

From EFL to ELF: In the Need to Progressively Incorporate English as a Lingua Franca in Colombian ELT *

Del EFL al ELF: en la necesidad de incorporar progresivamente el inglés como lengua franca en el ELT colombiano

* Discussion article

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Abstract

English as a lingua franca is a phenomenon that has been gaining importance in the last few years. In the international scenario, scholarly literature has already explored the possible benefits of incorporating ELF in the ELT field. In Colombia, however, the empirical and conceptual studies on this area are scarce. Keeping this in mind, this reflective article discusses the possibility of progressively incorporating ELF in the Colombian ELT. In the first place, what ELF is, is analyzed, and this and other terms that have been used to refer to this linguistic phenomenon are differentiated. Second, some of the areas that need to take into consideration (materials design, assessment practices, to mention a few) are presented if we want to integrate ELF in Colombian ELT. Finally, some conclusions are presented, as well as potential research scenarios regarding ELF.

Keywords: English, English language teaching, English as a lingua franca.

Resumen

El inglés como lengua franca es un fenómeno que ha ganado importancia en los últimos años. En el escenario internacional, la literatura académica ya ha explorado los posibles beneficios de incorporar ELF en el campo ELT. En Colombia, sin embargo, son escasos los trabajos empíricos y conceptuales sobre dicha área. A la luz de esto, en este artículo reflexivo se discute la posibilidad de incorporar progresivamente ELF en ELT en Colombia. En primer lugar, se analiza qué es ELF y se diferencian este y otros términos que se han utilizado para referirse a este fenómeno lingüístico. En segundo lugar, se presentan algunas de las áreas que deben tenerse en cuenta (diseño de materiales, prácticas de evaluación, por mencionar algunas) si se quiere integrar ELF en el área de ELT en el contexto nacional. Por último, se exponen algunas conclusiones, así como posibles escenarios de investigación en lo que respecta a ELF.

Palabras clave: inglés, inglés como lengua franca, enseñanza del inglés.

Introduction

“It [English] is yours (no matter who you are) as much as it is mine (no matter who I am). We may use it for different purposes and for different lengths of time on different occasions, but nonetheless, it belongs to all of us.” (Smith, 1976, p. 39)

In recent years, the number of scholars advocating the transgression from traditional ELT (English language teaching) models has grown. A decade ago, for instance, Macías (2010) highlighted the need to integrate an ELF (English as a lingua franca) framework in Colombian ELT as a manner to show the plurality of English in nowadays society. In line with the above, García (2013) reviewed the literature on EIL (English as an international language) and although his main intention was to establish the attempts that Colombian scholars had done for incorporating EIL in the national scenario, he concluded that in this Latin American country not many research studies nor conceptual literature having to do with the just mentioned area of knowledge had been developed. Interestingly, he also determined that EIL—or ELF, as it is also commonly referred to— may constitute a potential venue for Colombian ELT. Since that moment onwards, it seems that the linguistic phenomenon known as ELF has been gaining ground on the Colombian scene.

Even though it is not possible to affirm yet that ELF has become one of the most prominent areas of research in Colombia, it is undeniable that it has been permeating little by little certain academic contexts. Now, for example, it is possible to observe that some undergraduate and master’s theses (Castro-López, 2018; Parra-Báez, 2021; Torres-García, 2018) have inquired into such a theme. Besides, some research studies digging into EFL teachers’ perceptions and beliefs regarding ELF and the impact that a course on world Englishes had on pre-service EFL teachers understanding of ELT are being currently carried out (Macías-Villegas & Mosquera-Pérez, 2022; Mosquera-Pérez et al. 2022). However, it appears that more theoretical initiatives are being needed in order to more fully explore and understand the possible impact that ELF may have for the overall ELT field. Considering these

aspects, within the frame of this reflective paper some reasons are considered why we, ELT scholars and professionals working within the field, should make an effort to gradually integrate ELF in our pedagogical practices.

