

**Contemporary challenges in English teacher education: some contributions from the studies of English as a Lingua Franca/
*Desafios contemporâneos na formação de professores de inglês: algumas contribuições dos estudos de Inglês como Língua Franca***

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ABSTRACT

The singular character of the English language has contributed to the production of an abundant literature aimed at delineating a teaching pedagogy of that language which considers its role as a lingua franca. In recent years, the studies on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has shown great interest in presenting practical examples of ELF-oriented lessons. Similarly, lots of research papers have shown the importance of integrating ELF studies into teacher education curriculum. In this paper, based on considerations made by ELF researchers (BAYYURT; SIFAKIS, 2017; COGO; SIQUEIRA, 2017; GIMENEZ; EL KADRI; CALVO, 2018; JORDÃO; MARQUES, 2018; SIFAKIS, 2014), the importance of integrating ELF studies in teacher education is discussed taking into consideration the challenge that such integration may represent due to the fact that the process of learning and teaching English is still oriented by the construct of the native speaker (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2016; WIDDOWSON, 2012).

KEYWORDS: English as a lingua franca; Teacher education; English language teaching.

RESUMO

O caráter singular da língua inglesa tem contribuído para a produção de uma literatura abundante voltada para o delineamento de uma pedagogia de ensino desse idioma que leve em consideração seu papel de língua franca. Nos últimos anos, os estudos da área de Inglês como Língua Franca (ILF) têm demonstrado grande interesse em apresentar exemplos práticos do que seja ensinar a língua inglesa numa perspectiva de língua franca. De igual modo, muitos trabalhos têm demonstrado a relevância da inserção dos estudos do ILF nos programas de formação de professores de inglês. Neste artigo, partindo de considerações feitas por pesquisadores do campo do ILF (BAYYURT; SIFAKIS, 2017; COGO; SIQUEIRA, 2017; GIMENEZ; EL KADRI; CALVO, 2018; JORDÃO; MARQUES, 2018; SIFAKIS, 2014), discutimos acerca da importância da inserção dos estudos do ILF para a formação docente, levando em consideração o desafio que tal inserção representa, visto que o processo de aprendizagem e ensino do inglês continua a ser orientado pelo construto do falante nativo (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2016; WIDDOWSON, 2012).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Inglês como língua franca; Formação de professores; Ensino de inglês

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1 Introduction

The distinctiveness of the English language in the contemporary world has been highlighted in many studies and it has contributed to the production of a prolific literature geared towards the development of a pedagogy which takes into consideration its role as a lingua franca. According to Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo (2018), one of the obstacles to decentering the normative orientations that have guided English language teaching (ELT) around the world is related to how these reconfigurations will be introduced in teacher education programs. Such changes represent an important challenge since a lot of the assumptions which inform ELT practices have been questioned over time (CANAGARAJAH, 2014).

The effects brought to ELT as a result of its lingua franca role have been pointed out by numerous ELF studies in different parts of the world. Regarding Brazilian research in this field, Bordini and Gimenez (2014) indicate that there has been a significant growth in research papers addressing ELF in our context. They also observe that research here has been mainly focused on pedagogical concerns.

Sifakis and Tsantila (2019) point out that the understanding of ELF has undergone considerable transformations over the past two decades. Simply put, the term refers to the function of English as a contact language in interactions involving English users from different linguacultural backgrounds, to which each user brings a variety of English that he or she is most familiar and comfortable with. Those users also employ different strategies in order to communicate effectively. Although such interactions involve primarily non-native users of the language, it is relevant to emphasize that native users are not excluded from this type of interaction. The key point is that, in these situations, both native and non-native English users are in the position of negotiating meaning.

Following that line of thought, Duboc (2019, p. 11) stresses that the concept of ELF is controversial and polysemic. According to her, “[ELF is] one of those words that carry the burden of the past, as if it had been harshly exposed to cattle branding iron, always wrestling with its ‘first sense’ after further scrutiny and theoretical expansions.”¹

¹ Our translation for: [...] daqueles vocábulos que carregam o fardo do passado, como se tivesse sido duramente exposto a um ferro de marcar gado, sempre às voltas com seu ‘sentido primeiro’ após novos escrutínios e expansões teóricas. (DUBOC, 2019, p. 11).

The burden mentioned by the author is related to the initial phase of ELF studies in which the possibility of identifying and codifying the peculiar forms of ELF was considered. That burden, once again, in accordance with Duboc (2019), seems to last because there is still considerable influence of the fundamental cornerstone of ELF's early days in more recent academic productions whose objective is to analyze patterns of occurrence in ELF *corpora*.

