learning of ELF, its present role in an ELTE programme and its foreseeable future in the field. Each researcher individually wrote a reflective journal entry shared via Google Drive. These initial reflections were further discussed in a recorded, transcribed online meeting. Individually, we analyzed all data to identify salient recurrent concepts, then agreed on a shared set of codes. Armed with this codebook, we engaged in a second round of axial coding to group codes into themes.

Findings

In this section, the findings report on how the participants constructed and enacted their views on ELF. The data analysis revealed three interrelated themes: 1) changes in views, 2) development of ELF-oriented pedagogical practices, and 3) learning outcomes to plan ahead. To delve into each theme, we have chosen metaphors that verbally and visually depict our embodied experiences with ELF. We illustrate the main findings with diverse data excerpts from the written and spoken narratives.

Evolving pathways: the roots and routes of ELF

The analysis of the dialogic interactions reveals shifts in both teacher educators' view as they explored ELF. They found the roots of their professional trajectories within a conventional, native-speaker-centric framework that prioritized linguistic correctness and adherence to British and American models. After those first encounters, they set out on their ELF routes. The ELTE modules they attended influenced their professional development to different degrees, as shown in the following excerpts:

Ana Cecilia: My understanding of ELF began unexpectedly in the third year of my teaching programme when Phonetics and Phonology classes sparked questions about the global role of English. Influenced by Kachru's World Englishes model and Jenkins's groundbreaking work on linguistic diversity, I became increasingly fascinated by the complex social and political dimensions of language. For the first time, we considered the term "Englishes" and whose English we speak. This interest deepened through subjects such as Linguistics or History of the Language, where we explored content related to English accents, and the interrelationship between dynamics of power, politics, economic might and prestige to influence decisions regarding the English accent used in international contexts.

Gimena: Later on in the programme I recall having heard of ELF and World Englishes, for example, but only in passing. To be honest, I did not come to fully grasp the implications. ELF was mainly a theoretical concept without a strong correlation with my pedagogical practice as a future teacher. The same happened in TESOL modules. For example, I remember discussing issues such as intelligibility or using recordings with native and non-native speakers in listening comprehension tasks. They came as suggestions, but we didn't discuss or question the rationale of those ideas. In fact, we weren't actually required to put those principles into practice during the practicum. Once again, for me those were theoretical ideas or principles, which, unfortunately, I came to realize much later. I wouldn't even refer to myself as being aware.

It can be seen that during ELTE, Ana Cecilia could start challenging monolithic language conceptualizations and integrating ELF earlier and faster. Her use of metalanguage and reference to specific theoretical models like Kachru's (1976) or Jenkins' (2015) provides evidence of her process of assimilating the ELF perspective, mainly from a theoretical standpoint. Interestingly, her narrative already indicates the diverse dynamic linguistic, social and political forces at play embedded in ELF. Unlike Ana Cecilia, Gimena's narrative evinces no true engagement with ELF during her course of studies, since she was familiar with the concept, but only rather superficially. This is shown when she explains that she could mention ELF-related pedagogical tenets but failed to understand the rationale behind them.

Ana Cecilia's and Gimena's routes intersected again at later stages when they had already become teacher educators. A pivotal moment of transformation emerged through critical academic experiences in which they actively and critically unpacked ELF and endeavored to destabilize traditional language teaching paradigms. The data indicate that their conceptualization of ELF embraced broader linguistic perspectives as shown below:

Ana Cecilia: As a teacher educator, I became committed to exploring how English functions beyond traditional native speaker paradigms. (...) In the past, the teaching of a foreign language was to provide students with tools to speak native speakers of that language. Now, it is evident that potential language students will interact with non-native speakers much more frequently than native speakers. (...) I frequently engage with contemporary research, explore emerging perspectives, and actively seek opportunities to expand my understanding of global communication dynamics. The process of reading, writing, and critically analyzing linguistic practices has become an integral part of my professional evolution, transforming my approach from a traditional language teaching perspective to a more nuanced, socially conscious pedagogical framework.