Theorizing English as a Lingua Franca: What is it and What is its Relationship with EFL (English as a Foreign Language)?

In broad terms, English as a foreign language (EFL) is a term that has been historically employed with the purpose of referring to contexts where English is taught as an additional language. Although at first this seems to be a very simplistic definition of what EFL entails (and possibly the most adequate because of the particularities of a country like Colombia), following the perspective of Mora (2022) it is worth emphasizing that the general connotation of EFL goes far beyond.

According to the previous author, “the very notion of ‘foreign’: EFL is problematic even from the actual definition of foreign” (Mora, 2022, p. 28). In Mora’s view, EFL sells the idea of something that is distant, irrelevant, and inappropriate for the setting and for people who are exposed to it. This specific aspect has been significantly addressed in previous works (Mora, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015; Mora, et al., 2019) and after getting acquainted with the discussions that are presented in them, some questions as the following raise: Is it justifiable to keep talking about the EFL/ESL (English as a foreign language vs English as a second language) binary? Does English merely represent a foreign language in Colombia? This considering that in San Andrés and Providencia a new variety of the language emerged and was adapted to fit the needs of the community. And, more importantly, will EFL models continue to dominate the general field of English language teaching and learning in the national context?

As stated at the very beginning of this paper, the underlying intention in writing this article is to advocate the incorporation of an ELF framework in Colombian ELT because as seen in the previous paragraph, it seems that it is no longer possible to refer to English as a foreign language, regardless of the place.

The second definition to be presented is English as a lingua franca (ELF). Generally speaking, ELF is a linguistic phenomenon that has been defined under different lenses. To Firth (1996), ELF is a contact language between people who do not share similar cultural backgrounds. Likewise, House (1999) conceptualizes ELF as “interactions between members of two or more different lingua cultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue” (p. 74), while McKay (2018) asserts that ELF is the type of interaction that native and non-native speakers of the language hold through English.

Whereas the general term ELF seems to refer to the type of interaction that individuals (native and non-native) maintain through English in diverse scenarios, Macías (2010) suggested to be careful and have a clear notion of this, as different terms have been across academic literature as a manner to refer to the way English is being used in current times. English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as an international language (EIL), World Englishes (WE), Global Englishes (GE) and even English as an international lingua franca (EILF) have been some of these. However, in the context of this paper, we will only focus on establishing the main differentiation between the terms ELF and WE as we think that both encompass the general essence of the phenomena being addressed.

English as a Lingua Franca and World Englishes: Two Phenomena with a High Degree of Affinity

In an ongoing study on the matter, Mosquera-Pérez et al. (2022) establish a clear differentiation between these two terms. According to the previous authors, ELF, as suggested until now, refers to the type of interaction that individuals sustain using English. Although such encounters may take place across diverse scenarios, these normally occur within the frame of expanding and outer circle countries (see Kachru, 1992, for more information on the Kachru's three circles model). Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that the way English is being used has changed even in the context of inner circle countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia,

Canada) because of the influence that non-native communities are exerting on the language.

World Englishes (WE), otherwise, is more aligned with the new varieties that have emerged from the English language. In this sense, Kachru (1992) held that English has been through several processes of “indigenization” and “territorialization”. Consequently, nowadays it is possible to affirm that Asian English, African English, European English exist, and that, at the same time, each one of these territories count with their respective varieties (German English, French English, Singaporean English, Trinidadian English, Chinese English, Japanese English, Ecuadorian English, Colombian English, and the like).