According to Gimenez *et al.* (2015), the understanding of ELF as a variety capable of being coded seems to be less prevalent nowadays. Moreover, it is well accepted that ELF corresponds to any use of English among speakers of different mother tongues for whom English is the chosen medium of communication, and often the only option (SEIDLHOFER, 2011).

Duboc (2019, p. 11) points out that the complex web of meanings that emerges from the concept of ELF “[...] sometimes tends towards a naïve romanticization of the term, and sometimes it tends towards a more politicized understanding.”² However, it must be borne in mind that, although the concept of ELF still carries the weight of its initial conceptualization (DUBOC, 2019), for ELF researchers, the concept does not remain the same, and scholars need to get themselves ready to revise their conceptualizations of this phenomenon in line with new empirical findings (JENKINS, 2015, p. 51). Similarly, researchers have also been taking into consideration conceptualizations and results from other research fields which commonly dialogue with ELF.

Thus, it is possible to realize that the original idea of ELF is no longer conceived as a variety of English, but as a specific context of language use that produces forms of the language and ways of interacting and communicating. These forms, it is assumed, are very different from those expected in traditional interactional contacts in which the native speaker construct is an absolute reference (JORDÃO; MARQUES, 2018, p. 55). Therefore,

the ways we use language are context dependent, context here understood as a much wider determinant than the usual concept of context as “situation of use”. Context, therefore, points not only at physical space or degrees of formality of particular cultures, but also at affective, historical, cognitive, spatial, perceptual, material, representational dimensions of our ontologies and epistemologies, of

² Our translation for: [...] ora pendem para uma certa romantização ingênua do termo, ora pendem para um entendimento mais politizado. (DUBOC, 2019, p. 11).

how interlocutors understand and thus have their interactional practices constructed. (JORDÃO; MARQUES, 2018, p. 55).

Having said that, the spread of English across the globe allows us to perceive new possibilities for what counts as languages and new possibilities for considering what we mean by context in a situation of interaction among English users with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, in ELT contexts it persists a “[...] view of languages as objects, as essentialized and autonomous systems for the expression of thought, purportedly functioning as more or less transparent codes.” (JORDÃO; MARQUES, 2018, p. 56).

As reported by those authors, this view of language easily develops into normativity, establishing binary patterns of “right and wrong”, “correct and incorrect”, “possible and impossible”. As they observe, such patterns produce the hierarchy of language forms once they determine which forms are more appropriate and which ones are not for language use, leading into the labeling of users as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ based roughly on their knowledge of an abstract language system.

Still in those authors’ view, this is undoubtedly very close to the colonial discourse based on binary categories of belonging and not belonging, having and not having, being and not being. Kleiman (2013, p. 45), in this sense, recalls that for the Peruvian sociologist Quijano (2000), coloniality was created in colonialism, although unlike the latter, it is deeper and more lasting.³

Jordão and Marques (2018), in turn, based on Souza’s (2012) reflections, emphasize that coloniality, understood as a system of unequal relations of knowledge, power, resources and authorities, is not restricted to a historical moment. This unequal system prevails as it defines which knowledge should be valued as legitimate knowledge. Furthermore, the authors remind us that such coloniality is widespread and everlasting, for instance, in applied linguistics as well as in theories of language teaching and learning, validating, among other things, ethnocentric perspectives of idealized monolingual users, historically seen as the ultimate goal to be achieved by the so-called efficient language learners.

For Duboc (2019), studies like the one by Jordão and Marques (2018), demonstrate the meanings recently attributed to ELF in Brazil, as they bring “[...] a harsh

³ Our translation for: Segundo o sociólogo peruano Quijano (2000), a colonialidade foi criada no colonialismo, embora diferentemente deste, seja mais profunda e duradoura. (KLEIMAN, 2013, p. 45).

criticism of the supposed neutrality with which interactions in ELF are treated, [...] and advocate for an ELF decolonization exercise in English language teaching and teacher education.”⁴ (DUBOC, 2019, p. 14). The aforementioned exercise of decolonization, in fact, has the purpose of making it clear that both ELF interactions and ELT cannot be conducted nowadays as if they are immune to political and pedagogical implications of the phenomenon.

In this regard, Siqueira (2018), advocating for the decolonization of ELT practices, clarifies that he understands

ELF as a profoundly inter(trans)cultural phenomenon, which, par excellence, emerges in spaces where the desire to explore and accept differences in communication, to relativize values and attitudes must predominate, as well as to develop the ability to mediate the contact among different groups in communicative practices.⁵ (SIQUEIRA, 2018, p. 99).

