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# Critical ELT Agendas from the Territories: Recalling the Past, Exploring the Present, and Envisioning the Future

## Agendas Críticas de la Enseñanza del Inglés (ELT) desde el Territorio: Recordando el Pasado, Explorando el Presente, y Proyectando el Futuro

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## Abstract

Colombian English Language Teacher/Teaching (ELT) Education is a steadily advancing field toward establishing a socioculturally and sociocritically oriented area of knowledge. Whereas in previous years, national ELT was primarily concerned with the development and promotion of communicative skills among English as a foreign language students derived from cognitively oriented and traditionally connected stances, since the insertion of critical pedagogies and theories into the field, its approach has changed to better cope with what is happening in immediate contexts. In other words, ELT has assumed a more context-sensitive view through which the territories and the practices inherent to them have been placed at the core of the field. Considering the current landscape, in the frame of this article, we present an analysis of how ELT has been changing over the last few years while also contemplating current practices and future venues to come. By delving into the historical development of ELT in Colombia and emphasizing what we have labeled "critical ELT agendas from the territories" through which we merge principles of social justice, critical literacy, and English as a Lingua Franca, the current article critically examines factors that shaped Colombian ELT in the past, while considering potential venues for the future. The critical reflection proposed in this paper aims to provide insights that inform more responsive and practical approaches to ELT in Colombia and abroad.

*Keywords:* English Language Teaching, territories, context sensitive, social justice, critical literacy, English as a Lingua Franca

## Resumen

El campo de la enseñanza del inglés en Colombia (ELT) ha avanzado consistentemente hacia el establecimiento de un área de conocimiento orientada sociocultural y socio críticamente. Mientras que en años anteriores el ELT a nivel nacional se centraba en el desarrollo y fomento de las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) derivadas de posturas principalmente cognitivas y tradicionales, se observa que, desde la inserción de pedagogías y teorías críticas, el enfoque del campo ha cambiado para adaptarse mejor a lo que sucede en los contextos inmediatos donde tiene lugar la enseñanza del inglés. En otras palabras, el campo de la enseñanza del inglés ha asumido una visión más sensible al contexto, a través de la cual los territorios y sus prácticas inherentes se han incorporado. Considerando este panorama, en el marco de este artículo presentamos un análisis de cómo la enseñanza del inglés ha venido cambiando en los últimos años, al mismo tiempo que contemplamos prácticas actuales y posibles futuros escenarios. Al profundizar en el desarrollo histórico la enseñanza del inglés en Colombia y al enfatizar en lo que hemos denominado "enseñanza crítica del inglés desde los territorios", a través del cual fusionamos principios de justicia social, alfabetización crítica y el inglés como lengua franca, este artículo examina críticamente los factores que han moldeado la educación en inglés en el pasado de Colombia, mientras consideramos, a su vez, posibles futuros caminos. La reflexión crítica propuesta en este artículo ofrece perspectivas que puedan nutrir enfoques más sensibles y efectivos para la educación en inglés, no solo en Colombia, sino en el mundo.

*Palabras clave:* Alfabetización crítica, enseñanza del inglés, inglés como lengua franca, justicia social, sensibilidad al contexto, territorios

## Introduction

As the Colombian Association of Teachers of English (ASOCOPI) is celebrating its 60th anniversary, we would like to appreciate teachers' and researchers' past, current, and future contributions within and across English language teacher/teaching (ELT). This is why we share this paper with the ELT community. We deem it essential to start this examination by highlighting that it is well known that, historically, national ELT is a field that has been heavily based on *Exonormative* models (Matsuda, 2012) for preparing English language teachers and teaching the English language. This fact partially makes sense considering the Anglo-Saxon background of the field. However, emerging dialogues, conversations, and critical stances within and across the whole "Global South" have set the floor to attempt to go beyond neoliberal practices that have affected ELT worldwide. In line with this, the notion of "Territories" in ELT has the potential to expand this movement and keep empowering all those interested in making a positive change in society through English education.

