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Beliefs about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or International Language (EIL) in Intercultural Contexts: Voices from Brazil and Chile

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ABSTRACT

The following study examines how university teacher educators in Brazil and Chile perceive the integration of interculturality in the teaching and learning of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as an International Language (EIL). While both countries included English in the curricula as a foreign language, they have recently rethought the status of English in the education system—Brazil officializing it as ELF and Chile proposing it as EIL—the extent to which this policy changes translate into pedagogical practice remains unclear. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten English teacher educators from both countries, this research investigates their beliefs about the challenges and opportunities of implementing ELF or EIL with an intercultural orientation. The findings reveal a disjunction between awareness of policy mandates and uncertainty about their classroom application, reflecting limited guidance and persistent reliance on native-speaker norms. By situating these insights within broader ELF/EIL and interculturality scholarship, the study highlights the need for clearer policy practice alignment and for teacher education programmes to provide explicit support in developing intercultural competence. In doing so, it contributes empirical evidence from Latin America, a region underrepresented in ELF/EIL research, expanding understanding of how global language paradigms are interpreted in local educational contexts.

Keywords: Higher Education; Professors; Interculturality; Teaching and Learning

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 8 August 2025 | Revised: 7 October 2025 | Accepted: 10 October 2025 | Published Online: 5 November 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i12.11538>

CITATION

Sumonte Rojas, V., Fuentealba, L.A., Ayala Herrera, E., et al., 2025. Beliefs about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or International Language (EIL) in Intercultural Contexts: Voices from Brazil and Chile. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(12): 375–391. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i12.11538>

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1. Introduction

As a result of globalization and technological development, the increase in communication between individuals whose languages and cultural references differ from one another has been on the rise. Growing flows of migration have contributed to shaping societies that are increasingly multicultural and multilingual, which implies that people must have the ability to communicate effectively in different linguistic and cultural contexts ^[1]. According to these authors ^[2-4], in this multilingual reality, when individuals whose languages differ from one another come together, English is usually the preferred means of communication ^[5]. Consequently, the use of English has become a complex phenomenon. It does not only belong to the inhabitants of English-speaking countries, but to the world as an international language ^[6]. English can be conceived as the language of communication between people from different contexts and linguistic backgrounds ^[7,8], thus its global ownership ^[9]. As such, the spread of English has changed its status from being a homogeneous, standard language, spoken by inhabitants of a few powerful countries, to an international language or lingua franca, spoken by a wide variety of speakers of different languages around the world ^[10]. In this regard, the teaching of English has evolved from instructing according to linguistic native speaker (NS) norms to considering the identities, values, and customs of those who use the language but not as their first tongue (L1) ^[11]. Bringing a language other than one's L1 into the classroom means bringing students into contact with a world that is culturally different from their own ^[12].

According to Richardson ^[13], prospective teachers' beliefs directly affect what and how they learn, as well as the educational approach they will use in their own practice. Therefore, universities are privileged spaces for the development of meaningful learning from the deontological point of view, and for the civic and human training of future teachers as subjects inserted in a multicultural society ^[14]. English teacher education constitutes a crucial opportunity to challenge, transform and internalise prior beliefs regarding practices which are pivotal developing intercultural competence in the classroom and which can have lasting effects throughout the career ^[9,15,16]. Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse university English teacher

trainers' beliefs about the integration of interculturality in the teaching-learning of ELF or EIL, in Brazil and Chile.

In line with the conceptualisation made by Sharifi-an's ^[17] and Tajeddin et al. ^[18], in this study the concept of EIL refers to English as a language of intercultural communication in the current multicultural context of societies. Similarly, the concept of ELF used here is that of Jenkin's ^[5] referring to "a contact language used among speakers who come from different first language backgrounds, for whom English is not the mother tongue (L1), and who use it as a means of communication, often in international settings"(p. 4).

Byram ^[11] points out that in teaching an IL, educators must be intercultural competent to ensure its planned inclusion in the curriculum. This considers not only learning English to communicate with native speakers (NSs), but with non-native speakers (NNSs), which means preparing learners to be intercultural speakers in multicultural contexts ^[19,20]. The inclusion of the intercultural approach in language teaching and learning has become a pivotal goal at the level of public policies ^[1,21,22], institutions that prepare future teachers of English, and in-service language teachers, especially in the last two decades ^[23,24]. Accordingly, the international view is more respectful of other varieties of English, including varieties spoken by NNSs ^[25], which strain standard linguistic patterns and give rise to what is called lingua franca ^[26].