Understandings of ELF such as this one by Siqueira (2018), as well as the one by Jordão and Marques (2018), clearly demonstrate, besides the development of the research field, a maturation of the perception of ELF in relation to the way English is appropriated and used worldwide.

Regarding the impacts of ELF research in the Brazilian educational field, the insertion of the concept of ELF in the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), is to be considered an important achievement, despite some incongruence in the application of the term, once the document is of a normative nature and establishes a set of organic and progressive learning that all students are expected to develop along the different stages and modalities of Basic Education (BRASIL, 2018, p. 7).

Following that path, concerning English, the BNCC brings the following information:

Some concepts no longer seem to take into account the view of a language that has gone “viral” and has become “mixed”, as it is the case with the concept of foreign language, strongly criticized for its Eurocentric bias. Other recently proposed terminologies have also provoked an intense debate in the field, such as English as an

⁴ Our translation for: [...] uma dura crítica à suposta neutralidade com que as interações em ILF são tratadas, [...] e advogam em defesa de um exercício de descolonização do ILF no ensino de inglês e na formação docente. (DUBOC, 2019, p. 14).

⁵ Our translation for: [...] o ILF como um fenômeno profundamente inter(trans)cultural, que, por excelência, se materializa em espaços onde deve predominar o desejo de se explorar e aceitar diferenças na comunicação, relativizar valores e posturas, assim como desenvolver a habilidade de mediar o contato de diferentes grupos em práticas comunicativas. (SIQUEIRA, 2018, p. 99).

international language, as a global language, as an additional language, as a lingua franca, among others. Despite the differences between one terminology and another, the emphases, contact points and eventual overlaps, the understanding given to this component in the BNCC focuses primarily on the **social and political function of English** and, in this sense, it moves on to treat this language in its **lingua franca status**. The concept is not new, and it has been recontextualized by field scholars in recent studies concerning the English language use in the contemporary world.⁶ (BRASIL, 2018, p. 241, emphasis in the original).

Although the BNCC needs various improvements in order to move away from traditional practices of ELT (DUBOC, 2019; SZUNDY, 2019), as pointed out, the insertion of the concept of ELF in the English language guidelines of the document, in our view, does represent the recognition of the importance and relevance of current ELF studies. It also signals the need for the inclusion of discussions concerning what is understood by teaching English under a lingua franca perspective in teacher education programs.

Given this scenario, considering that the insertion of ELF and the implications of the understanding of this concept for English teaching practice is a challenge that needs to be faced and overcome by English teacher education in the Brazilian context, this paper starts with a brief reflection on the inclusion of ELF in this area within the country's reality. Then, we make some considerations about the transformative approach along the preparation of English language teachers (SIFAKIS, 2014; BAYYURT; SIFAKIS, 2017), and take into account some paths signaled by Brazilian researchers committed to the insertion of ELF in English teacher education programs.

The paper then concludes by highlighting the relevance of the inclusion of ELF studies in teacher education in our local context, particularly after the insertion of this

⁶ Our translation for: Alguns conceitos parecem já não atender as perspectivas de compreensão de uma língua que “viralizou” e se tornou “miscigenada”, como é o caso do conceito de língua estrangeira, fortemente criticado por seu viés eurocêntrico. Outras terminologias, mais recentemente propostas, também provocam um intenso debate no campo, tais como inglês como língua internacional, como língua global, como língua adicional, como língua franca, dentre outras. Em que pese as diferenças entre uma terminologia e outra, suas ênfases, pontos de contato e eventuais sobreposições, o tratamento dado ao componente na BNCC prioriza o foco **da função social e política do inglês** e, nesse sentido, passa a tratá-la em seu *status* de **língua franca**. O conceito não é novo e tem sido recontextualizado por teóricos do campo em estudos recentes que analisam os usos da língua inglesa no mundo contemporâneo. (BRASIL, 2018, p. 241, negrito no original).

concept in the BNCC, given that these studies make it possible to problematize conventional practices in ELT.

2 English Teacher Education and ELF: some points to be considered

Over the past years, a substantial body of research findings about ELF and the implications for ELT has been produced, especially concerning the teaching of English in countries where this language is taught as a foreign language (EFL), or, in Kachru's (1985) terminology, expanding circle countries. These publications overtly reflect the demand for change in EFL. According to Canagarajah (2014, p. 768), as the contexts where English is used change and, therefore, the conventions and practices related to the use of this language are transformed, pedagogical approaches must also follow that tendency in order to reflect the users' values and aspirations.