Gimena: I believe the concept of ELF started to resonate with me later on in my career, mainly when participating in two research projects. Even though ELF wasn't the primary focus, their conceptual frameworks clearly aligned with an ELF pedagogy. Those projects examined context-sensitive, socially and culturally relevant materials development. I worked in the teaching field designing and adapting materials and also guiding teachers into addressing particular students' needs in their English lessons. Those projects helped understand the concept better and also apply it.

Along the path from the roots to the routes, both teacher educators' ELF journeys evince a fundamental shift from viewing language as a fixed, prescriptive system to understanding it

as a dynamic, socially embedded communicative practice. After their first encounters in deeply rooted language education conceptualizations and practices, the research field emerged as a potential site for transformation.

Coming to grips with ELF

The second theme revolves around the development of ELF-oriented pedagogical practices, an enterprise they had to come to grips with. Both teacher educators reflected on the numerous intentional strategies they deployed to help pre-service teachers deconstruct and reconstruct taken-for-granted linguistic assumptions; at the same time, they identified and critically examined the challenges they faced.

Preparing pre-service teachers to become aware of ELF and be ready to plan and deliver lessons through an ELF lens required, on the one hand, interrogating the native-speaker construct and destabilizing underlying ideologies and fixed notions of languages and speakers (Marlina, 2018; Matsuda, 2017), among other steps, and on the other hand, celebrating language complexities, embracing decolonial practices (Hopkins et al., 2024; Rosa & Duboc, 2022). Informed by Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 2000), they incorporated diverse audiovisual materials representing linguistic and cultural variations to develop preservice teachers' metacognitive awareness about communication, introduced critical sociolinguistics (Croft, 2020), social justice (Ortaçtepe Hart, 2023) and intercultural citizenship (Porto & Byram, 2015) and challenged pre-service teachers' perceptual boundaries. In the excerpts that follow, the teacher educators illustrate some pedagogical interventions:

Ana Cecilia: Luchini [an author included in the compulsory readings] works with people from India, for example, so we play recordings and ask our students about the conversation: what's going on?, what are they saying?, is it intelligible or not?, how can you tell whether it is intelligible or not?, what aspects determine intelligibility?, why do some things seem intelligible to you or not?, why do you think this is good English or not? So, from there, you begin to break it down and you realize that many of the things about communication, whether they really work or not, have to do with this question of my willingness to communicate.

Gimena: One task that has worked best is field work such as going to schools, observing lessons, or interviewing teachers. For example, we carry out a task in which pre-service teachers have to search for teacher-developed materials that address intercultural citizenship or respond to the interest areas of a certain age group. Pre-service teachers have concluded that this type of materials is scarce in our context, so, these types of experiential learning experiences situated in a specific context are highly relevant because they place students in a real situation to critically examine the educational implications of ELF, and in some way, also help them position themselves as action researchers or problem-solvers. (...) I believe that with these theoretical frameworks we are aiming to transform certain beliefs and foster more democratic perspectives aligned with social justice.

The teacher educators integrated ELF into the contents and practices they designed and selected from social justice and intercultural perspectives. In her narrative, Ana Cecilia chose to illustrate how she encouraged future teachers to reflect the social dimension of ELF, whereas Gimena exemplified reflective practice within the educational domain. They showed that

preparing pre-service teachers required more than linguistic training; it demanded developing critically aware, globally conscious educators. Their approach fundamentally repositioned language teaching from a technical skill acquisition to a transformative social practice. These interventions were not merely theoretical but practical, aiming to transform prospective teachers' understanding of language as a complex negotiated communicative process.

In spite of enabling relevant learning experiences to help teachers-to-be to understand and integrate ELF as part of their pedagogical repertoire, both teacher educators highlighted the obstacles they encountered. Ana Cecilia's and Gimena's narratives opened a window into diverse variables within and beyond their programme:

Ana Cecilia: In teaching English to primary school, the challenge is greater. Future teachers often underestimate children's capacity to grasp concepts like global citizenship and view ELF-informed teaching as a hurdle. (...) When developing materials for children, they resort to ready-made materials available that often lack linguistic diversity and promote an instrumental view of English. (...) Another issue is that many [preservice teachers] enter ELTE programs because they like English, not because they have a strong sense of their role as educators, and unconsciously tend to replicate traditional teaching methods from their own language learning journey.