Moreover, Richardson ^[13] points out that beliefs correspond to the understanding of premises or propositions about the world held psychologically by individuals as true. There is evidence that beliefs affect teachers more than the theory they have access to ^[27]. Furthermore, the beliefs of English teachers could have profound impacts on their practice and professional identity, especially in Brazilian and Chilean teachers who do not have English as their L1. It is essential that teacher training programmes support future teachers in the examination and evaluation of their own beliefs regarding their pedagogical practices during their training ^[28]. In this way, future teachers would be able to implement teaching practices that aim to develop intercultural competence in their students as well as to reflect on current changes and challenges in their practices ^[29]. Gay ^[30] points out that beliefs influence elements such as students' expectations, teacher identity construction pro-

fessional knowledge, classroom performance, and planning and evaluating. All these elements are crucial for teaching and learning. Additionally, Bandura^[31] states that beliefs mediate knowledge and action, acting as filters that affect educational practices and interactions. Thus, the study of beliefs is relevant because i) they constitute a basis for the exercise of citizenship, promotion of human rights and equality, ii) it is possible that beliefs may influence future educational practices by either promoting positive attitudes towards diversity or limiting progress to minimal levels in educating in and for diversity, and, iii) teachers, in general, are not aware of their beliefs and how these affect their actions, which have been shaped by their own cultural and social backgrounds, previous experiences and personal characteristics^[32].

The present study identifies discrepancy between educators' understanding of linguistic policy mandates and their operational uncertainty regarding classroom implementation. This pedagogical divergence underscores a critical gap in the alignment between official policy and its practical implementation. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of ELF, EIL, and interculturality, this research provides a timely contribution by offering empirical data from two underrepresented contexts: Brazil and Chile. The findings from these specific Latin American nations illuminate how global linguistic paradigms are not uniformly adopted but are instead interpreted and operationalised within distinct local educational environments. This localized analysis is crucial for enriching scholarly discourse and advancing the understanding of ELF and EIL within diverse global settings.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and as an International Language (EIL)

The term international language can support a more inclusive approach to teaching English, framing it as a means for intercultural communication and exchange in a globalised and interconnected world. In this sense, and according to Crystal^[33], one of the consequences of the dissemination of English in a globalised world is that it does not belong to anyone in particular. In fact, with over 1.5 billion speakers, it is the language that receives the greatest

interest in being learned in the world due to linguistic and extra-linguistic factors^[34]. 'English is not a single language but a kaleidoscope of local varieties'^[8] (p. 171). The conceptualisation of EIL is constructed as an inherently plural entity; i.e., it is not a monolithic language, but a plurilithic one^[35]. Formally and functionally, English has multicultural identities, in this context, the term English does not embrace this sociolinguistic reality; but the word Englishes does^[36]. It is now clearly established that English is used by a greater number of NNSs compared to NSs; that is, NS use of English is in the minority which has direct implications on how it is successfully used and how it is taught^[9,37]. The same authors point out that intercultural bilingual speakers have variable and fluid communicative practices that do not often follow monolingual NS norms, which are not possible to implement in all contexts.

The study of EIL focuses on the international functions of the language and its use in the context of speakers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, involving intercultural communication^[35]. According to these authors, this approach has a non-normative orientation, which does not favour one variety of English for all speakers and contexts. The latter leads to pluralisation and relativisation of the target model of English, thus making pedagogical decisions difficult, as well as the design of programmes to prepare future teachers of English^[38]. Conversely, English as a lingua franca empowers speakers of other languages to build knowledge from diverse cultural backgrounds. As Tarp^[39] states, ELF holds a distinctive particular role in societies as a common language of communication varying among cultures, influencing the readiness to interact with others. Overall, either for ELF or EIL, English language teaching (ELT) has become a strategy that universities worldwide use to develop global citizenship and intercultural understanding among diverse speakers, regardless of their worldview^[40], thus emphasizing its global and intercultural function^[8].

2.2. English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Classroom

Moving from a monolithic to a plurilithic view of English makes it difficult for pedagogical decisions to be included in the curriculum, and for the model of English to be implemented in the classroom to be pluralised^[38].

The shift in the sociolinguistic use of English has implications for learning objectives, for teachers, and for the curriculum ^[41]. These implications are capturing researchers' attention, leading to moving beyond the norms set by NSs, which are losing traction and being replaced by comprehension and intelligibility in intercultural and multilingual interactions ^[9,42].

Teachers are the main agents for transferring the elements and features of the language to their learners, either as ELF or EIL ^[43]. In this matter, teachers should be aware of contextual, pedagogical and cultural elements of the language, but also the linguistic features needed to build meaning in context. According to Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman ^[35] awareness of meaning implied in communication can only be developed as learners integrate at least the basic patterns of the lexical-grammatical and phonological features of the language to be learned. In this regard, the prevailing emphasis on NS models in ELT challenges the development of the language used in multicultural contexts. On the one hand, it is essential to build a solid linguistic foundation for learning and using a language. On the other hand, it is equally important to engage students in meaningful learning experiences. This can be achieved by providing learners with the tools they need to become proficient users of English. The goal is to enable effective communication across multiple varieties of the language, rather than being limiting students to the NS model, which is still commonly promoted in FL education. As Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman ^[35] highlight, it is not feasible to ignore that English is a globally spoken language; therefore, it is necessary to consider standardised varieties, which could correspond to a starting point. English language proficiency is not based upon NS status but rather on one's ability to adapt to and negotiate different contexts ^[44].