ELT in Brazil, as well as in other expanding circle countries, where English is not used locally as a second official language, has always taken the North American and/or the British varieties as models for its teaching. However, as Canagarajah (2014) asserts, the current globalization phenomenon has evolved in such a way that communities in the expanding circle are not at all taken as immune to translocal influences through media, social networking, travel and commerce, for example.

Thus, even in countries where English does not enjoy official status, local uses of the language have been developing, and English users in these countries are increasingly interacting with multilingual communities. Therefore, it is no wonder that researchers are interested in reflecting on the impacts of these changes in the EFL classroom.

With respect to the Brazilian context, we understand that the already pointed out insertion of the ELF concept in the BNCC, requires the inclusion of debates concerning what it means to consider the lingua franca status of English in the classrooms of Brazilian Basic Education, since according to the document, English

[...] is no longer a foreign language from hegemonic countries whose speakers serve as a model to follow, [...]. From this perspective, English speakers with different linguistic and cultural repertoires worldwide have their uses of the language accepted and legitimized, which makes it possible, for example, to question the view that the only

‘correct’ English – and the one to be taught – is that spoken by North Americans or British.⁷ (BRASIL, 2018, p. 241).

This way, the guidelines for the teaching of English in Basic Education points to the need for reflection on what it means to teach English under this perspective during the preparation process of English teachers, as according to the document, Basic Education curricula, initial and continuing teacher education, as well as the production of teaching materials, will all be oriented by the BNCC (BRASIL, 2018, p. 5). In this context, current research findings have a lot to contribute to the discussions about teaching what we would call ELF-aware lessons.

Although ELF research has been pointing to the need for change in ELT, researchers in this field have always carefully stated that it is not their role to say what teachers should or should not do in their teaching contexts. In fact, as Jenkins (2012, p. 492) would argue – “[...] it is for ELT practitioners [themselves] to decide whether/to what extent ELF is relevant to their learners in their context.” It comes as no surprise, therefore, that a considerable number of publications related to the integration between ELF studies and ELT pedagogy have researchers who are also teachers at the forefront.

These researchers/teachers have focused primarily on the analysis of teaching materials in order to check if the materials allow ELF-aware lessons to be planned and implemented. They have also investigated possible ways to adapt ELT curriculum so that it may express the contemporary needs of the learners. Moreover, these professionals have frequently sought for ways to incorporate these discussions into teacher education programs, both at pre-service and in-service levels.

In other words, ELF researchers from different countries and backgrounds (BAYYURT; SIFAKIS, 2017; GIMENEZ, 2014; DUBOC, 2018; SIQUEIRA, 2008; SIFAKIS, 2014, just to name but a few) have been considering ways in which the different parties involved in ELT, that is, English teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, among others, may think of alternatives for the development of ELT practices

⁷ Our translation for: [...] não é mais aquela do ‘estrangeiro’, oriundo de países hegemônicos, cujos falantes servem de modelo a ser seguido, [...]. Nessa perspectiva, são acolhidos e legitimados os usos que dela fazem falantes espalhados no mundo inteiro, com diferentes repertórios linguísticos e culturais, o que possibilita, por exemplo, questionar a visão de que o único inglês ‘correto’ – e a ser ensinado – é aquele falado por estadunidenses ou britânicos. (BRASIL, 2018, p. 241).

which are closer to the complex reality of English uses and users in the contemporary world (SIFAKIS, 2014).

However, it is necessary to bear in mind that

If, on the one hand, we have applied linguistics researchers interested in developing new conceptual tools to explain the re-location of English in a postcolonial perspective, i.e. detaching it from its historical native speakers, on the other hand, we have teachers influenced by a growing market that reinforces the native speaker ideology and governmental policies that do little to “rock the boat”. (GIMENEZ; EL KADRI; CALVO, 2018, p. 211-212)

Thereby, for these scholars, teacher education programs in such realities play a special role in that they are the privileged space to challenge ELT status quo. Many initiatives have reported the results of these efforts (SIFAKIS, 2007, 2014; BAYYURT; SIFAKIS, 2017). In Brazil, most of these studies have focused on beliefs and attitudes, as well as on the potential implications of considering the global spread of English for its teaching (EL KADRI, 2010; BORDONI; GIMENEZ, 2014; COGO; SIQUEIRA, 2017). Thus, it is possible to notice through the development of the ELF construct and, consequently, the development of the substantial literature about ELF, the necessary progress to bring the questions raised by scholars in this field of study to teacher education.

Once again, in Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo’s (2018) view, rethinking teacher education from an ELF perspective is neither an easy task nor a recent one. In fact, researchers have been highlighting the need to provide room for ELF implications in the curriculum of English teacher education programs for quite a while. Likewise, these authors also point out that the great challenge for teacher preparation programs is how to deal with the re-conceptualization that the ELF perspective brings into ELT.