By positioning ourselves on an epistemic crack we have labeled "*ELT Agendas from the Territories*"[4] which comprises a look at the historical and political axis of development of national ELT and ELT pedagogies, we, three English language teacher educators and researchers based in the central-eastern region of the country, analyze, through this current paper, the way our ELT field has been gradually leaving behind marketizing, businessifying, and corporatized knowledge encouraging processes which perceived numbers, statistics, and rankings as synonyms of positive results and success, and has been assuming instead more heterogeneous-context sensitive lenses which are making an effort to appreciate better the particularities of the regions where said activity takes place.

Overall, our article is divided into three major sections that contain complementary subsections. These are organized as follows: 1) Critical ELT Agendas from the Territories: An Emerging Notion that Calls for More Localized and Context-Sensitive English Education; 2) Social Justice and Education: An Overview, 2.1) Social Justice Within and Across ELT; 3) English as a Lingua Franca: Another Way to Keep Linking English Language Education with the Territory, 3.1) English as a Lingua Franca, English as an International Language, World Englishes, or Global Englishes in Colombian ELT: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Heading? and 4) Final Remarks: Envisioning the Future of ELT.



[4] Territory is a notion based on Ramos-Holguín's (2021, 2023) epistemic contributions. Although perhaps other more standard terms such as "territory-based ELT", "local ELT perspectives", and even "context sensitive" practices, may overlap with our notion, and provide a similar understanding of what we intend to share, we have decided to attach to and employ the denomination "territory" because it encompasses our attachment, ancestrality, and sense of identity of our land.

## Critical ELT Agendas from the Territories: An Emerging Notion that Calls for More Localized and Context-Sensitive English Education

To start our analysis, we would like to bring to the fore the driving notion of this paper: **Territories**. From a neo-liberal perspective, territories are sections of space occupied by individuals, social groups, or institutions, most typically by the modern state (Agnew, 2000). Even though this is possibly one of the most widespread definitions of territories, from a neo-liberal perspective, territories constitute principally pieces of land that are mostly used for extractivist purposes since, under the premises of the modern nation-state, territories have been associated with land, space, power, and impersonal relations, providing their owners with statuses of power and prestige.

Even though the just presented theorization of what territories mean and imply is possibly one of the most widespread disseminated and common, Knight (1982) contends that more than a piece of land that can be exploited, territories constitute a piece of the sociocultural landscape where humans live because "it is human beliefs and actions that give territory meaning" (p. 517). From this more humanistic perspective, territories are not just pieces of land that can be used by individuals at their convenience; rather, territories are conceived as spaces that embrace socio-cultural practices, challenge misconceptions and stereotypes, and embody historical struggles, meaning that territories are spaces that transcend the material aspect of things.

While the notion of territories we propose here goes beyond market-driven practices, it seems that traditional ELT has failed to completely embrace this stance. A key reason for this disconnection is the dominance of a type of "methodological nationalism" (Baker, 2024), which has served to reinforce Anglo-Saxon-centric standards in the field. Interestingly, contributions made in the last two decades (Cárdenas, 2006a, 2006b; González, 2003; Guerrero, 2008; Hoyos-Pipicano & España-Delgado, 2025; Usma 2009; Velásquez-Hoyos & Giraldo-Martínez, 2024; ) have suggested a need to develop more context-sensitive initiatives through which the territories, practices, and even indigenous languages inherent to them are more frequently put at the core of the profession, and of the preparation of prospective English language teachers, and language educators in general.



After developing one of these analyses, and in line with Guerrero (2008, p. 35) who has already concluded that in Colombian "being bilingual means speaking English", González (2003) suggested that not only ELT but also the professional development of many English language teachers has been linked to models where bilingualism is often connected to English, but to English spoken by either American or British people. Because of this, González (2003) stressed the need to develop professional development, or professionalization programs, from a more context sensitive perspective. Succinctly, this author stated, more than 20 years ago,

that "there is a need for new forms of teacher development programs that respond to the requirements of different teachers, teacher educators, professional development agendas, and methodologies because the ones proposed are not sensitive to our educational needs" (p. 165).

