

Repensando la Enseñanza del Inglés en México: percepciones de docentes sobre el Inglés Lengua Franca

**Rethinking English Teaching in Mexico: Preservice and Teachers'
Perceptions of English as a Lingua Franca**

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Abstract

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has emerged as a prominent phenomenon, impacting English Language Teaching (ELT) worldwide. Despite its relevance, ELT in Mexico predominantly adheres to an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach, with limited research exploring ELF-aware methodologies. This qualitative case study aimed to address this research gap by investigating EFL teachers' and preservice teachers' perceptions regarding the ELF paradigm and its pedagogical implications at a Mexican public university. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. Findings reveal that while participants show increasing awareness and strong support for English varieties, some misconceptions regarding ELF persist. Furthermore, participants emphasize the need for culturally sensitive, context-specific pedagogies tailored to Mexico's unique linguistic landscape, highlighting the necessity for teacher education programs to incorporate ELF theory and practice, de-center native speaker norms, and equip educators with skills to adapt materials and foster intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: language teaching ; teaching method ; lingua franca; foreign language.

Resumen

El inglés como lengua franca (ELF) ha cobrado relevancia en la enseñanza del inglés, pero en México aún predomina un enfoque de inglés como lengua extranjera, con escasa exploración de metodologías ELF. Este estudio cualitativo explora las percepciones de profesores y futuros profesores de inglés en una universidad pública mexicana sobre el paradigma ELF y sus implicaciones pedagógicas. Los datos se recopilaron mediante cuestionarios, entrevistas semiestructuradas y un grupo focal. Los resultados revelan una creciente conciencia y un apoyo hacia las variedades del inglés, aunque persisten ideas erróneas sobre el ELF. Asimismo, los participantes subrayan la necesidad de pedagogías culturalmente sensibles y adaptadas al contexto lingüístico mexicano. Se destaca la urgencia de que los programas de formación docente incorporen la teoría y la práctica del ELF, superen las normas del hablante nativo, y preparen a los educadores para adaptar materiales y promover la competencia comunicativa intercultural.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de Idiomas; métodos de enseñanza; lengua extranjera; lingua franca.

Introduction

Research problem

English has become the first global lingua franca. Technical advances, the global spread of the internet, and other factors have fostered the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) to meet the communication needs of speakers from different first language backgrounds in an interconnected world. Considering the fast-changing contexts of English usage, ELF has today “major implications for language learning and teaching” (Dewey, 2012, p. 142) and has progressed significantly as a research field, especially in academic settings. However, in contrast to global considerations, English language teaching (ELT) in Mexico is still based on an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) perspective and mainly relies on standard forms of the language. Thus, this research aims to investigate EFL teachers' and preservice teachers' perceptions of the concept of ELF at a Mexican public university, in light of prior studies conducted in other countries that focused on teachers' perceptions of ELF issues.

Background

Mauranen (2017) defines the broad term “lingua franca” as a contact language, serving as a vehicular language between speakers who do not share a first language. In the case of English, it has become such a powerful global system of communication in many aspects that it is commonly called “the global lingua franca,” “the language of business,” or, for the main interest of this research, “the most popular language of study.” ELF has no specific geographical boundaries or standard forms; the concept is mostly focused on English usage among people from different first-language backgrounds. For instance, the protagonists of a professional European football match would use English when interacting, although the players and referees could be from diverse origins and might not speak it as a first language.

In the 21st century, the globalization process, the technological advances, and the development of the internet became crucial factors for the spread of English as a predominant international language (Sharifian, 2009). According to Crystal (2003), roughly only one out of four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language. The issue of including ELF as a paradigm in ELT is even more complex when we consider that ELT professionals received research on ELF with criticism and opposition in its earlier days. Seidlhofer (2005) reckons a paradoxical situation in which, for the majority of its users,

English is a foreign language, and many “verbal exchanges in English do not involve NS at all, but on the other hand, there is still a tendency for NS to be regarded as custodians over what is acceptable usage” (p. 339).

Literature review

English has unequivocally achieved the status of an international language, a distinction not primarily attributable to the number of its native speakers, but rather to its pervasive special role in myriad global communication contexts (Crystal, 2013). This phenomenon is most strikingly evident in its widespread use among non-native speakers across diverse sociocultural, professional, and educational domains.