Although this is a major challenge, we consider that the inclusion of ELF in English teacher education is of utmost importance nowadays as it enables teachers, especially pre-service ones, to reflect on their own ways of teaching and to analyze what needs to be improved in order to enable their learners to become users prepared to communicate successfully with people from all walks of life around the globe.

In this regard, Cogo and Siqueira (2017, p. 51) contend that, since the beginning of ELF investigations, scholars have underscored that ELF studies do not aim to impose what should or should not be taught in the classroom, as already mentioned.

Nevertheless, a very important aspect around this phenomenon concerns how teachers and teacher educators can make use of or adapt theoretical findings in their own contexts, and how established ELT beliefs and practices may facilitate or prevent practitioners from adopting a more ELF-oriented approach.

Thus, even though the task of rethinking language teacher education is not an easy initiative, there is no denying that the results of these changes contribute to the preparation of English practitioners who, potentially are to become more aware of what it means to teach English today and, therefore, better prepared to make informed decisions about what they consider to be more appropriate to their contexts when it comes to teaching and learning an additional language, especially English.

3 Rethinking English teacher education: some initiatives

Cogo and Siqueira (2017, p. 51) assert that ELF research has advanced in such a way that one of its biggest challenges today is to have its empirical findings reach the regular ELT classrooms. They also indicate that major areas related to these results concerning pedagogical implications are the syllabus, materials and approaches, assessment, and most importantly, the knowledge base of teachers, being all these critical for teacher education.

Sifakis (2018), considering the extent to which ELF research is capable of impacting and bringing about changes to ELT, emphasizes the need to develop a comprehensive model that makes it possible to relate the ELF construct and the ELT area, in particular the teaching of EFL, taking into consideration the needs of each specific context. The scholar also stresses the need to present good practices to represent this link. For him, the programs responsible for the preparation of teachers need to involve them in a journey of reflection that, besides the critical perspective, makes use of a transformative approach (SIFAKIS, 2014).

Along with that line of thought, Sifakis (2014) considers the transformative approach to be an appropriate educational resource to motivate teachers interested in integrating ELF into their teaching contexts. Moreover, the researcher believes that this approach is adequate to address the need for change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes, as

well as the need for changes in consolidated ELT practices. This task is a challenge though, and as Bayyurt and Sifakis (2017) point out, one of the restrictions of proposing a teacher education guided by ELF principles is that there is, among other aspects, no pre-established curriculum.

Apart from that, the same way there are studies in favor of a teacher education informed by the ELF perspective, it is also possible to find criticisms of such proposals. For these scholars, this situation stems from the fact that while EFL is clearly specified as a teaching and learning construct, the ELF construct is still in search of specifications so that it can be recognized as such. It cannot be forgotten that these specifications will depend, besides the teacher's interest, on the context in which the teaching and learning process will take place.

Despite the growing body of knowledge related to ELF, Bayyurt and Sifakis (2017) understand that the insertion of ELF in teacher education will not change teachers' perspective immediately, because, even for interested experienced practitioners, it takes time to identify what is necessary to be done to make their teaching practices closer to the reality of English.

Therefore, these authors consider that it is necessary to focus on: (1) providing comprehensive information about the present role of English worldwide and (2) incorporating elements of change in teachers' perspective about that role and the implications for their teaching contexts. Following what was indicated by Sifakis (2007), Bayyurt and Sifakis (2017), as already highlighted, propose a transformative education model that is broken down into three phases:

- Phase 1: Teachers' exposure to the complexities of the global spread of English and the multiplicity of communicative contexts in today's world;
- Phase 2: Awareness of the challenges those complexities can present to their contexts in a critical and practical way;
- Phase 3: Involving them in an action plan that would help them integrate elements from ELF and WE (World Englishes) research that they might consider to be relevant to their own contexts.

For these two scholars, the focus of this proposal is not to make teachers accept the entire ELF construct. Rather, the focus is on using existing research as a means of motivating them to grow into more autonomous, independent and critical practitioners,

capable of deciding the extent to which they want to integrate ELF-related issues to their practices.

Bringing the issue to our context, Gimenez (2015) considers that the incorporation of ELF studies into teacher education allows reflections on what English is today, causing displacement of meanings and thus allowing more visible articulations between language, power and ideology. Also, according to this author, in the survey about ELF in Brazil, carried out by her and Bordini in 2014, at least 20 studies were identified between years 2005 and 2011, indicating concern about teaching aspects, and in this manner, demonstrating an interest in pedagogical reappraisal in the different contexts in our country.