2.3. English Language Teaching (ELT) in an Intercultural Context

English is ranked in fourth position in terms of the number of NSs worldwide; however, it is spoken by NNSs in around 100 countries ^[34], which means that it is a language acquired/learned by more people outside the inner circle than inside this circle ^[45]. The unprecedented number of individuals communicating in English, NS and NNS, demonstrates that this language plays a fundamental role

in terms of communication. In this context, English constitutes the main language of intercultural communication in multicultural backgrounds, contributing to social adaptation and understanding of another culture ^[40]. Therefore, it is possible to state that ELF or EIL is not associated with a specific cultural or social context. Thus, it attempts to clarify cultural conventions and lead learners of English to compare one's own cultural assumptions with those of others ^[46]. According to Kramsch ^[47] learning about the culture of others entails reflection on one's own culture. Jin and Cortazzi ^[48] point out that intercultural learning refers to how we understand other cultures alongside our own through interaction. Consequently, the development of intercultural competences among teachers is increasingly important. In many societies, teachers act as agents who bridge the cultural capital of their students with the worldviews of the cultures students are exposed to ^[49]. Intercultural education emphasises the dynamic character of culture, understood as a variable mixture of similarity and diversity. This challenge relates to the dynamic concept of culture itself, as a social construct that is continuously shaped and transformed through communicative interactions ^[50,51]. It can be established that this conception of a dynamic culture is associated with a non-essentialist point of view. As noted by Barrett et al. ^[52], culture is not static; rather, it undergoes continual transformation influenced by political, economic, and historical forces, as well as through interactions with and the influence of other cultures. Additionally, cultural evolution is driven by internal processes, wherein members of a cultural group actively contest and renegotiate the meanings, norms, values, and practices that constitute their cultural framework ^[52]. Accordingly, as Lopriore and Vettorel ^[53] declare, ELT has emerged towards a paradigm in which the language is learned and used in multilingual contexts within plurilingual identities, allowing societies to negotiate understanding in their communication.

2.4. Brazilian and Chilean Contexts

Regarding the status of languages in the two contexts investigated, Portuguese is the only official language according to the Brazilian constitution (Art. 13th), despite the fact there are more than 200 languages spoken mostly in indigenous and immigrant communities around Brazil ^[54].

In Chile, Spanish is a *de facto* language, as there is no document that establishes it as an official one ^[55]. However, as Finardi ^[6] points out, this is a superficial analysis since in both countries, there are minoritized languages, which for decades have tried to remain ‘alive’ and are unlikely to be taught as an FL, given the pressure to include English (as the only mandatory FL in the curriculum) in the linguistic repertoire at the educational level. In this context, the teaching of English in Brazil, until 2017, competed with the offer of other (European) languages in school and the focus was on the teaching of those languages as an FL ^[54]. It was only after the reform of the Brazilian Basic Education Law (LDB) in 2017 that English was declared a *lingua franca*, and its provision became compulsory from basic education (6th grade) onwards.

In Chile, the Indigenous Law 19.253 of 1996 created the Intercultural Bilingual Education Programme, which aims to include the minority languages in the school curriculum, allowing for the acceptance of the Minimum and Compulsory Content of the Indigenous Language Sector. However, this inclusion in the curriculum is relegated to educational settings where there is a majority of students from indigenous peoples. Therefore, it is not established in a cross-cutting manner in the educational system, unlike the ELT, which has been implemented nationally and in a compulsory manner since 2003 from fifth grade. As of this year, the Chilean Ministry of Education established that citizens would be bilingual in English, which was considered an FL. Notwithstanding this high ambition, the country did not become bilingual. More recently, in 2024, the Chilean Ministry of Education ^[56] proposed that English might be taught as an international language, making it a compulsory subject, beginning in the first grade of primary education, with an emphasis on interculturality.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine teacher educators’ beliefs regarding the integration of interculturality in the teaching and learning of ELF and EIL. The investigation was grounded in Byram’s ^[11] conceptual framework of interculturality, which delineates essential features for fostering effective intercultural

communication. The framework identifies four key components: (1) knowledge about social groups and their cultures, as well as the ways in which individuals interact and perceive one another; (2) attitudes, encompassing the willingness and capacity to relativize one’s own cultural perspectives while acknowledging and valuing others, thereby moderating ethnocentric tendencies; (3) skills, which involve the ability to interpret cultural phenomena and relate them to one’s own cultural context; and (4) critical cultural awareness, referring to the capacity to critically evaluating one’s own cultural practices and perspectives, along with those of others. This theoretical foundation informed the analysis of educators’ beliefs and practices concerning interculturality in language education.