While the concept of English as an International Language (EIL) seems to cover the total diversity of English varieties in the world, including its native varieties, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) specifically refers to communication between speakers who do not share the same linguistic background (Seidlhofer, 2005). Functionally, ELF is defined “by its use in intercultural communication rather than formally by its reference to native-speaker norms” (Hülmbauer et al., 2008, p. 27). This perspective contrasts sharply with traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approaches, which historically prioritize adherence to Native Speaker (NS) norms and target NS cultural aspects. Crucially, in ELF contexts, interactions emphasize communicative functions over strict linguistic form, valuing efficient intelligibility above native-like correctness (Cogo, 2010). This shift from a native speaker-centric paradigm to a communication-effectiveness paradigm is fundamental to understanding ELF.

To fully grasp how English attained its current global status, it is essential to examine the historical trajectory of its spread and the multifaceted reasons behind its exponential growth. Mackenzie (2018) posits that the distinction between the English spoken by non-native and native users is fundamentally a result of language contact and interference.

He highlights English's long history of contact-induced change, asserting that the language cannot be solely attributed to a combination of “French and the ancient Saxon languages” (p. 67). English has been continuously shaped by extensive contact with Celtic languages from its earliest forms, followed by Scandinavian and Norman influences that both “added to and subtracted from the language” (p. 65). Furthermore, significant non-native acquisition over centuries has led to “contact-induced simplifications” (p. 70). Thus,

English has perpetually “been in contact with other languages for its entire history, and today it is in contact with all the world’s ‘larger’ languages and a huge number of ‘small’ ones” (p. 150).

Crystal (2013, 2008) succinctly explains the global dominance of English as stemming solely from the “power of the people who speak it,” emphasizing that “power always drives language” (2013, 1:14). This power manifests in various forms, including political (military), technological, economic, and cultural contexts. Synthetically, Crystal (2013) attributes the historical reasons for the global spread of English since the 17th century to the influence of the British Empire, the Industrial Revolution, American imperialism, economic power, and twentieth-century cultural hegemony.

This historical legacy has culminated in a perception where, at an international level, English is often considered “the only language worth considering” (Christiansen, 2015), or, at least, the most privileged. This privilege is evident in educational settings worldwide, with at least 142 countries making English mandatory in public education, while it remains optional in 41, and it is naturally the dominant language in English-speaking countries (Ives et al., 2016–2019). Mexico, like many nations, has adopted English as their chief foreign language being taught in schools.

The widespread adoption of English necessitates a re-evaluation of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies, particularly concerning the roles of native and non-native speakers, the concept of ‘standard English, and the perception of accents. Traditional ELT often relies on the native speaker as the ideal model, implicitly or explicitly reinforcing a native/non-native speaker dichotomy. However, ELF research challenges these assumptions by asserting that English is a global resource owned by all its users, regardless of their first language (Bon, 2023; Gülseren & Sarica, 2020). This perspective impacts how teachers view their identities and those of their students, shifting the focus from mimicking native speakers to developing effective intercultural communication skills (Ardıç, 2021).

The concept of ‘Standard English’ also undergoes scrutiny in an ELF framework. While some teachers may feel a pedagogical obligation to teach a ‘standard’ form due to institutional contexts or assessment requirements, the reality of ELF highlights that a singular, authoritative standard is often nonexistent in real-life interactions (Alastalo, 2022). Instead, ELF emphasizes the fluidity and dynamic nature of the language, where diverse cultural combinations and local varieties are valid for effective communication.

Furthermore, the pedagogical implications of ELF extend to material development and the teaching of pronunciation. Traditional ELT materials are often critiqued for presenting an idealized, often monolingual, view of English that does not reflect its diverse global uses and varieties (Vettorel, 2018). An ELF-aware approach encourages the use of authentic materials that feature non-native accents and demonstrate various English varieties, thereby better preparing learners for real-world ELF interactions. In terms of pronunciation, ELF scholarship advocates for a focus on intelligibility rather than native-like accent imitation (Jenkins et al., 2011; Tolmacheva & Tareva, 2023). This means that teachers should prioritize clear pronunciation, allowing for a range of accents as long as they do not impede mutual understanding.

Research aims

Despite the growing body of ELF research globally, there remains a significant research gap concerning the perceptions of the ELF concepts within the Mexican academic context. Initial searches of Mexican academic literature on ELF found little direct research on the topic. Few studies, including Vajda (2016), have directly addressed the concept. Therefore, this research seeks to learn about teachers' and preservice teachers' perceptions from a Mexican public university regarding the paradigm of English as a lingua franca (ELF).

It also attempts to question the pedagogical implications of teaching ELF in the Mexican academic context by examining cultural approaches that teachers employ in their classrooms and how their beliefs and experiences might influence their teaching practices.