Hence, while the general term of ELF introduces the idea of communication through English across any of the three Kachruvian circles, WE is more associated with changes at lexical, syntactical, grammatical levels that the English language has gone through. This differentiation is made more explicit in the following figure:

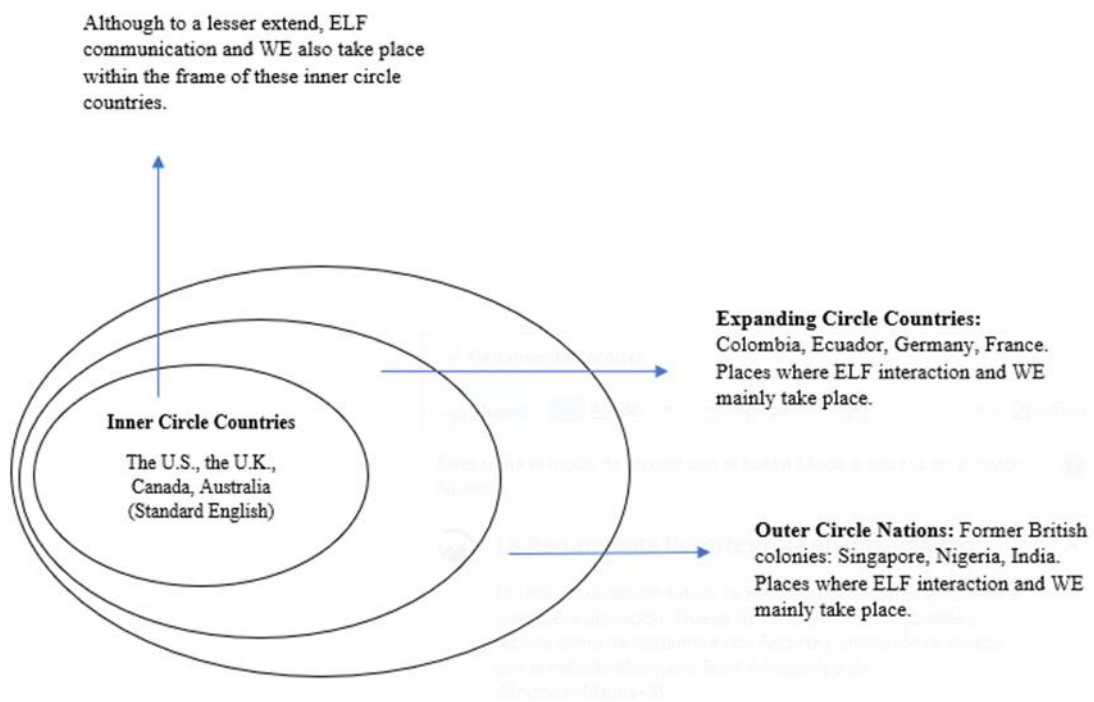


Figure 1. ELF vs WE

All in all, it indicates that the state of English has changed, and it is also necessary to make future English teachers aware of the contexts in which English is used (whether native or non-native), and the changes it has experienced. Here are some of the areas that need to be reconceptualized to fulfill that purpose.

Awareness Raising

Undoubtedly one of the very first actions that we should follow to progressively promote the implementation of ELF in Colombian ELT should be raise awareness about the current state of English. Concerning this aspect, previous scholarly literature (Ceyhan-Bingöl & Özkan, 2019; Luo, 2016; Soruç & Griffiths. 2021) has shown that when exposed to this type of knowledge, individuals respond positively. A higher degree of awareness regarding the current state of English as well as a more open attitude towards other varieties of the language are some of the most recurrent findings after implementing these types of initiatives.

In order to promote ELF within the English classroom context, a series of authors (Llurda & Mucano, 2019; Lopriore & Vettorel, 2018) have recommended some of the following activities:

- Reflect about the extent to which English is present in the students' context
- Expose prospective English teachers to varieties of English beyond the Inner Circle
- Integrate methodologies that intersect between the global and the local
- Adapt course-books to include WE/ELF observation and recognition in their lessons
- Identify appropriate authentic language resources
- Adapt authentic materials to specific activities and tasks
- Offer tasks on intercultural issues

- Develop tasks and materials where learners' communicative competence is inclusive of the ability of resorting to communicative strategies and to their own plurilingual repertoires.