3.2. Data Collection and Participants

The researchers designed the semi-structured interview based on the roles of teacher and learner in an ELT classroom, taking into account Byram’s ^[57] intercultural dimensions and the need for educators to be interculturally competent when teaching a language. Then, the interview was reviewed by experts in the field who provided feedback on the clarity, relevance, and structure of the questions. The suggestions were incorporated into the final script. After the interviews were transcribed, the researchers analyzed them individually first and then together to ensure there were no interviewers’ own cultural biases or assumptions. The interviews were conducted in person by the researchers between February to April 2025 at a state university in Brazil and at a private university in Chile. Before conducting the interviews, which lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each, the informed consent form was read and signed by the participants. There were ten participants (five in each university). For the selection of the sample, the following inclusion criteria were considered: qualified as an English teacher, teacher trainer and with at least three years of practice in the profession. It is worth mentioning that the sample size is small; however, “there are ranges of opinion about obtaining appropriate sample sizes for qualitative research” ^[58] (p. 49). Even though the methodological limitation of the study is that the results cannot be generalized and applied to all different contexts, this qualitative research aims to explore experiences which provide

deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied offering insight into particular cases. As it is stated by Lichtman^[59], generalization is not the main purpose of qualitative research, nor to identify frequency but to explore meaning^[60].

Consequently, this study intends to open a door to more studies related to this theme, which is impacting the teaching and learning of languages worldwide. **Table 1** shows the teachers' characteristics.

Table 1. Sociodemographic participants feature.

Category/Country	Brazil	Chile	Brazil	Chile	Brazil	Chile
	Gender		Age		Years of Teaching Experience	
Female	3	3	40–60	30–60	3–20	3–10
Male	2	2	40–60	40–60	3–25	3–30

3.3. Data Analysis

Data were analysed through qualitative content analysis^[61], supported by NVivo 11 software. The process of category identification employed the methodology stated by McIntosh and Morse^[62], who advocate for category generation as the main primary analytical strategy, ultimately facilitating the development of theoretical construction. The initial step involved the transcription of each interview. Afterwards, the researchers analysed them individually, keeping in mind the definitions of the key concepts considered when designing the interview, and then collaboratively, to ensure that no cultural biases or assumptions from the interviewers influenced the analysis. This analysis was focused on the question: What do the participants' voices tell us? [63]. This process resulted in the generation of a considerable number of codes. Following independent analysis, the researchers collaboratively examined the codes to identify patterns and similarities, systematically organizing and reorganizing them as needed. Through this iterative approach, descriptive and explanatory categories were constructed, each aligned with the central theme of the study. The concluding stage of the analysis focused on theoretical development, intended to delve into the beliefs of higher education teachers in Brazil and Chile about the integration of interculturality in the teaching-learning of ELF or EIL, from the perspectives

of the professors themselves. To enhance the reliability of the analysis, the researchers first developed their coding schemes autonomously. Subsequently, they engaged in a negotiated agreement process to reach a shared understanding and ensure consistency in the interpretation of the data^[64]. The researchers have a similar level of expertise in the topic under study, which enhances the rigour of the analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Overview of Themes

The analysis generated two overarching themes reflecting participants' beliefs about integrating interculturality into ELF/EIL teaching: (i) English in educational contexts, which captures essentialist and non-essentialist orientations, the role of teachers, and perceptions of language policy; and (ii) Meaning construction, which encompasses values, intelligibility, and identity (**Table 2**). While participants acknowledged the policy shift towards ELF/EIL in both Brazil and Chile, their responses revealed ambivalence about its classroom implementation. Each interview excerpt presented in this section is identified according to the following: country, CH (Chile) or BR (Brazil) plus teacher (T), followed by the interviewee number, resulting in CHT.1 – BRT.1, to ensure a clear reference to the source of each statement within the analysis.

Table 2. Systematising results qualitative analysis.

Initial Deductive Theme	Initial Inductive Themes	Primary Inductive Category
Beliefs of teaching and learning English as a lingua franca or international language in an intercultural context	English in educational contexts	Essentialist and Non-essentialist views
		Teachers' role
		Language policy
	Meaning construction	Values
		Intelligibility
		Identity

4.2. English in Educational Contexts

4.2.1. Essentialist and Non-Essentialist Views

Brazilian and Chilean teachers point out that English is spoken worldwide; therefore, they mostly emphasize that there are not many significant differences between ELF or EIL. In fact, BRT.3 states that the *labeling* is more of a political issue because in Brazil, where they tend to identify English as an additional language, the implications in education policies differ significantly from other contexts, and BRT.2 states that,

I use the concept of English as an additional language because the terminology offers the meaning of not having acquired English as a second, third, or fourth language (BRT.2).

These participants highlight the importance of not labeling the concept of using the English language but rather understanding its purpose in real-life situations. Similarly, Chilean teachers state that there are differences, but those variances are related to the purpose of teaching; for example, CHT.5 highlights that,

if someone learns the language to become a teacher, they need to develop metalinguistic awareness, which would be different from learning a language to communicate with others (CHT.5).

By the same token, CHT.2 declares that the teaching method is aligned with the expected outcome, so teaching future teachers of English is different from teaching school students. Regarding those differences, the interviewees specified that adjustments should be made in case of teaching and assessing EIL; however, even though the explanations were clear in terms of cultural viewpoints, they were not explicit in terms of teaching practices.