In order to reach the objectives of the inquiry, this study is guided by the following research questions: What are teachers' and students' perceptions of English as a lingua franca? How may such teachers' and students' perceptions impact their ELF-oriented pedagogy? What are the pedagogical implications of teaching ELF in the Mexican context?

Method

Research approach

This qualitative study adopted a naturalistic and interpretive approach to explore English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) perspectives within English Language Teaching (ELT) in

Mexico. A qualitative design was selected to investigate participants' perceptions, aligning with a naturalistic inquiry since phenomena were observed and recorded directly by the researchers, who share similar profiles with the participants (Creswell, 2016).

The research adopted a case study approach. The cases investigated included perceptions of cultural issues related to ELF's influence, their impact on their ELF-oriented pedagogy, and the pedagogical implications of adopting an ELF approach in their teaching practices.

Participants

The study was conducted within the English Department in the School of Languages of a public and autonomous university in Veracruz, Mexico. Participants were purposively selected from undergraduate and postgraduate ELT programs, comprising 13 individuals: six EFL teachers and seven preservice teachers. Additionally, eight participants (identified as 1–8) engaged in individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group for qualitative data collection.

Research methods and instruments

The study implemented three data collection methods sequentially. First, two distinct questionnaires, with minor variations, were administered to teachers and preservice teachers to gain their insights. Eight individuals were then interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview guide comprising open-ended questions to examine teachers' perceptions of ELF, ELF dynamics, and pedagogical implications. Final focus group interviews were held with participants who had completed the initial interviews. A large and multifaceted dataset from this multi-method approach allowed nuanced study topic development. All data collection was conducted online and in English. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring anonymity.

Data collection and analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed a traditional approach (Creswell, 2016), involving organization, transcription of recorded Zoom videos, coding, condensation of codes into emergent themes, and data representation in tables. Subsequently, data triangulation analysis was performed to compare findings across the multiple data sets, enhancing objectivity, accuracy, and validity in the analysis and interpretation (Denzin, 2009).

Results and Discussion

This section provides a comprehensive description of the findings, organized into three primary themes: teachers' perceptions of ELF, teachers' awareness of ELF issues and their effects on English language instruction, and participants' views on the implications of teaching ELF within the Mexican context.

Teachers' perceptions of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

This section synthesizes findings regarding EFL teachers' perceptions of ELF, drawing on both questionnaire responses and semi-structured interview data. A mixed approach to data analysis allowed for a comprehensive understanding, integrating insights from closed-ended (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions. The discussion is structured into three subcategories: participants' definitions of ELF, the origins of their ELF knowledge, and their overall perspectives on the phenomenon.

Defining ELF

In order to identify the participants' perception of ELF in the questionnaire, they were firstly asked to assess their level of awareness of ELF through a multiple-choice question. It was established in relation to the definition of ELF required in a following question so that any lack of knowledge could be reflected.

The findings report that all participants, teachers and students alike, admitted being aware of ELF before they wrote their definition. These results contrast with previous reports, such as that by Inceçay and Akyel (2014), where only 33% of Turkish EFL teachers indicated advanced or moderate knowledge of the concept. However, the current results align more closely with studies like Öz (2019), which noted that 61% of EFL teachers had engaged with ELF literature or undertaken related studies.

Compared to previous reports, the findings of the hereby inquiry suggest an increased awareness of ELF among teachers, likely attributable to exposure through publications or training.

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews further illuminated the participants' conceptualizations, with 75% of the interviewees producing a relatively accurate definition. Most definitions focused on the characteristics of ELF as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages

In general terms, EFL teachers' definitions were more accurate than the ones provided by students. The data show that more EFL teachers (4 out of 5) than students (3 out of 5) gave an accurate definition of ELF regarding the chosen model: the criterion used to evaluate the definitions' accuracy for the questionnaire and the interviews is a generally approved definition of ELF by Seidlhofer (2015), who considered it "as any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (p. 7). This definition includes native speakers for whom ELF is also an additional means of communication (Baker, 2012).

Additionally, the excerpts from five EFL teachers and six students were compared in order to select the most representative definitions, which were then organized and separated into four themes according to their focus on the following characteristics:

different first languages, the native or non-native speakers of English, the situational contexts of use, or the reference to 'World Englishes.'