Gimena: I also question the real impact of ELF and related theoretical frameworks on future teachers' professional development. I believe we're taking small steps but also baby steps; there are many variables, both internal like their own beliefs and experiences, and external such as institutional limitations, which affect to what extent we can effect changes. For example, a pre-service teacher, who is already working as a teacher, commented on the few possibilities of exercising agency he had. He was required to work with certain materials developed by other people, or developed for global contexts without taking into account the particularities of each student's context.

Ana Cecilia: in the programme we also have this issue: when we talk about diversity, social justice, interculturality, for some teacher educators it means only discussing language variation in terms of accents, one or two, so if it's American English and British English, it's already kind of enough and that's because I still think that in Phonetics modules the aim is learning to speak beautifully and the native speaker ideal.

Gimena: there are also many different opposing claims both in our programme and in linguistic and educational policies. I remember an example of a teacher educator who preferred to work with a British university rather than a Latinamerican one in a collaborative online international learning project in the field of Phonetics, for example. That's a telling example to me. Sometimes rhetoric contradicts practice. The same happens with national curricula; policies promote ELF, plurilingualism and interculturality, but there isn't sufficient funding and room for teacher development. We have to work our way through multiple voices and viewpoints, and in the end, it all remains at the level of individual efforts.

Critical challenges emerged in this pedagogical journey, particularly in how different stakeholders understand the broader socio-political dimensions of language. Resistance and reluctance to teach the foreign language from an EFL perspective often stemmed from individuals' own educational experiences and deeply entrenched beliefs about linguistic

legitimacy. These attitudes were displayed by both pre-service teachers and teacher educators in the programme; contradictions were also reported at the intersection of the intended and enacted curriculum regarding ELF. These circumstances, among many others, indicate that the teacher educators strove to ride the ups and downs of EFL consistent integration at different levels of context.

Forging through the curriculum

The third emerging theme highlights the teacher educators' learning through duoethnography. Critically reflecting on the roots and routes of their ELF conceptualizations, as well as their endeavors to integrate ELF-oriented perspectives into their practices in light of multiple contextual variables, mobilized new understandings and strengthened their pedagogical competencies. They especially recognized the value of authentic learning experiences and teacher agency.

In their narratives, both participants advocated for learning activities which involved real communicative scenarios as a springboard for supporting pre-service teachers' awareness of ELF, not only theoretically but also experientially. Ana Cecilia and Gimena provided two examples:

Ana Cecilia: In the near future, we would like to invite some of our students to share a conversation with our institution's international students, record the conversation and analyze the linguistic features from an ELF perspective. Today, most of the existing corpora provides predominantly features exchanges among European students using EFL, which limits the representativeness of diverse ELF contexts. By generating and examining local data, we aim to compare those datasets with our local ones to make better informed decisions about which aspects to prioritize in our teacher education programme.

Gimena: I keep on questioning myself about pre-service teachers' appropriations of ELF; how fruitful our discussions are at a deeper level, so I think that authentic activities, like participating in Global Conversations [an initiative by DePaul University in which international students take part in a conversation to discuss global issues and cultivate intercultural skills] such as the one we facilitated on multilingualism and social justice, can help future teachers fully grasp the concept and the implications of ELF, at least from the perspective of language users.

By identifying windows of opportunities and powerful meaningful learning tasks, both teacher educators could position themselves as agentic teachers, as shown below:

Ana Cecilia: In the Phonetics and Phonology department, we are planning to explore linguistic diversity through practical, collaborative investigation. Our emerging project intends to engage international students [who study at our programme for a semester] in gathering, recording, and analyzing their communicative interactions. This project represents a groundbreaking method of understanding real-world language negotiation in our local context. This approach moves beyond theoretical discussions, providing empirical insights into how diverse English speakers actually communicate, negotiate meaning, and navigate linguistic differences in authentic contexts.

Gimena: As I participated in two research projects on context-responsive pedagogies, I began to address the topic more systematically. They provided me with concrete tools to start rethinking how I conceive of language and, thus how I conceive of teacher education. I re-drafted the syllabus of the module I lead so that there would be a cross-cutting perspective. Now social justice informs each thematic unit, also creating smoother transitions and larger epistemological coherence. Even though we focus on other topics, it gives me the chance of revisiting, challenging, and discussing different aspects related to the ELF perspective.