In Chile, all participants agree that English should be used as a vehicle to exchange knowledge with others and not just to exchange information. CHT.1 mentions that learning English for communicating with people would promote intercultural understanding, adding knowledge and comprehension of others. All these are needed in Chile since the country has received many non-Spanish-speaking migrants over the last decade. CHT.2 points out that teaching EIL in an intercultural context is challenging and

suggests that teachers should receive guidelines on how to teach and assess learning; it is stated that interculturality is more than having mixed diverse cultures in a classroom; CHT.3 points out that teaching and assessing EIL under an intercultural paradigm is a shift for which teachers are not prepared.

Assessing pronunciation, for example, while integrating interculturality in the teaching of English as an international language is one of the issues encountered in practice due to the number of native varieties of English that exist nowadays (CHT.3).

Similarly, BRT.1 points out that it is challenging to even think about assessing the pronunciation of English spoken as a LF because of the number of different accents that should be accepted. The participant also mentions that changing the assessment paradigm would lead to the learning of an array of diverse accents by teachers and learners. Similarly, CHT.5 states that,

There is a difference between teaching English as an international language and teaching English as a foreign language, especially as it is taught in schools (...) English as an international language and lingua franca are more focused on communication and the idea of being aware of who you are and how you communicate yourself with others (CHT.5).

The interviewees reveal that the pedagogy for teaching future teachers of English in countries outside of the inner circle has followed the model of native-speakerism, in which cultures are compared, and sounding like a NS is somewhat expected. Consequently, future teachers of English will reproduce the essentialist view of teaching and learning English which, according to Holliday^[65] and Holliday et al.^[66], promotes stereotyping of others without considering the cultural changes and dynamics that result of migration and social mobility around the world, a consideration which is needed to accomplish 21st-century social and cultural needs.

Regarding the essentialist view of teaching the English language, Sellami^[67] highlights that an intercultural pedagogy provides a non-essentialist paradigm which assesses culture as a dynamic and multifaceted entity. In other words, intercultural pedagogy moves away from an essentialist view which bounds culture to its nationwide

borders, causing stereotypes and oversimplifications. The aforementioned is congruent with the interviewees' perceptions regarding the reproduction of teaching models in which the mastery of the language is expected in terms of correctness of pronunciation; as CHT.5 stated,

...English taught in schools has more emphasis on grammar, on how to say things more prescriptively, not focusing on who you are talking to, but on how you express yourself in the English language (CHT.5).

Even though much has been said in terms of the use of the English language worldwide, it seems that the intercultural paradigm under which teachers are supposed to position themselves is challenging their own structures. Therefore, the issue to address is not only related to classroom practices but also to broader sociocultural aspects in relation to the application of public policies, ELT pedagogical resources and lesson planning ^[68]. In this regard, teachers' beliefs should not be rooted in older paradigms but in a more ecological approach that considers language learning as a complex system in which various factors interact. In light of this ecological approach, languages are not a fixed set of rules or an isolated cognitive process, but a living entity characterized by fluidity and influenced by its environment ^[69].

4.2.2. Teachers' Role

Teachers' role inside and outside the classroom is highly relevant as it has direct impact on students' intercultural competences development in the long-term. In this regard, Román et al. ^[70] state that teachers of English should acquire communicative competences to use the language in any situation, but also intercultural communicative competences to foster communication, respect, and appreciation of diversity between different cultures represented in a classroom.

According to BRT.1, teachers' role in the integration of interculturality is a matter of including cultural aspects while teaching the language; the professor highlights that,

It is always necessary to include diverse cultures and not focus on just one culture as the center of attention because even in our city, there are many

different cultures (...) when teaching languages, there are always some cultural aspects to address (BRT.1).

On the other hand, BRT.2 argues that teachers should promote the development of interculturality in the classroom, but that process will depend on the maturity of teachers' knowledge of and experience with languages. As an example, the professor states that,

I teach English, right? And English is, although we have this idea of English as a lingua franca (...) that English does not belong to any country anymore because there are more no native speakers than native speakers, we know that in the common sense, in the media, in the discourses, in teaching materials we know that English is too very attached to two major countries, right? Namely the USA and the UK, and I confess that in the beginning, I tried to mimic the British English (...) but now I say that my English is from Brazil, and I see that sometimes students come with this notion, they try to mimic the US English, or whatever, and it's nice to help them realize that cultures and pronunciation varies from town to towns, even if we think about Brazil we see the language diversity that we have here, for example (BRT.2).

Similarly, CHT.4 points out that the integration of intercultural competence in the teaching of English will depend on the teachers and the subject to be taught. It is stated that interculturality is not developed openly during classes, but indirectly, and it also depends on how proficient learners are in the language. In this regard, the participant says,

I regret that what we do with students is so limited. It does not reach higher analytical categories; we only get as far as application because we teach students the function of the language, how to survive using the language, but it is hard to do more in terms of reflection using the language (...) in the sense of interculturality, for example.