Qualitatively, EFL teachers' definitions were designated as generally more detailed and accurate than the students'. EFL teachers also proved to be more familiar with the ELF concept, since they provided more detailed and accurate definitions. Based on these data, it can be understood that there could be a correlation between the experience of EFL teachers and their level of awareness of ELF.

Although most definitions were quite neutral, the most experienced EFL teacher expressed a negative opinion about the concept when defining ELF, as shown in the following excerpt:

ELF is the kind of English that is used among speakers of other languages. The idea is that both speakers only have English in common to communicate and that they are not interested in the language itself. (...) it can go overboard and end up in pidgin or something like that, with the possibility that sooner or later, this kind of ELF becomes something different.

That perspective was justified in the following methods through the comparison of Standard English in opposition to a vision of ELF as a low-level form of English with a lack of rules. That excerpt illustrates a controversy reported by Jenkins (2017), who denounced criticism from ELT professionals who considered ELF as a threat to Standard English. It also reflects views from ESL and EFL teacher participants, reported by Reko (2019), "according to which ELF can be characterized as a low-level or makeshift form of the English language" (p. 68). That example is also representative of a traditional perspective of ELT, supporting a misconception of ELF as a subaltern NNS English usage compared to the correctness of standard forms.

Teachers' awareness of ELF and its impact on teaching

This category aims to answer how teachers' perceptions impact their ELF-aware pedagogy. The data from the ten Likert scale questions in this study were compared to Öz (2019), which had the same statements and 26 participants, twice as many. The result of such comparison allowed the following four subcategories to emerge.

Perspectives on English varieties

To the first Likert scale question, "It is important to introduce different varieties of English in class", every informant answered favorably since more than half (7 out of 13) strongly agreed and the rest (6) just agreed. There was not a significant difference in the perceptions of the participants, as the analysis showed that EFL teachers did not significantly differ from students. As for the second question, "We should familiarize our students with real-life use of English worldwide," all the answers were still unanimously favorable, with 9 out of the 13 participants who strongly agreed and 4 who agreed. Preservice teachers were slightly more enthusiastic about the statement (6 out of 7) than the EFL teachers (3 out of 6).

The interpretation of the data on the perceptions of English varieties clearly showed positive perspectives towards teaching English varieties in the classroom. All the participants were unanimously in favor of the introduction of English varieties in class and in favor of the familiarization of students with real-life use of English worldwide.

Regarding the semi-structured and focus group interviews, six themes were related to EFL teachers' perspectives on English varieties, whereas only four themes stood out for the same number of preservice teachers.

EFL teachers focused mostly on the necessity for instructors to raise learners' awareness of English varieties, but they also highlighted national varieties in English-speaking countries, problems of discrimination against some variations of English in some societies and institutions, and the comparisons between English varieties and similar distinctions in Spanish within Mexico and regarding Spanish from Spain. Only two EFL

teachers also alluded to the question of English ownership for users of varieties, and one of them pointed out the difficulty of teaching varieties in class.

These data confirm the same assumptions obtained through the analysis of answers to the previous Likert scale questions. Therefore, the analysis revealed that all the selected participants understand the diversity inherent in the English language.

Perspectives on the native and non-native speakers' dichotomy

Answers to the two last Likert scale questions showed again a unanimous position of all the participants from the two categories in favor of a global ownership of English.

The analysis of three different data sources revealed that all informants agreed on the claim that ownership of the English language extends beyond its native speakers. The participants also demonstrated a strong belief that NNS teachers contribute to English, but they often see NS English as an ideal spoken performance to reach and thus to focus on for their teaching practice.

Perspectives on Standard English

From the closed-ended questions, a clear majority of EFL teachers (4 out of 6) believe that there exists a Standard English, while only 3 out of 7 preservice teachers do.

The findings from the semi-structured and focus group interviews showed a similar pattern in which the attitudes of EFL teachers are more balanced between a necessity "to teach some sort of Standard English," according to educational contexts, certifications, or the American influence in Mexico, and their awareness that there is no authority anymore over English, that any cultural combinations and local varieties are valid because there is no standard concept in real-life societies.

These findings demonstrated the willingness of teachers to consider a more open approach for ELT.

Perspectives on accents

Findings from this study also show a relationship between teachers' perspectives on accents and the construction of identity in English language learning and teaching. The findings reflect the same pattern in which EFL teachers shared beliefs that are more oriented toward ELF. On the other hand, preservice teachers' opinions are more reserved regarding accents. These are in accordance with the review of research of Jenkins et al. (2011) and findings from other researchers (Öz, 2019; Siqueira, 2020; Berrêdo, 2015), who reported that NS accents are not viewed as a goal for English language teachers who focus more on the correctness of pronunciation.