The excerpts above illustrate how both Ana Cecilia and Gimena managed to exercise their agency at different stages of curriculum development. They recounted decision-making and action-taking instances which both acknowledged to be a drop in the ocean. They consisted of individual efforts not consistently articulated with other modules at programme level, but proven evidence to push through curriculum reform.

In essence, the findings report on the teacher educators' embodied experiences, and therefore, represent a profound reimagining of language education. By challenging traditional paradigms, integrating critical perspectives, and developing innovative teaching strategies, they seek to prepare pre-service teachers to become reflective, socially conscious professionals capable of navigating the complex linguistic landscapes of our increasingly interconnected world.

Discussion and implications

This study explored the conceptualizations and pedagogical experiences of two teacher educators as they prepare pre-service teachers to teach ELF within an ELTE programme in Argentina. The findings, structured around three themes - changes in views, development of ELF-oriented pedagogical practices, and learning outcomes to plan ahead, highlight the dynamic, reflective and at times, non-linear journeys both educators have taken in integrating ELF into their teaching beliefs and practices.

The first theme, “evolving pathways”, underscores the significant shift in both educators' conceptual understandings of English. Their initial training within a native-speaker-centric paradigm, with a heavy emphasis on linguistic correctness and standardized norms, mirrors entrenched ideologies of linguistic authority in ELT (Matsuda, 2017). However, the educators' narratives reveal how authoritative academic exposure and research practice acted as critical inflection points. While Ana Cecilia appeared to engage with these theoretical models more deeply and earlier in her development, Gimena's understanding of ELF emerged more gradually and experientially, largely through engagement in research projects and material development. Their journeys exemplify a transition from fixed to fluid language ideologies (Marlina, 2018; Matsuda, 2017) aligning with post-structuralist views of language as socially constructed and context-dependent (Pennycook, 2010). The intersection of their “roots” in traditional ELT with the “routes” taken through critical reflection and academic and research-based engagement illustrates how ELF conceptualizations are shaped by both formal education and situated practice. Remarkably, both trajectories intersect at common global lines of inquiry, placing research as a promising area for transformation. Their divergent and, sometimes, convergent pathways point to the non-uniformity of ELF awareness among teacher educators, reflecting Seidlhofer's (2011) view of ELF awareness as evolving in a fragmented, rather than structured curricular way.

The second metaphor “coming to grips with ELF” synthesizes the teacher educators’ development of ELF-oriented pedagogical practices, highlighting their intentional efforts to move from theoretical engagement to pedagogical enactment. Their practice reflects a transformative orientation, where language teaching becomes a space for challenging linguistic hierarchies, cultivating critical awareness. Drawing on critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000), their classroom interventions, such as problematizing intelligibility and encouraging teachers-to-be to interrogate teaching materials, offer fertile ground for discussing linguistic, social, political and educational ELF dimensions, echoing broader studies carried out in diverse contexts but to larger more systematic extents (e.g., Dinh, 2017; El Kadri et al., 2017; Selvi, 2017; Vettorel & Lopriore, 2017). These practices also support decolonising not only English but also English learning and teaching (Hamid, 2023) as they integrate multiple voices from diverse communicative contexts, localised curriculum development and teaching practices and translanguaging (Hopkins et al., 2024; Rosa & Duboc, 2022) in an ELTE programme in the Global South. Despite being emergent, their practices align with Marlina’s (2018) vision of critical, emancipatory ELF pedagogy. Their endeavors illustrate dealing with ELF beyond an abstract or theoretical level to overcome the difficulties already identified in the literature (Dinh, 2017; Marlina, 2014, 2018; Selvi, 2017). When compared to existing pedagogical frameworks for ELF awareness, the strategies deployed by both teacher educators fit into learning opportunities which promote experiential learning and criticality in agreement with the first two phases of Bayyurt and Sifakis’ (2017) model. In the context explored in the present study, no opportunities for action plan are found due to the fact that the modules the participants teach do not involve actual teaching practice.