For the most part, the interviewees state that there are certain courses in which intercultural aspects may be developed. They see interculturality as a component to add in some English classes but not as an element to be inte-

grated in the design and implementation of every class. Similarly, Flórez-Montañó et al. ^[71] found out that “different authors remark on the importance of the teachers’ role as facilitators and mediators, having in mind that students are the centre of the teaching process (...). They also say that teachers must be critical, reflective, and have a high intercultural competence (...) and it was recurrent that teachers have the desire to teach under the principles of interculturality but not all the time (...)” (p. 174). This is especially significant given that teachers serve as influential role models for their students.

4.2.3. Language Policy

English is taught from initial levels in both countries, so English teacher education has been part of the teaching programmes offered by universities accordingly. In that regard, language policies have oriented the paradigm in which teaching programmes should be situated to prepare future teachers in these two nations. In Chile, the new pedagogical and disciplinary standards for the initial teaching training programmes, mandated nationwide, incorporated the teaching of culture and intercultural competence as a new standard to be developed in teacher education ^[72]. Afterwards, the curriculum proposes English to be considered an IL rather than an FL to be taught in universities and educational settings ^[56]. In Brazil, English was also considered an FL, but in 2018, the Brazilian National Curriculum Base established the status of English under the paradigm of ELF ^[73].

Based on the regulations mentioned above, it can be observed that political and economic decisions follow Chua and Baldauf’s ^[74] illustration of language planning policy in education, in terms of development and sustainability; i.e., from a top-down approach resulting from the linguistic prestige of the language. Additionally, the status given to the language in both countries encouraged the conceptualization of either ELF in Brazil or EIL in Chile, both of which imply approaching teaching and learning from a paradigm different from the traditional EFL model.

Even though the mentioned countries have situated the teaching of the English language under a different paradigm, professors tend not to see the differences in the implementation of this new way of addressing the English language in practice. In this regard, BRT.2 states that the

difference between EFL, ELF or EIL is just a matter of geographical location, but the learning of the language does not change. The participant adds,

I like to use the terminology of English as an additional language because English, as an international language or others have political tendencies regarding who the language belongs to and which countries the language belongs to (BRT.2).

Similarly, BRT.3 points out that there is no difference between the conceptualizations of EFL and EIL. Although, the Brazilian government has labeled the language under the paradigm of ELF, the participant highlights that

I do not see any difference in the way of teaching and learning English how it would be different to say that English as a foreign language or English as an international language, or an additional language maybe because of this, decolonial, rebel view that we have, but we need to continue teaching how to use the language properly (BRT.3).

As declared in previous paragraphs, Chilean educational public policies recently proposed a paradigm change from EFL to EIL ^[56]. As it was the case in Brazil, Chilean language policy in education was recognized as a top-down approach. In this sense, CHT.5 points out that even though Chilean teachers should follow public policy guidelines for teaching, the mandate is not that clear in terms of practical terms. CHT.5 highlights that,

...I think it is easier to follow the government guidelines, in our case, because we have colleagues from different parts of the world and we all pronounce words differently (...) we sometimes assess speaking performance in pairs, so we need to discuss what is correct in terms of speaking, you know what I mean, for the grade to give students.

In a similar line, CHT. 2 indicates that working with people from different parts of the world is somehow easier because it is a matter of accepting what is correct for others, in terms of pronunciation and the use of words CHT.2 highlights,

I am not sure of what is expected from us (...) I mean, we teach English and we include different

cultures, and it is not a matter of not following the government guidelines, but we need to teach the language, and I am not saying that native speakers are always correct and we need to pronounce the words as they do, but it is a matter of learning to use the language.

4.3. Meaning Construction

4.3.1. Values

Some of the interviewees refer specifically to values. They perceive it as an essential concept when asked about the meaning of interculturality when teaching and learning a language that belongs to everyone. First, BRT.2 states that to understand other people's English, respect and empathy are required. Additionally, BRT.3 highlights the idea of social equality and declares that,

Interculturality is closely linked to the recognition of others as someone as valuable, as someone as respectable, as someone as important as I am in society.

The values expressed by the Chilean university teachers align with those of the Brazilian participants. For instance, participant CHT.1 emphasizes the concept of sharing, highlighting the view that individuals are not interconnected and engage in shared experiences across various aspects of life including perspectives, habits, and food. In line with two other participants, they also focus on social equality as the key element of interculturality, adding that the economic factor is what makes us value some accents as more prestigious than others. Furthermore, they add that interculturality is not only the harmonious coexistence of cultures that may or may not include different languages, but also a coexistence where mutually rewarding relationships, cooperation, integration, mutual knowledge, and mutual appraisal of each other's differences are present.