Pedagogical implications for an ELF approach in Mexico

ELF is known as a world phenomenon that concerns all users of English in contexts where multicultural communication makes it a necessity (Jenkins et al., 2017). But it is above all in ELT, where ELF has major implications for teachers and learners who might find it relevant for their teaching and learning contexts (Dewey, 2012).

For this study, it is crucial to evaluate the participants' perceptions of the Mexican academic context so that we can gain their perspectives on possible pedagogical implications for an ELF-oriented teaching approach. The three following subsections present the EFL teachers' and preservice teachers' outlook on cultural approaches, on ELF-oriented materials, and on the possibilities of an ELF-aware approach in Mexican classrooms.

Perspectives on cultural approaches in ELT

In ELT, there is a common assumption that cultural content should be derived from NS cultures, but ELF approaches assume that there is a need to decenter the cultural aspects of English from the domain of NSs and to promote the development of cultural or cross-cultural understanding instead. The results in this subsection are derived from a

Likert scale question and two main questions asked in the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews.

On the Likert scale question, “In ELT, choosing topics among students’ cultural aspects makes them feel confident,” all EFL teachers agreed except for one who disagreed, whereas four preservice teachers strongly agreed, two agreed, and one had a neutral opinion. Most preservice teachers related their model of teaching culture in English to NS cultures. Two preservice teachers viewed their school culture as negatively impacting their teaching methods. As a whole, two preservice teachers and three EFL teachers presented perspectives that proved to be more tolerant toward different cultures, aside from the standards.

Finally, an EFL teacher explained that some cultural influences should be avoided by learners in the way they use English because there is a risk of being rejected in NS societies like Great Britain.

Attitudes towards ELF-oriented materials

The participants’ answers to the Likert scale question “There is a mismatch between how English is used and the language in ELT materials” revealed that a majority (8 out of 13) agreed with the statement.

Three experienced EFL teachers showed some positive attitudes towards materials with NNS accents and also considered varieties, called “Englishes,” away from the NS world. With respect to preservice teachers, although most of them agreed that there is a mismatch between how English is used and the language taught in ELT materials, only two out of seven talked about using material with other varieties of English to complement the traditional material with standard NS English.

Attitudes towards ELF-aware approaches in the Mexican context

Most participants' answers focused on effective communication to define what good English is; 2 preservice teachers defended the same focus with the acceptance of few errors or misunderstandings; and only 2 EFL teachers prioritized correctness.

Finally, findings from a focus group interview that involved the participation of three EFL teachers and two preservice teachers gave a crucial perspective on the Mexican geographical context that all participants agreed to consider singular.

Conclusion

These findings lead to the conclusion that most participants in this study expressed positive attitudes toward ELF and its implications for cross-cultural communication. In general terms, the findings obtained in this study are in line with results from recent studies about perceptions of ELF since most participants indicated and proved to be familiar with the ELF concept, and they showed positive attitudes towards raising their learners' awareness towards ELF for communicative purposes.

The findings thus showed an openness to an ELF cultural approach when most participants agreed on including Mexican cultural aspects, but only one out of thirteen put it into practice. In general, EFL teachers included more strategies to implement a multicultural approach, while preservice teachers did not include ELF cultural notions.

Finally, most preservice teachers' perspectives match with Dewey's (2014) ideas that English language pedagogy assumed that the goal of learning EFL is to communicate with and integrate into a target community of NSs, although "there is a growing awareness of ELF and Global Englishes and their potential impact on pedagogy, especially among experienced language teachers" (p. 16).

Concerning the first research question, the discussion of findings drew the conclusion that EFL teacher participants had more knowledge about ELF and gave a more accurate definition of the concept since it was included in half of their trainings, and they could also obtain information through leading their own research and reading articles. On the other hand, most preservice teachers recognized that they were not exposed to ELF before they participated in this research, but they were aware of the phenomenon from previous personal experiences.

In general, EFL teachers and preservice teachers agreed that intelligibility had to be given more emphasis than correctness, which is more representative of an ELF approach.

Some misconceptions about ELF were highlighted in the individual interviews of two experienced EFL teachers who considered ELF as a project of monolithic international English, as cited in Jenkins et al. (2011). Despite the preservice teachers' lack of knowledge about ELF and its implications in ELT, they showed more awareness of the contexts in which ELF is used around the world. Therefore, this research assumes that raising ELF awareness and introducing the concept in the early stages of teacher education is one of the main pedagogical implications.