In line with these aspects, we argue that while traditional ELT has predominantly emphasized the development of the four communicative skills, something that is not necessarily negative, future ELT resources and practices should also incorporate diverse knowledge, practices, and viewpoints that have historically been overlooked. Since this aspect is essential to address persistent challenges, in the following lines, we present two dimensions that constitute some of the venues we deem to be better included in ELT. These are Social Justice and English as a Lingua Franca.

## Social Justice and Education: An Overview

This section outlines the historical development of social justice and how this notion has gradually permeated education globally. After this initial analysis, we will analyze how it has permeated ELT, and will additionally provide some potential actions ELT professionals, scholars, and educators can apply to more actively engage their students with social justice-oriented education.

In general, recent years have witnessed considerable changes in education. ELT is not an exception. While in previous times there was a strong, almost sickening desire to worship native English speakers in an apparent effort to have their status, and by extension, their privileges, recent conceptualizations of ELT are intending to place human subjectivities, experiences, and voices into the field (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018; Mosquera-Pérez, 2022). That is how social justice began to enter the ELT profession. However, social justice in ELT has not taken place at once or at a single step. It has gradually entered the field to effectively "humanize" this dimension. Before proceeding, however, it becomes necessary to look at its historical trajectory.

Throughout the years, Social Justice Education (SJE) has evolved to foster justice through approaches highlighting transformative leadership and equity as central themes. The discussions have spread to shift its comprehension from being merely a curricular strategy to being considered a comprehensive worldview, a perspective that prompts its integration into educational practices (Karaköse et al., 2023). In line with these developments, after the abolishment of slavery in 1920, important global entities like UNESCO started to make efforts to create organizations aiming at reducing global illiteracy levels. By facilitating programs and concrete actions to promote schooling despite accessibility and other structural difficulties, UNESCO saw a suitable instrument to integrate and pacify the masses in education while

also ensuring that countries would count on a professional workforce for the coming years (Hofstetter & Schneuwly, 2024).

The following years brought an intense debate around a two-sided situation that the government would have to deeply consider. On the one hand, bringing modernity to isolated regions and promoting education as a tool to contribute to the quest for professionalization. On the other hand, adjusting to each country's particular ideologies and contexts, many of which shared their interest in returning the focus of schooling to one aiming for simplicity, ancestral knowledge, and love of the countryside (Hofstetter & Schneuwly, 2024). The latest aligned with the Progressive Education Movement, which emphasized experiential learning, critical thinking, and democratic values, aiming to diverge from the traditional curricula, rooted in preparation for industrial university and strongly influenced by social class.

During the International Conference on Public Education in 1936 (ICPE), at the center of the discussion, Agustín Nieto Caballero, director of education and Colombian delegate, stated his nation's resolution to ruralize all schools, teaching the notions of hygiene, work, agriculture, and love towards the rural. Nieto's perspective about the responsive purpose of education would eventually set the foundations in preparation for Colbert et al.'s (1976) educative model of Escuela Nueva. The decade of the 1930s on the North American continent brought significant efforts to scrutinize systemic oppression simultaneously, particularly approaching social class and race inequalities. The first of these efforts was established through the labor movement, which empowered organizations to battle through strikes with certain government support provided by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was the Labor Movement that led to the creation of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 and the proposal of a Congress of Industrial Organizations (COI). Secondly, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was consistently at the forefront of national campaigns against lynching and "Jim Crow" laws affecting education, as well as fighting segregation and discrimination in schools to work toward educational equity (Haggler, 2018).

Posterior two decades enclosed the conflict of World War II and its consequences on political, social, cultural, and educational spheres. During this period, researchers began to highlight the need for equitable practices despite the persistence of privilege within academic institutions, especially in higher education. Accordingly, Dewey's advocates stressed the importance of universities in nurturing individual potential and social responsibility by supporting equitable hiring practices and providing financial aid to marginalized populations (Cunningham, 2022). Distinctively, Europe was deeply influenced by the political and social upheavals of the time. World War II and its aftermath prompted a reevaluation of social justice, with several nations trying to rebuild and redefine their societies. In such a context, the meaning of social justice was widely discussed, oscillating between two main views,

one prioritizing the equality of conditions and the other the individual rights (Šustrová, 2024). Communities experienced a shift in the educational discourse highlighted by strong expectations about the role of citizenship and government responsibility, a factor contributing to the creation of new political movements. Particularly, in Czechoslovakia, both National Socialism and later Communist regimes employed the discourse of social justice to obscure their objectives of legitimizing their authority, even though with divergent conceptual frameworks, one emphasizing racial narrative and the other prioritizing class cohesion.