Gimenez (2015) also emphasizes that although practitioners recognize and accept that the native speaker's ideal of proficiency is unattainable, this remains as the proposed goal for many learners, thus signaling that despite the fact that our field is being challenged by the ELF perspective, the reality of ELT continues to be

[...] grounded in policies that favor one (or two) standard variety (varieties), the industry that support pedagogical practices and the English language market continue to push toward its teaching as a foreign language.⁸ (GIMENEZ, 2015, p. 88).

With the introduction of the current BNCC, however, there seems to be an attempt to bring about changes to ELT in Basic Education through the consideration of English “[...] as a language that materializes in hybrid uses, marked by fluidity and open to new ways of saying, driven by pluri/multilingual speakers [...]”⁹ (BRASIL, 2018, p. 242). Regarding teaching approaches, the document argues that recognizing English in its lingua franca status entails understanding that certain ELT-related beliefs need to be relativized.

For Szundy (2019, p. 144), at first glance, the ELF perspective defended in the presentation of the English component in the BNCC may lead us to believe that the teaching and learning practices of this component are situated in the perspective characterized as decolonial (MIGNOLO, 2007). For her, this happens because, in

⁸ Our translation for: [...] alicerçada em políticas favoráveis a uma (ou duas) variedade(s) padrão, a indústria que sustenta as práticas pedagógicas e o mercado linguístico de inglês continuam a pressionar na direção de seu ensino como uma língua estrangeira. (GIMENEZ, 2015, p. 88).

⁹ Our translation for: [...] como uma língua que se materializa em usos híbridos, marcada pela fluidez e que se abre para a invenção de novas formas de dizer, impulsionada por falantes pluri/multilíngues [...]. (BRASIL, 2018, p. 242).

defending the non-superiority of native speakers over the many uses of what we perceive as English and the legitimacy of those uses by all those who use this language, the BNCC's lingua franca ideology would allow the teaching and learning process of this language to be a place of contention, claiming and non-submission (RAJAGOPALAN, 2005, p. 155) .

However, Szundy (2019) points out that

[...] this more hopeful look, in the Freirian sense of the term (FREIRE, 1992), soon crumbles as we come across the abilities stipulated for the component, which seem to privilege the view of text(s) as (an) autonomous unit(s) [...] and an undoubtedly problematic intercultural dimension.¹⁰ (SZUNDY, 2019, p. 144).

Once our aim is to advocate for the inclusion of discussions about English teaching from a lingua franca perspective in Foreign Language teacher education, in this paper, we will not analyze the skills stipulated for the English language component in the BNCC. However, we think that it is pertinent to expose the position of professionals in the field (DUBOC, 2019; SZUNDY, 2019) concerning the insertion of the ELF term in this document, since these positions signal the need for reflection on what is meant by teaching and learning practices of English from a lingua franca perspective. More importantly, what is meant by an ELT critical pedagogy, since the BNCC highlights that it is necessary to prioritize the social and political function of English.

We do see eye to eye with Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo (2018), when they affirm that the concepts of awareness and reflection are crucial for rethinking teacher education. In the Brazilian context, these authors cite, as an example, one of the initiatives they took to insert this perspective in 2014, when they were investigating whether and how an ELF perspective had been adopted in programs to prepare future English teachers.

The data of this study were generated from an open-ended questionnaire applied to seven professors from a Foreign Language teacher course in the state of Paraná. The data analysis has shown that indeed there is recognition among teacher educators that ELF is a relevant perspective to be introduced into English language teacher education programs.

¹⁰ Our translation for: [...] esse olhar mais esperançoso, no sentido freiriano do termo (FREIRE, 1992), logo se desfaz quando nos deparamos com as habilidades estipuladas para o componente, que parecem privilegiar a visão de texto(s) como unidade(s) autônomas [...] e uma dimensão intercultural pouco problematizadora. (SZUNDY, 2019, p. 144).

The study also allowed the perception that many teacher educators already presented some type of knowledge about ELF, although the authors were unable to evaluate what they actually understood by ELF. The investigation also made it possible to identify a tendency for the introduction of ELF-related issues mainly in pedagogical components of the program, resulting in isolated attempts and initiatives by those who had had contact with ELF studies.

Their investigation, in accordance with other studies (RAJAGOPALAN, 2009; SIQUEIRA, 2008), demonstrates that despite the difficulty in implementing ELF-based ELT, for many Brazilian scholars, the ELF perspective is relevant to our context. According to the aforementioned researchers, the following principles need to be taken into consideration: the study and communicative experience with different varieties of English, reflections on issues of identity and possession of the English language, discussions on how to evaluate productive skills that deviate from native speakers' norms, the intercultural nature of English and questions of intelligibility.

Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo (2018) also reflect on actions taken in two pre-service English teacher education programs. In one of these programs, a thirty-hour elective course was held for a semester in 2015. The course aimed to draw attention to issues related to ELF uses and the pedagogical consequences that arise from them. The researchers pointed out that they were aware that simply adding an elective course may not be enough to challenge assumptions taken as universal truths in EFL teaching. However, in a context where practical suggestions on how to teach English taking into consideration its role as a global language are scarce, their initiative is to be taken an important step to introduce discussions on the potential of ELF use in EFL-oriented practices.

Regarding the activities and materials used during the development of these two initiatives in these courses in Paraná, Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo (2018) also emphasize the need to go beyond the teaching resources generally available to the teacher educators which mostly concentrate in reading and listening comprehension activities, that is, at the receptive level. For the authors, one of the difficulties for teacher educators is to find examples of ELF uses in written texts so that it can be shown to pre-service teachers that ELF means much more than a variety of accents.

We agree with these scholars that initiatives such as theirs (and many more are expected) provide opportunities to learn more about ELF and its potential to bring about changes in current ELT, guiding these practices towards a more egalitarian form of interaction among ELF users of different cultural backgrounds.

Along that line, Cogo and Siqueira (2017) assert that foreign language teacher courses in different parts of Brazil are incorporating ELF-related topics, thus creating opportunities to demystify and challenge traditional fundamentals of EFL teaching that still predominate outside and within the English classroom. For them, a consideration of teaching beliefs, attitudes and practices is critical to the possible development of an ELF-aware oriented approach. According to these authors, some studies show that English teachers and linguists have a less receptive attitude towards ELF than non-linguists.

Moreover, Cogo and Siqueira (2017) call attention to the fact that this lack of receptiveness to ELF is associated, and it could not be any other way, with the profile and trajectory of language teachers, some of whom have invested in learning the language from a perspective that had the native speaker as an ideal to be achieved. Consequently, these teachers see themselves as custodians of the norms and standards of English, which is one of the aspects of the professional identity of the English language practitioner that may prevent integrating ELF into their teaching practices (SIFAKIS, 2009).

Development in ELF research has made it possible to identify some aspects that may cause resistance or even insecurity concerning the adoption of an ELF perspective. Among these aspects, Cogo and Siqueira (2017) cite the following: (1) conception of English as a foreign language; (2) adoption of ELT materials based on English native speakers, that is, English considered as standard; (3) understanding of the teacher as a custodian of the norms and varieties of standard English; (4) influence of international tests and exams that require standard English; (5) influence of teachers' institutional policies, among others. These aspects are, therefore, issues to be discussed in teacher education, although we understand, as mentioned earlier, that this is not an easy task as it challenges and destabilizes well-established and enrooted beliefs in ELT.

The study by Cogo and Siqueira (2017) carried out in the city of Salvador, Bahia, aimed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of Brazilian teachers regarding ELF, as well as aspects that affect teachers' attitudes. In order to motivate discussions on topics

that participants might not know well, the investigation was conducted by running focus groups, rather than individual interviews.

Thus, two focus groups were formed, one with pre-service teachers and the other with in-service ones. The pre-service teachers were from a Letters course at a federal university and, at the moment of the research, they were teaching at the university's Language Extension Program whose objective is to provide low-cost courses to the public in general. Participants in this group had an average of two years of teaching experience and none of them had never had an experience abroad.

The in-service teachers, in turn, worked in a prestigious private English course that catered to students from local upper middle and high classes. These participants had an average of five years of teaching experience, and most of them had already had experiences abroad, mainly in English speaking-countries.

To encourage the discussion, Cogo and Siqueira (2017) presented to the group quotes selected from ELF writing that challenge some traditional ELT views. These quotes were presented to each focus group and participants were asked to reflect about them and discuss their views on the issues depicted.

The study showed that both groups had positive attitudes towards ELF, however, they seemed more cautious about the implications of ELF for ELT, especially the in-service teachers' group. Regarding the factors responsible for the perception of ELT professionals in the investigated context, it was found that, pre- and in-service practitioners had similar insecurities and doubts about ELF, they understood ELF in different ways. The investigation has shown that their stance in relation to English, ELF and the English language diversity was affected by their understanding of language learning and teaching theories as well as their own success and failure as language learners.