To learn EIL involves the development of receptive and productive skills that equip learners with the ability to get and produce information to exercise local and global citizenship^[6]. This means that the focus should be placed not only on linguistic aspects but also on cultural exchange in a multicultural world. CHT.5 relates interculturality to

her role as a language teacher in a NNS English context, stating that if communication, sensitivity and empathy are the main goals, teachers do not have to expect a correct use of the English language, according to a normative perspective. Similarly, the participant affirms that it might be a futile exercise to attempt to teach all the cultural norms of English NS to students, but that it may be worthwhile to make them aware of these different cultural rules to reinforce the idea of variety and to understand that culture and norms are not the same in every country. In this context, the stereotype concept emerges and is conceptualized from two different points. First, it is established that, as was previously stated, norms-or the way people behave-differ across nations, which is not a negative aspect per se. On the contrary, it allows people to be open-minded because there is an opportunity to be in contact with others' points of view. Then, professors mention that each person who arrives from a different country to ours is a migrant, regardless of the country where s/he comes from.

When the topic of migrants is worked in class, the impact on the students when asking what does the word migrant mean, how they see it, making them reflect on the stereotype of migrants that they have, which generally are going to be related to people arriving in vulnerable conditions, but they do not realize that suddenly a teacher from the Czech Republic is also a migrant, that s/he comes because of other reasons, that the motivation is different (CHT.1).

A person who has moved from their country of origin to live in a different one is a migrant, and the reason why s/he moves does not matter. In short, when reflecting on their concept of interculturality, participants from both countries underscore respect, empathy, equality, and mutual awareness as pivotal values in diverse societies. Notwithstanding, the participants' discourse lacks concrete references to the use of English from the intercultural paradigm. Probably, the new intercultural praxis is not that clear to them, even though there exist some guidelines for teaching English with an intercultural perspective^[57].

4.3.2. Intelligibility

Most of the participants referred to this concept explicitly when asked whether having an English NS pro-

nunciation was desirable. Nonetheless, they also refer to having their L1 accent as something acceptable rather than beneficial or advisable, as they use the adjective acceptable and the phrase *does not matter* when answering the question. In this respect, these participants also remark that this L1 accent is sustainable as long as communication is not jeopardized, especially in contexts and places where there is a considerable variety of accents, as exemplified by CHT.3.

Nowadays, any speaker you find in the street does not care about accents, because accents change everywhere, and if you can communicate, accent does not matter.

The participants also refer to intelligibility and language assessment in their answers. On the one hand, BRT.1 states that,

even though intelligibility is more important than proximity to native speakers' accents, the educational system places stronger emphasis on the latter, that is because when sitting an English language proficiency exam, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation might be deemed as more important than making oneself understood.

In this respect and by way of example, in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam, considered an important test for higher Education and global migration, the speaking skill rubric states that the highest scores are given to those who communicate orally in a manner that closely resembles that of a NS, with an L1 accent that is nearly imperceptible. In this context, CHT.1 establishes,

It depends on the context, because if I am not a teacher of English, the most important thing is to be understood. If I am in a foreign country, I have to be intelligible, it is the most important. But, if I am a teacher of English, I obviously have to handle more, I need to have more command of the language in this case, if I'm going to use it to teach.

On the other hand, BRT.2 affirms that language assessment should consider intelligibility rather than linguistic correctness and that there could exist a minimal core that will allow intelligibility amongst speakers of English.

Throughout the interviews, other ideas arise concerning the emphasis on communication as opposed to the emphasis on linguistic correctness. In this sense, for example, BRT.3 mentions that the issue of whether to keep an L1 accent depends on the reasons why your English language proficiency is being evaluated. This interviewee expands on this point by saying that, for example, if you are applying to a job in an international company, it is advisable to work on pronunciation so as not to sound too different and to facilitate communication, although not necessarily sounding like a NS of English. Similarly, BRT.5 discloses that Brazilian people do not have to sound like a NS but use the language to be understood; the teacher adds that pronunciation should not affect comprehension. Notwithstanding, BRT.1 highlights that,

It is not necessary to sound like a native speaker, but that will depend on the context in which you are and who you are with, because of prejudices. Anyway, it is difficult not to consider accents when teaching and assessing students because there are so many accents that you need to take and follow one of them. Also, schoolteachers still focus on the idea of teaching students to sound like native speakers, which is to teach and learn a lot of grammar, pronunciation (BRT.1).

Another powerful reflection is provided by BRT.5, who states that in the university where s/he is currently teaching, the teaching of English as a FL aims at empowering future teacher of English not only to be able to communicate, but also to make English their own language, an international one, thus stressing the concept of ownership.

To sum up, participants clearly lean towards intelligibility rather than language correctness from an English native standpoint. However, in general, they perceive intelligibility not as a desirable goal, but as an acceptable element to be present in non-native English speakers.

4.3.3. Identity

The identity of professors as well as their role as educators are aligned in terms of the challenges they encounter while trying to incorporate government guidelines, principles of teaching, and teaching methodologies to fulfill all students' needs, as it is required for the development

of learners' competences of the 21st century education. As BRT.3 expresses:

Being a teacher of English is not an easy task since it is mandatory to teach learners how to use the English language, but it is also needed to do more than that because we are educators, not just teachers.