The data on teacher educators’ theorizing from practice also reveal persistent challenges. These include pre-service teachers’ resistance to non-native norms and the replication of traditional practices, often unconsciously, due to their own prior schooling experiences as well as current ones in their ELTE programme. This echoes what Dewey (2012) describes as the inertia of native speakerism which is a phenomenon where deeply rooted ideologies are not easily displaced, even in the face of new paradigms. To address this, both educators emphasized the importance of scaffolded, reflective tasks and assessment models that value communicative competence over linguistic accuracy. These strategies highlight a shift in pedagogical priorities, where emphasis is placed on negotiation of meaning, empathetic listening, and inclusive communication which are core tenets of ELF-aware teaching (Sifakis, 2019). Like other studies (Selvi, 2017; Vettorel & Lopriore, 2017), resistance and reluctance were also reported on the part of other teacher educators in the programme, which may be motivated by their own varying standpoints of ELF perspectives. The overall analysis of the teacher educators’ initiatives and challenges yields important concerns: how can individual efforts mobilize collegial work and promote a curriculum informed by an ELF lens?

The third theme, learning outcomes to plan ahead, was visually depicted by the metaphor “forging through the curriculum”. It sheds light on the broader implications of the duoethnographic study. Firstly, their narratives suggest that preparing ELF-aware pre-service teachers requires more than curricular inclusion; it involves ongoing professional development through engagement with authentic learning experiences. Importantly, international collaboration at home was highlighted as an enabler, offering exposure to diverse Englishes that may not be readily available in local contexts, and opportunities for intercultural communication and an appreciation for linguistic diversity. Secondly, both educators highlight the critical role of their teacher agency in pushing the way forward. They articulated specific avenues towards concrete and cross-curricular integrations of ELF into their programmes.

This study carries important implications for ELTE, ELF pedagogy, and language policy. The findings highlight the need for ELTE programmes to systematically integrate ELF-oriented content, not merely as theory but as lived pedagogical practice. Teacher educators should be supported in critically reflecting on their own language ideologies within institutional frameworks that promote alternative, non-native-centric models of English. Ongoing professional development and collaborative engagement with research is essential for deepening ELF awareness, and institutions must create dialogic spaces for experimentation and reflection. Moreover, the development of meaningful ELF pedagogy requires innovative practices, including the use of diverse materials, critical assessment of intelligibility, and the integration of social justice and intercultural perspectives, which reframe language teaching as a transformative social and political act. Preparing ELF-aware teachers involves challenging ingrained beliefs about language correctness and legitimacy, making critical reflection and affective engagement vital elements of teacher preparation. Finally, the study urges policymakers to reconsider native-speaker norms embedded in curricula and assessment, advocating for an ELF-informed stance that embraces pluricentricity, multilingualism, and intercultural competence, reflecting the realities of global English use.

Conclusions

This study offers insights into how ELF can be meaningfully integrated into teacher education through conceptual shifts, reflective practice and critical pedagogy. While the paths taken by Ana Cecilia and Gimena differ, their stories converge on the recognition that teaching English today demands an understanding of linguistic diversity, power and social justice.

Their embodied experiences challenge the field of ELT to move beyond tokenistic mentions of ELF and towards that inclusive, context-sensitive and critically engaged pedagogical practices. For ELTE programmes, the findings suggest a pressing need to systematically embed ELF-aware content, support educators in navigating ideological tensions, and create spaces for collaborative inquiry that support ongoing transformation.

Certain limitations must be acknowledged, however. First, the study focuses on the narratives of two teacher educators within a single ELTE programme in Argentina. While their insights are rich and offer valuable depth, the small, context-specific sample limits the generalizability of the findings to broader educational settings. Second, the study offers only a limited engagement with structural and systemic constraints, such as national curricula, standardized assessments, and institutional hiring policies, which often shape or restrict the implementation of ELF pedagogy at a broader level.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the ongoing conversation about how teacher education can challenge linguistic ideologies and foster pedagogies that reflect the complex, dynamic realities of English as global means of communication. It affirms the role of teacher educators not only a curriculum implementer but as critical agents of change in envisioning more equitable and inclusive language education futures.

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