Despite global enterprises attempting to discuss and integrate social justice in education, its principles were first incorporated effectively into the domain of pedagogy in the Latin American context through the scholarly contributions of Paulo Freire during the 1960s and 1970s. Freire's book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" saw its first light in 1968 as an answer to the complex sociopolitical landscape people faced on the continent, characterized by military coups and repressive regimes. While Chile experienced large unionization, countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico saw a significant rise in student movements, heavily influenced by the Freirean approach emphasizing dialogical exercises and critical pedagogy (Jones & Torres, 2010). Other movements in countries like Peru and Bolivia pursued recognition, respect, and autonomy for indigenous communities. According to Tarlau (2023), Cuba and El Salvador oriented efforts toward literacy, launching a Literacy Campaign (1961) in the first case and several literacy programs for guerrilla groups in the second. Hence, social movements increasingly recognized education as a tool for mobilization, fostering a culture of activism and awareness about social justice issues.

SJE materialized in Latin America widely as a response to socioeconomic inequalities coupled with fierce political repression. For instance, the existence of dictatorships in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil throughout the 1970s and 1980s spurred a need for educational reform designed to address equality and inclusion for all students, as those military dictatorships at the time held a hostile view of public education. Jones and Torres (2010) point out that there was a great deal of advocacy for more neoliberal policies like the privatization of public entities at the time. That most people in Latin America now have access to public education is one of the prominent accomplishments of the last three decades (Noel, 2009), and significant reforms in the policies and practices have promoted equality and inclusion (Tarlau, 2023).



Acknowledging the global trends in SJE and their specific implications in Latin America is fundamental to shed light on the historical movements, ideological frameworks, and sociocultural enterprises that served as a preceding dialogue for the development of SJE in Colombia. During the 1990s, social justice became a relevant theme in ELT as the 1980s ended with the promising consolidation of democratic governance. The socioeconomic turmoil taught teachers how critical literacy could foster inclusive methods, fundamental to addressing concerns of fairness and access in language education.

Several important elements played a role in the shift towards considering the implementation of the principles of social justice in the English classroom, we can attribute the first one to the construction of a legal framework that emphasized human rights and the recognition, for the first time, of the rich ethnic and cultural diversity in the country, which seemed consolidated when the Colombian Constitution was signed. The second one, on the other hand, arose as the processes of language teaching programs began to incorporate social justice agendas, emphasizing the need for teachers to understand and address disparities in educational outcomes related to race, socioeconomic status, and language, aligning to international proposals in the topic (Jacobs, 2006).

One of the main concerns dealing with equity registered in the literature was highlighted by Amaya de Ochoa (2002), who argued that the 1990s in Colombia were characterized by blunt inequities in educational access, specifically in higher education, which exacerbated social injustice and affected national development. The author explains how, regardless of several efforts to democratize higher education, extend its coverage, and improve equity, a vast number of students who belonged to endangered or marginalized communities could not access universities. An additional concern that such populations brought to society was the social intervention strategies that emphasized civil rights, aiming to secure their welfare (Monroy, 2005).