After having taken into consideration the previous recommendations, at the end of this paper we also present an ELF aware lesson plan. As its same title suggests, its main purpose is to make individuals more conscious about the role of English in international contexts and for communities whose first language is different to this one. We now move on to the next section which is related to the design and development of materials.

Materials Design

As suggested by Macías (2010), other of the aspects that need to be reconceptualized to successfully incorporate ELF is materials design. In this sense, Lopriore and Vettorel (2018) claim it is also important to raise awareness among educators about ELT materials so that “existing materials can be critically examined and implemented with ‘authentic’ examples of the current complexity of Englishes and ELF” (p. 98). This perspective aligns with Siqueira and Matos (2018) who similarly suggest that to correctly implement ELF in the classroom context, language learning materials play a fundamental role.

In order to successfully design ELF aware materials, Lopriore and Vettorel (2018, p. 103) propose to examine these under the light of the following guiding questions:

- What would you modify and why, in order to include WE- ELF aware materials and activities?
- Would it be mostly a matter of activity or task types (i. e., teaching approach), or a matter of resources and types of materials?

Here it is worth remarking that creating our own materials not only to incorporate principles of English as a lingua franca but also to tackle sociocultural issues that affect the different contexts where English takes place becomes fundamental. This has been further supported by Colombian authors Guerrero (2008) and Núñez-Pardo (2020) who highlight that ELT materials have historically sold superficial notions of culture. Consequently, particularities of our South American context have been disregarded.

In relation with this situation, Ramos-Holguín and Aguirre-Morales (2014) sustain that it becomes vital to keep promoting materials design among English teachers due to 3 specific motives: 1) the possibility for innovation that material design offers, 2) the opportunity of raising more diverse standpoints towards education and society in general through this action, and 3) the chance to bridge the gap between what takes place in formal schooling scenarios and within individuals' particular realities. In these authors' viewpoints, this would not only lead to improving educational teaching and learning conditions as such. Beyond that, it represents the perfect opportunity "for teachers to become agents of change" (Ramos-Holguín & Aguirre-Morales, 2014, p. 145).

In a more recent contribution Aguirre-Morales et al. (2022) further expand on the reasons why EFL educators at all educational levels should assume a more active role and create their own materials and highlight the fact that one of the aspects that ELT materials (as it is the case of textbooks) have historically failed to address are the particularities of the context in which the English language is taught. This is an important element to bear in mind as not acknowledging the specificities of the settings where the overall English teaching and learning process takes place may lead to what has been regarded as a colonization of power, being, and knowledge (Núñez-Pardo, 2020). In this way, ELT materials gain relevance and constitute an important factor for challenging agendas that seek to maintain unequilibrated power dynamics across different dimensions of society.

Since materials design represents one of the dimensions that may play a major role in the integration of English as a lingua franca in Colombian ELT, two examples of ELF aware materials are presented below.

1. Read the following excerpts of English around the world and answer the questions below:

English is spoken as a first language by several countries including Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, and the United States. While all of these countries share the same mother tongue, there are some differences in the way they speak and write.

The first difference is in the accent. Each country has its own accent. And within each country there are a variety of accents called *regional accents*. Another difference is spelling of some words, like **color** and **colour**, or **theater** and **theatre**.

And a third difference is that some of the words are not the same at all. For example, Americans say **restroom**, Canadians say **washroom**, and the British say **W.C.** (water closet.) But all of these words have the same meaning (*the room where the toilet is located.*)





If you are from South America, for example, you will probably have more exposure to North American English. If you live in Europe, most likely you will be more exposed to British English.

Guiding questions:

- What comes to your mind when reading information about English around the world?
- How do you perceive your English in regard to the type of English spoken by other speakers?
- Would you be willing to learn English in other countries different from the U.S and England?