For Cogo and Siqueira (2017), something the study data clearly shows is the perception of ELF as emancipation, a way to free educators from the traditional view of ELT by bringing them closer to a more critical professional practice. Concerning this, we could say that this study, as well as the other initiatives of inclusion of discussions about ELF in English teacher preparation programs mentioned earlier in this paper, provides an opportunity for the development of critical practitioners prepared to make decisions about informed pedagogical practices in their classrooms.

Final Remarks

The reflections presented here represent a small portion of the studies that have been carried out, so far, in order to allow teachers to rethink their practices taking into account the reality that permeates the use of English today. We consider that, although it is a difficult task to go against EFL teaching premises, which, as we have pointed out earlier, is a teaching and learning construct that presents clear specifications, EFL teaching has much to gain from the integration of knowledge derived from ELF studies.

In this regard, we consider the insertion of the term ELF in the BNCC as an important step towards challenging traditional ELT practices in an environment that has never been considered ideal for effective language learning: the school. Such insertion becomes even more important when one observes that this document

[...] integrates Basic Educational national policy and will contribute to the alignment of other policies and actions at the federal, state and municipal levels, related to teacher education, evaluation, the elaboration of educational content and criteria for the provision of adequate infrastructure for the full development of education.¹¹ (BRASIL, 2018, p. 8).

It is possible to note, then, that the document recognizes that it is not only necessary to establish the essential learning that all students need to develop along their path in Basic Education, but also to ensure compliance with what is established through alignment with other policies and actions. In this sense, regarding the area of English teacher education, we understand that the curricular components of English teacher preparation programs need to include discussions that may contribute to a better understanding of what is meant by ELF in our context.

Although studies, such as that by Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo (2018), indicate the recognition of ELF as relevant to the process of pre-service teacher development, discussions about issues related to ELF studies are mostly isolated initiatives by those

¹¹ Our translation for: [...] integra a política nacional da Educação Básica e vai contribuir para o alinhamento de outras políticas e ações, em âmbito federal, estadual e municipal, referentes à formação de professores, à avaliação, à elaboração de conteúdos educacionais e aos critérios para a oferta de infraestrutura adequada para o pleno desenvolvimento da educação. (BRASIL, 2018, p. 8).

involved in teacher education. Thus, we believe that, by introducing English in its lingua franca status, the current BNCC may contribute for the recognition of this status in the curriculum components of English teacher education programs in our country. Despite the hurdles to be overcome, we see the initiative as positive because it is only with teachers who are aware of what they consider to be teaching English from a lingua franca perspective within their contexts that it might become possible for them to envision ELT practices that can potentially rupture with the traditional and old fashioned paradigm of teaching only vocabulary and grammar features in Basic Education.

Within this context, we do agree with Duboc (2019, p. 17), when she argues that the BNCC echoes “[...] an updated discourse that camouflages language content traditionally taught in a logic of linearity and hierarchy [...]”¹². Nonetheless, we have to recognize that the insertion of the ELF concept in this document seems to be a good start towards change in ELT practices.

Still recognizing the strong tradition of EFL practices in our context, Siqueira and Matos (2019, p. 132) remember that, although classes sensitive to the ELF perspective are gaining ground in Brazil, the reality of ELT in our country continues being predominantly driven by the native speaker construct. We are not saying that this orientation cannot be used depending on the teaching and learning goals or considering the interest of the students to learn the language. However, we understand that teachers need to make informed decisions, and, more than ever, the insertion of ELF in teacher education programs is an opportunity to make this possible, bringing about, as Lopriore (2018) points out, appropriate ways to involve pre- and in-service teachers in the reappraisal of English and its teaching.

We consider that the inclusion of ELF studies in teacher education has much to contribute to critical reflections on what is meant by language and foreign language teaching and learning. Also, what is meant by situating English in its lingua franca status, since an English teaching practice that focuses on the social and political function of that language (BRASIL, 2018, p. 241) may not consider this status only to signal that English is the language of globalization and access to significantly greater material assets.

All in all, our choice of interpretation for the concept of ELF in the current Brazilian BNCC conforms to the reasons that lead us to recognize the importance of ELF

¹² Our translation for: [...] um discurso atualizado que camufla conteúdos da língua tradicionalmente ensinados numa lógica de linearidade e hierarquização [...]. (DUBOC, 2019, p. 17).

studies in teacher education courses in our educational contexts. Therefore, we understand that the ELF concept in the BNCC endorses a perspective of critical language education, signaling the break with conventional ELT ideas and demanding that ELT practitioners have their objectives rethought, re-evaluated and reshaped in order to insert meaningful and important contents for their teaching contexts. Thus, we understand that the ELF studies as well as areas that are to be in constant dialog with ELF research, such as World Englishes, need to be fully and permanently present in English teacher education. It is a demand of today's world.

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