### *Social Justice within and across ELT*

The new millennium established a renovated laboratory for social justice research. In the ELT field, the focus shifted towards integrating critical pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching, fostering an environment where diverse voices could be heard and valued. Subsequently, multiple studies have contributed to shaping Colombians' perceptions regarding SJE and its implementation in formal and informal settings. An analysis of the literature about SJE in Colombia reveals diverse approaches and interdisciplinary frameworks. Such tendencies have manifested through various initiatives. Some of these have been studies revolving around gender issues (Peñaloza, 2020; Castañeda Peña, 2021; Ubaque Casallas & Castañeda-Peña, 2021), identity construction and reshaping (Castañeda-Trujillo et al. 2022; Mosquera-Pérez & Losada-Rivas 2022), critical literacy (Mora, 2014), interculturality (Oviedo-Gómez & Jaramillo-Cardenas, 2023; Ramos-Holguín, 2021), decoloniality (Fandiño-Parra, 2021, Guerrero-Nieto et al., 2022), and ruralities and overall experiences held in rural settings (Hoyos-Pipicano & España-Delgado, 2025; Ortiz-García & Contreras-Pinilla, 2023).



Concerning this "territorialization of knowledge," research reports, such as the ones carried out by Cruz Bernal and Ramos Holguín (2024), Bolaños Sáenz et al. (2018), Coronado-Rodríguez et al. (2022), Monroy Ramírez and Barros Bastidas (2023), Hurtado (2020), Ramos-Holguín et al. (2021), Nieto and Clavijo (2020), and Ramos et al. (2012).

After working with diverse territories, these scholars demonstrate that there is no template for ELT in the territories, no checklist, rubric, single model, or one "best practice. The researchers proved that teaching English with and in the territories means challenging curricular decisions, criticizing one-size-fits-all methodologies, acknowledging identities and local knowledge, providing students with emotional learning resources, and drawing on community assets. This attention to the territories has helped the ELT field to affirm each community's characteristics and bring these conversations up in the classrooms.

From a more epistemological and ontological view, Bonilla and Cruz-Arcila (2014), Ramos-Holguín and Aguirre-Morales (2016), Cruz-Arcila (2018), Hernández Cassiani (2019), Sierra-Ospina (2020), Monroy Ramírez and Patiño-Agudelo (2022), and Monroy Ramírez and Barros Bastidas (2023) were concerned about teachers and their territories. In this sense, the authors undertook research initiatives suggesting that teachers should help instill within their students the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the territories in which they live. Overall, the researchers pointed out that knowledge about ELT from the territories should follow a bottom-up approach in which teachers' voices are echoed in the state policies because, directly or indirectly, schools and teachers serve the role of reproducing and perpetuating established social, cultural, political, and economic structures within territories. A particular example of efforts to undertake context-sensitive ELT pedagogies is Oviedo-Gómez and Jaramillo-Cárdenas's (2023) case study developed at two public institutions in Medellín, Antioquia, and Florencia, Caquetá. This study serves as a model for educators seeking to integrate critical interculturality to challenge dominant power structures and promote alternative ways of knowing and being, as the researchers designed and implemented a curricular unit grounded in critical interculturality, aiming to raise students' awareness of their realities and roles within their contexts.

As diverse as the topics broadening the dialogical exercises about SJE are, the last decade has been characterized by a shift towards interculturality, decolonization, peacebuilding, ruralities, and identities, aiming to provide novice and experienced teachers with proposals about practices, methods, and conceptual frameworks to defy power hierarchies and promote critical reflections in our nation. On this path, Mackenzie (2019) critically examines the Colombian government's bilingualism policies, revealing the difficulties and failures in promoting equitable English learning opportunities. Mackenzie's analysis points out that these policies often reinforce existing inequalities rather than mitigate them. For instance, the promotion of English as the main second language can marginalize indigenous languages and cultures as they experience greater struggles to access information and opportunities, leading to a form of linguistic imperialism. The author's approach highlights the tension between national policies and the contexts' linguistic diversity in Colombia, questioning the real scope of legal frameworks when developed to alienate the local communities and their needs.

As seen until now, social justice has increasingly become a key dimension in education, including ELT. English language teachers can therefore take several steps to actively integrate social justice into their classrooms, fostering critical awareness, inclusivity, and student empowerment. These steps include: A) adapting current curriculum and teaching methods, B) choosing resources that challenge biases and stereotypes, C) creating safe spaces for people to talk about societal issues while also setting the chance to amplify marginalized voice, D) designing culturally relevant materials, which raise awareness of discrimination while also constituting a catalysts for change, E) encouraging work with communities and local organizations, and finally, F) integrating activities which, at large, create spaces for dismantle historically imposed narratives. Two resources we find particularly beneficial for this purpose are the "Learning for Justice" site (https://www.learningforjustice.org/) and the "Teaching for Change" platform (https://www.teachingforchange.org/), which offer several free ideas, lesson plans, and other resources to help dismantle discrimination of any type.