Figure 2. The Current State of English Around the World
Source: Bouabdellah (2004)

	<p>English in Central América (Guatemala and Nicaragua)</p> <p>The first speaker is a 20-year-old female student who was born in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Link to listen to speaker 1: https://www.dialectsarchive.com/guatemal-a-1</p> <p>The second speaker is a 62-year-old female retired homemaker who was born in Managua, Nicaragua in 1953. Link to listen to speaker 2: https://www.dialectsarchive.com/nicaragu-a-1</p>
	<p>English in Middle East (Syria and Lebanon)</p> <p>The first speaker is a 24-year-old female student who was born in Damascus, Syria in 1991. Link to listen to speaker 1: https://www.dialectsarchive.com/syria-3</p> <p>The second speaker is a 30-year-old male researcher who was born in Beirut, Lebanon In 1988. Link to listen to speaker 2: https://www.dialectsarchive.com/lebanon-2</p>

Note: Main Aim: To expose individuals to varieties of the language spoken in non-native contexts.

Figure 3. English Around the World

ELF Aware Testing and Assessment

Concerning ELF and language assessment and testing, Newbold (2018) points out that in 21 century it is essential for test designers, language teachers and school administrators in general to incorporate principles of ELF in such procedures and promote “ELF aware tests”. Newbold affirms this considering that even though English has developed differently in various countries of the world, in previous years large scale tests such as TOEFL, IELTS and other exams that provide international certifications resorted principally to “an idealized native speaker as a default

standard by which to measure non-native speakers' performance" (Newbold, 2018, p. 215), and did not take into account the learners' features and different degree of experience with the language. Thus, more sensitive testing and assessment procedures about NNs- NNs interaction are urgently needed.

The previous idea is reinforced by Kouvdou and Tsigari (2018) who claim that "ELF aware assessment" is necessary to better assess English in multilingual settings. Besides this argument, Kouvdou and Tsigari propose a series of principles to take into account when designing ELF aware assessment: a) to prioritize strategic competence and communicative effectiveness over linguistic accuracy and approximation to inner circle standards, as NS norms are no longer valid to assess English in international scenarios, b) to prioritize mutual intelligibility and negotiation of meaning as ELF is principally used in contexts where communication takes place mainly between NNs, and c) to emphasize on contextualization because "language proficiency has to be contextualized, reflecting both the global and local needs of the learners" (Kouvdou & Tsigari, 2018, p. 233) in different scenarios. To conclude, Kouvdou and Tsigari (2018) recommend implementing alternative assessment practices when intending to incorporate principles of ELF because these are more flexible and open in nature, different to standardized tests which mainly follow inner circle norms to assessment.

Conclusions

Although it appears to be that in Colombia we keep to implement methodologies that continue to favor standard English (as most of the ELT materials we use are directly brought from inner circle contexts), it is also undeniable that ELF has been gaining interest by some scholars. It is observable in the recent number of studies and thesis that have been carried out on this field of knowledge. Yet, more research is being needed in order to better understand the way ELF has been permeating the Colombian scenario since this action would allow determining if it is possible to talk about a Colombian variety of English, as it has been suggested by some scholars from the national scenario as it is the case of Macías (2010) and Mora (2022) who

contend that it is already time to consider English spoken in Colombia as a legitimate variety of this language.

After writing this reflective paper it is possible to affirm that many areas of knowledge must undergo a process of resignification in order to promote more actively the inclusion of English as a lingua franca. Materials design, assessment, initial teacher education and its intersection with professional development, to mention a few, are some of those. Therefore, and taking these aspects into consideration, within the context of this reflective paper we would like to invite other scholars and English teachers from all educational levels to incorporate ELF in their pedagogical practices as a manner to raise among prospective English teachers' awareness about the current state of English. It is of paramount importance, as by doing this prospective, English teachers and individuals in general would have the opportunity of being exposed to the richness of English in real world contexts (Macías, 2010), and would also lead them to comprehend that although privileged (Guerrero, 2008; Mejía, 2006; Mosquera-Pérez, 2022) English is only one of the multiples languages that exist in our territory.