Regarding the second research question, general perspectives on ELF issues resulted in more conservative EFL teachers, as they were more likely to defend the native standard norms in ELT in the same fashion as in other studies (Inceçay & Akyel, 2014; Öz, 2019; Reko, 2019). However, there were also some very contrasted opinions on standard norms (British and American models), since two EFL teachers reported attitudes towards ELF as they tried to include other models of Englishes to raise awareness of the relationship between standard forms and the variability of English interactions, as shown in Jenkins et al. (2011, p. 306).

Most EFL teachers and preservice teachers agreed that language assessment and preparing for proficiency tests required focusing on standard norms almost exclusively. Participants also reported feeling pressure from institutions and parents who questioned the teaching methods used to achieve specific objectives for learners.

Most participants who recognized some advantages in implementing an ELF-aware approach also contrasted their opinion regarding the context of teaching in which such a paradigm could be motivational, such as for learners with a higher proficiency and in institutions providing more freedom to teach.

Most participants reported they were satisfied with their accent and did not think that imitating native-like accents was preferable for them or their students. More preservice teachers believed that learning accents or being exposed to a wider variety of

accents was necessary for learners to develop oral comprehension skills. In general, most informants recognized and viewed their respective accents (Mexican, Flemish, or American) as positive, focusing more on intelligibility.

Finally, the implications of these perspectives on accents and non-native speakers' identity were oriented towards an ELF approach because most informants did not consider native speaker accents as the model to follow, as reported by Akçay (2020) in a study of Turkish EFL instructors' and students' perceptions on accents and ELF.

Some EFL teachers and preservice teachers demonstrated that their international experience, as well as their learning and teaching experiences, had a major impact on their ELF-oriented pedagogy. However, they also agreed on the importance of contexts for drawing ELF implications in classrooms, as English language teaching in Mexico is deeply dependent on standard norms required in key areas, such as materials, syllabuses, curricula, and methods.

Concerning the last research question, the findings from the individual semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview were coherent and representative of the perspectives presented above. There is a general agreement on the importance of exposing learners to accents beyond just those of native speakers.

The most accepted implications for an implementation in classrooms are related to materials since almost all participants showed a clear openness and approval for the use of audio materials that would display other varieties of accents, including Mexican accents.

The unanimous perceptions of English as a language owned by all its users reflected the participants' awareness of the diverse cultural approaches that might be applied in teaching practice, instead of a restrictive English native cultural model in pedagogical and testing materials. Unfortunately, the participants demonstrated a lack of

understanding about the relationship between language and culture in the teaching context. Some preservice teachers could not figure out or define the role of culture in their classroom, but they also explained that the model they employed was principally influenced by their institution's cultural approach.

The focus group interview revealed additional concerns about the Mexican academic context. All the informants agreed on some of the basic challenges that ELT faces in Mexico. They agreed that the first challenge for ELT is to be accessible for most learners since they reported important social problems related to English teaching and learning, such as the lack of proficient teachers.

The most significant limitation for pedagogical implications of the ELF paradigm, according to the interviewees, was the lack of context in Mexico for the use of ELF, as English is not given the same importance as in other regions of the world, mostly because of the presence of Spanish, which is already considered a lingua franca in Latin America.

An EFL teacher participant also reported that some Mexican learners tend to associate English with the United States of America, hence relating negative opinions to their attitudes towards English learning.

Implications

The findings from this study have shown important implications for future practice in the Mexican academic context. One of the main implications is the necessity to raise awareness about the use of ELF around the world. This research suggests an approach that resembles that of the Brazilian researcher Siqueira (2020), who defended an integration of ELF into the traditional EFL approach by “promoting a solid dialogue” between these two paradigms and raising awareness to foster a change in the attitudes of teachers and learners towards the reality of ELF and its implications for the classroom (p. 380).

Other implications drawn from the findings of this study are related to the correlation between teachers' experiences and their openness to an ELF-aware approach.

Limitations and Further Research

Finally, important limitations need to be considered, as this research could not include more participants due to the limits of time to collect data for the three methods implemented. Another limitation was caused by the lack of participants from the bachelor's TEFL program since six preservice informants out of seven belonged to the master's program.

Future research could include a larger sample of participants from different universities and regions to obtain more representative findings to be compared with those obtained in this research. Additionally, this study could inspire research that could include a quantitative approach for data collection and analysis or other types of participants, such as EFL students, teacher educators or English teachers from bilingual institutions for indigenous learners.

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