To close this section, we would like to manifest that while social justice-linked action has been gradually emerging in ELT to challenge dominant practices, English as a Lingua Franca is also gaining relevance nationally. This form of linguistic "disobedience" to native-speaker norms, embodied in the ELF paradigm, holds the potential to reconceptualize English language teaching and consolidate alternative perspectives. This is the next level of analysis to which we will turn our attention.

## English as a Lingua Franca: Another Way to Keep Linking English Language Education with the Territory

Although there are concerns about whether we should or not teach English from a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Global Englishes (GE) in contemporary times (Fu, 2024), these fields have undeniably been gaining momentum in the 21st century. Our national context is not indifferent by any means to these circumstances.

Historically speaking, English has exerted a strong influence on Colombian society due to its increasing interest in joining 21st-century interconnected communities. Although in the context of this nation English has been and continues to be referred to as a "foreign language", recent groundbreaking conceptual (García, 2013; Macías, 2010; Mora, 2022; Mosquera-Pérez, 2022) and empirical (Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024) contributions have been discussing the need to adopt new semantic and, by extension, pedagogical notions to relate to the teaching of English nationally. Specifically, Mora (2022) argued that the very notion of "English as a **foreign** language" is problematic since etymologically, "foreign" is a synonym for other expressions such as "alien", "strange", and "weird". In other words, the idea of English as a foreign language appears to continue reproducing, implicitly, standards and views that clearly delimit a differentiation between native and non-native English users

globally. As Macías and Mosquera-Pérez (2024) suggest, this situation appears to reproduce an 'us' vs. 'them' position, where those who better align with Anglo-Saxon models (Núñez Pardo, 2022) and values are often regarded as better speakers of the language or are privileged over their counterparts.

Even though Mora (2022) presented an enriching and thought-provoking discussion about the need to transgress deep ingrained notions such as EFL (English as a foreign language) or ESL (English as a second language), terms that have been interchangeably (and mistakenly) used in the country despite their particular features and applicability. In this same journal, twelve years before Mora (2022), in the country's Southeast region, Macías (2010) extended a widespread invitation to move from EFL and head towards an ELF view with the teaching of English across the educational system.

Specifically, and influenced by ELF advocates and scholars from diverse regions of the world (as Basabe, 2006; Berns, 2005; Crystal, 2003; González, 2007; Jenkins, 2000, 2003, 2006), Macías (2010) debates three aspects that should be re-signified to be able to talk about the teaching of English as a Lingua Franca in Colombia. The first aspect, according to the author, is linked to the relationship between native and non-native English-speaking teachers (NESTs vs. NNESTs). Following Macías' view, the concept of the native speaker has been widely analyzed and eventually demystified in ELF/ESL literature because being a native does not necessarily mean that you are a perfect speaker. As remarked by Rampton (1990), "being born into a social group does not mean that you automatically speak its language well. Many native speakers of English can't write or tell stories, while many non-native speakers can" (p. 98). Therefore, while it may be partially true that natives are better at certain dimensions, such as speaking or pronunciation, it does not necessarily mean they are the ideal models to follow. This view gains further relevance considering that many native English speakers are monolingual and have not firsthand experienced learning a language different from their mother tongue (Davidson, 2007).