To conclude, it seems highly necessary to remark that although this article has focused on how to progressively integrate English as a lingua franca in Colombian ELT, as discussed by previous authors (Correa & Usma, 2013; Guerrero, 2008; Mejía, 2006), it is also essential to keep promoting the integration of other languages (foreign and indigenous) in the national context as these have been overshadowed by the colonialist power of a language like English (Mahboob, 2011; Matsuda, 2017). Therefore, promoting this action gains relevance because as language educators it is our obligation not to continue spreading hegemonic discourses/ideologies that favor native centered standards, and assume instead a more open and critical view of reality with the intention of favoring intercultural understanding as well as the recognition of sociocultural differences present in the field of language teaching.

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ANNEX 1: ELF AWARE LESSON PLAN

ELF – Aware Lesson Plan

Objective: Developing awareness about English as a Lingua Franca/ World Englishes/ English as a global/ international language.

Proficiency level: Intermediate and above

Age group: EFL College students – Adults (18 – 22)

Class time: 75 minutes

Expanding circle – Non – Native English Speakers

<p>2. Introduction:</p> <p>Global English with David Crystal https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ11EjccXKw</p> <p>Which English? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XT04EO5RSU</p>	<p>As soon as the students had answered the questions, the teacher will start the lesson by presenting two videos by David Crystal. The first one addresses issues of English as a global language, while the second one talks about English variations around the world, better known as “World Englishes”</p>	<p>Computer Internet Access Links to the videos Speakers</p>	<p>5 min.</p>
<p>3. Presentation of the map for Anglo speaking countries, English as a second language, English as a foreign language, English as a lingua franca, and World Englishes.</p>	<p>The teacher presents students a world map. At the same time, the teacher points to those countries where English is native or mother tongue, those where English is second language and those where English is studied as a foreign language and those where English is used as lingua franca. At the same time, the teacher explains the terms used just a moment ago, also adding the concept of “World Englishes”</p>	<p>Computer Video beam Board Image – map of the world for Anglo speaking countries and “World Englishes”</p>	<p>10 min.</p>
<p>4. Exposure to English variations – Group work https://www.dialectsarchive.com/</p>	<p>1) The teacher asks students to listen to the audio clips (they will only be played once), and students have to write down in their notebooks the words they listen to. 2) Students are asked to make groups of three (3). For second time, students will listen to the recordings to verify the words they have listened to. 3) The teacher provides students with the answers (words) that were mentioned in the audios.</p>	<p>Computer Audio recordings 1) A local educated variety of English (Malaysian) 2) Standard Southern British English 3) Standard American English 4) Standard Variety of Indian English</p>	<p>15 min</p>

	4) The teacher explains about the variations that were implied in the audio.		
<p>5. Youtube/ video discussion:</p> <p>Using the Internet to teach culture: An interview with Claire Kramersch</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1NKFIp0Utc</p>	Then, the teacher makes a transition to a Youtube video, in which Claire Kramersch, a native French speaker of English is interviewed discussing the use of Internet to teach culture. (This video demonstrates the pronunciation of a Non – native speaker of English)	Computer Internet Access Link to the video Speakers	12 min
5. Critical reflection about the language	When the video had finished, the teacher will shift the focus of discussion to language itself by clarifying that even though professor Claire Kramersch is a native speaker of French, she has mastered English language as a way to spread her work on second language acquisition, language and culture, multilingualism (and suchlike), making clear that English is a powerful language with the potential to expand to wider audiences. On the other hand, the teacher will also ask students to think about potential negative effects of using Internet as a tool/ which populations might be included, and which populations might be excluded.		10 min
7. Conclusion – End of lesson.	To finish, the teacher gives students a broad conclusion about the lesson and what has been studied in order to		5 min.

The above ELF aware lesson plan was designed taking into consideration the model presented by Matsuda (2017).