The second fact that Macías (2010) analyzed was connected to an ELF methodology in ELT. Concerning this aspect, Macías affirmed that he had witnessed the application of several English teaching methods in Colombia, including the grammar-translation approach, audiolingual method, total physical response, and the natural approach, among others. At the same time, nevertheless, he also claimed that "initiatives to design local or national methodologies in Colombia have been kept to a minimum or have been quickly absorbed by the international ELT market established in the country" (Macías, 2010, p. 188), acknowledging therefore that "endo normativism" (Matsuda, 2012) or "*methodological nationalism*", as Baker (2024) calls it, have been common in this country. These notions contributed to, as we like to think of, establishing the bases of the ELT field worldwide. However, as pointed out by Ayala Zárate and Álvarez (2011) and Correa and Usma Wilches (2013), it is also essential that in the current time, we design models, approaches, methodologies, policies, and overall ELT

resources that better recognize and integrate the local and global particularities of English (see also Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024). In a few words, designing resources that combine global and local ('glocal') understandings of English, comprehending the sociocultural contexts where this language takes place.

The last aspect Macías (2010) developed in his paper was related to ELT materials. Generally, this scholar remarked that although ELT materials constitute a really essential component of the English language teaching enterprise, materials available in the market have historically centered their attention on North American or British culture, or what Kachru (1992) and Mahboob (2011) regarded respectively as the Inner Circle (the U.S, the U.K, Canada) or as the NABA (North American, British, Australian). This overreliance on materials and resources at large, designed within the context of these nations, has led, according to Núñez Pardo (2020, 2022), to shaping attitudes and ideologies toward the way people from diverse backgrounds use and speak the language. Simply put, such an excessive dependence on native-centered norms has set the ground for language ideologies and other marginalizing attitudes to emerge. It is vital then, according to Macías, to create materials that integrate knowledge and epistemologies that have been shadowed in ELT.

The initial analysis shared above leads to a partial understanding that even though there is a lot to be done to finally talk about English as a Lingua Franca language teaching in Colombia, some initial steps, mostly conceptual, have been undertaken in the context of our territory. Something that we deem important to remark is that although 15 years ago Macías (2010) made a direct invitation to assume an ELF perspective in ELT, various similar yet fragmented contributions have taken place in this regard. In this section of the article, we analyze the current state of English as a Lingua Franca and similar notions in ELT and ELT-connected research, and present potential avenues for better and more effectively integrating this view in primary and secondary education, and initial English teacher education.

## *English as a Lingua Franca, English as an International Language, World Englishes, or Global Englishes in Colombian ELT: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Heading?*



National academic conversations centered around ELT in Colombia have made evident that the field has been gradually detaching from imposed and self-imposed Global North practices, and has been breaking boundaries in terms of pedagogies, methodologies, and assessment procedures to be applied in formal classroom contexts (Mosquera-Perez, 2022; Núñez-Pardo & Tellez-Tellez, 2024). This progressive epistemic rupture (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) has set the ground to expand understandings of English, English teaching and learning, and initial English teacher education as new approaches. Particularly, those linked

to sociocultural dynamics have influenced ELT and related areas. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Global Englishes (GE), English as an International Language (EIL), and World Englishes (WE) are some of the results of the expansion of these processes.

Upon reviewing empirical and conceptual materials relevant to our analysis for this special issue of the journal, we observed that an invitation to teach English and educate prospective English teachers beyond Anglo centric standards have taken various shapes in Colombia. In this sense, while some claim for an ELF model (Macías, 2010; Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024; Mosquera-Pérez, 2022), other invite to shift EIL (García, 2013), WE (González, 2010; Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024; Mosquera-Pérez, 2024; 2025), GE (Vargas Arévalo, 2025), and even ECL (English as a Colombia Language) and CE (Colombian English) (Mora, 2022).

Contributions addressing these concepts have emerged from various contexts within the national territory and from diverse perspectives. The theoretical analyses by Macías (2010), González (2010), García (2013), Mora (2022), and Mosquera-Pérez (2022, 2024) have encouraged the academic community to integrate ELF and EIL principles gradually into ELT, considering the potential establishment of Colombian English (CE). Conversely, empirical studies such as those by Castro-López (2018), Parra-Baez (2021), and the recent initiative by Macías and Mosquera-Pérez (2024) suggest that introducing ELF or its variants into formal classrooms and teacher preparation programs could positively impact learners. Exposure to these perspectives may eventually help solidify English as a legitimate official language in Colombia, as contemporary ELT models advocate for incorporating local perspectives in language teaching.

Building on this analysis, it is evident that while a modest, yet significant body of work has emerged in Colombia, regarding ELF and related concepts, considerable progress is needed to fully integrate English as a Lingua Franca within the national context. Nevertheless, the advances made so far indicate a promising ELT landscape. The referenced works have significantly contributed to broadening our understanding of the impact that recognizing English as a global lingua franca and its various forms can have on educational settings.

As we rejoice in celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Colombian Association for Teachers of English (ASOCOPI), we acknowledge the steady progress in Colombian ELT. However, further research and initiatives are essential to truly establish a lingua franca perspective of English in Colombia or to recognize Colombian English as a distinct variety. We advocate for the formation of research groups, seedbeds, and enhanced teacher preparation and professional development opportunities focusing on the entire ELF spectrum. Therefore, we would like to invite other scholars with similar interests to join us and contribute to the establishment of an "Observatory for the Development of English in Colombia and Latin America" (ODECL), an initiative aimed at studying the status and role of English as a lingua franca in this region of the world.

ELT practitioners and all those interested in potentially addressing ELF and Global Englishes in their classroom environments could also undertake some of these specific actions we propose: A) decenter native-speaker norms by encourage critical discussions on English ownership, B) incorporate multilingual resources to challenge linguistic discrimination, C) promote translanguaging and multilingual practices, D) use assessment practices that value diversity in terms of accents and English varieties in general, E) introduce global perspectives in ELT materials, F) Foster connections with global communities. The website of the "International Dialects for English Archive" (https://www.dialectsarchive.com/) and "ILF Brasil" (https://www.elfbrasil.com/) could be a good starting point.

To finish, it is worth highlighting to remark that although our current understanding of these fields is a dimension that is just beginning to take shape, as even in international academic scenarios there is no a consensus regarding convergent, or divergent factors among them, what is clear is that in Colombia we are already perceiving the need to transgress traditional English education models and assume instead a more integrate that views English as something fluid, and negotiated (Jenkins, 2015). Although now our colleagues have used the terms ELF, EIL, WE, and even GE, the future is promising. Perhaps in a short-term period we could talk about Multilingualism through English (MTE) as it is already occurring in some international settings where research in English is at the core. However, we agree with Mora (2022) when he claims that this is an aspect that requires more profound discussions nationally.

## Final Remarks: Envisioning the Future of ELT

When examining the trajectory of the ELT profession and ELT-related research, it becomes more than evident that the field has been advancing. Colombian history has been marked by a complex socio-political landscape, which has caused considerable issues of inequity characterized by a profound feeling of unfairness and sadness. Several organizations have contributed by approaching social issues and addressing them through multidisciplinary approaches, nevertheless, challenges persist due to rooted social hierarchies and the sequels of conflict. Despite the scenario, our people still strive for recognition, equity, and integration. The last decades have provided a vast opportunity for teachers to ceaselessly research through SJE to give our communities a voice, acknowledging their territories and identities.



We believe that, even though significant efforts have been made to humanize ELT pedagogy (Ortega, 2024) and better prepare new generations of teachers for transformative practices (Sierra-Piedrahita, 2024), there is a long path to be walked. Policy makers, English teacher education programs within the national framework, and all stakeholders in the field must continue working towards this goal. Central to this endeavor is fostering collaboration

between governmental and non-governmental organizations, developing context-sensitive pedagogies, promoting research agendas linked to collaborative efforts, integrating real-world examples into classroom practices, and gradually introducing diverse English varieties. Crucially, policy construction must encourage inclusive dialogue, ensuring that stakeholders are not positioned "at different ends of the table" (Correa & Usma Wilches, 2013, p. 239).

Future ELT agendas should, in consequence, challenge simplistic, Western-centric conceptions of territory as merely a physical space occupied by individuals. Instead, ELT practices must highlight the rich diversity of cultural expressions emerging from various territories, encouraging a broader framework for understanding territory in terms of its cultural complexity. We describe this approach as engaging with "territories otherwise."

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