This has been further confirmed by Archanjo et al.^[75] who examined the identity of FL pre-service teachers in Brazil and Chile, and the results suggest that FL pre-service teacher identity is shaped by notions of legitimization of the teacher's role and language proficiency. It means that all educators of English would go through a long-term process of shaping their teaching view, identity, and the oriented praxis implemented when teaching. Regarding the teaching practices and how professors carry out their lectures, BRT.3 declares that,

I am a teacher. I correct my students when they mispronounce things, not because I want them to pronounce like natives, but because I want them to be understood. Also, I need to follow teaching programmes and to do that I cannot explore on topics not related to what students are supposed to learn (...) in the end, even though I wish I could do more following the new paradigm mandated by the government, I am a strict teacher, so I have to accomplish what is needed for my learners.

In the same line, BRT.5 establishes a connection between the accents when teaching a language and how to preserve them in communication when speaking with people from other languages, because that action highlights people's identity. Notwithstanding, the participant points out that,

I keep my accent when speaking English (...) I mean, if I speak with people from Mexico, Jamaica, or India, for example, they keep their own accent without any problem (...) but we all need to be aware of the comprehension, I mean, even if you have an accent, you also need to be concerned of the inter-comprehension (BRT.5).

Overall, the matter of teaching and learning the English language seems to be quite complex from the partici-

pants' view in the sense that the metalinguistic knowledge tends to be a main focus, in which the integration of the new paradigm, i.e., interculturality is not seen as plausible until learners develop full awareness on how to handle the use of the language. As it is observed by Ubaque-Casallas^[76], "even though English language teachers have kept alive an identity of themselves as subalterns by subduing to theoretical principles about teaching, conversations here documented those personal theories of language can co-exist, but mostly contradict hegemonic theoretical constructions imposed in the ELT field" (p. 206), which is also unveiled in the reflections observed in the interviews of Brazilian and Chilean university teachers.

5. Discussion

When people who do not share the same language come together and need to communicate with each other, English is the language they usually turn to^[1,3,4], without the need to reach consensus about the choice of language. In this multilingual and multicultural reality, societies have been compelled to incorporate this language into their educational curricula, resulting in a greater number of learners and, consequently, a higher proportion of NNSs than NSs^[9]. Therefore, societies or governments seek strategies to transform citizens into bilinguals and thereby become part of this global village. Considering this search for strategies, Brazil changed the approach within which the teaching-learning of English is framed, and this happened a few years earlier^[73] than the reform initiative proposed by the Chilean Ministry of Education^[56]. In both countries, decisions were made by language planners who, in some cases, are not linguists^[6,55]. From educational policy, it is worth noting that the norm has been to impose English language instruction from the top down. Considering Chua and Baldauf's^[74] proposal, it is possible to point out that these guidelines are at the supra-macro planning level and do not take into account the infra-micro and micro levels, where local communities and institutions can be found. In this context, investigating teacher educators' beliefs is a key avenue for understanding the dynamics that shape pedagogical practices. EFL teachers' beliefs critically interrogate and naunce current scholarly discourse on ELF, EIL, and interculturality be revealing fundamental sociolinguis-

tic tensions in pedagogical practice. The central findings -the persistent tension between promoting global intelligibility and the simultaneous reproduction of native-speakerist norms- directly challenges the notion of de-centering ownership in Global Englishes^[77,78]. This adherence to a perceived linguistic standard suggests that while educators may accept ELF/EIL concepts, linguistic hegemony remains a powerful force at the classroom, impeding the full operationalization of communication-focused paradigms^[46]. Given their configuration nature, such beliefs can either facilitate or constrain the adoption of inclusive approaches. In this sense, teacher education programmes should not just teach future teachers their discipline but equip them with specific knowledge and skills to effectively communicate complex ideas and foster critical thinking. The exercise of educators' agency should empower them to engage with the diverse cultural and socioeconomic specificities of their students, thereby facilitating the co-construction of meaning within the learning environment.

These new paradigms, from the axiology of ELF or EIL are posed at the supra-macro planning level for intercultural education and constitute a challenge for teacher educators and those in service. In this context, the professors' statements provide some insights regarding the implementation of the teaching of English in terms of the praxis and how they visualize the paradigm shift in practical terms. Even though educational public policies are well known by teachers, who they are trying to implement them as mandated, there is a mismatch between the language proficiency expected, the praxis, and the intercultural views of the purpose of teaching and learning the English language. Consequently, it seems that there are two distinct realities regarding how to implement the new approach proposed at the educational level; one refers to the guidelines provided by public policies, and the other relates to what is actually implemented in the classroom. This goes in line with what is indicated by Finardi^[6] and Fuentealba et al.^[55].

The results also suggest that although teachers are familiar with the guidelines mandated and proposed by the government both in Brazil and Chile, their implementation poses challenges when aligning language proficiency, the development of interculturality, and various learner-related variables such as culture, age, cognitive processes, among

others. Likewise, there is no clarity regarding the theoretical and empirical foundations of the shift in approach, from teaching EFL to ELF (in Brazil) or EIL (in Chile). Curriculum design remains a key gap because policy is supposed to inform the curriculum of teacher education programmes, which prepare teachers for their professional duties. However, this lack of knowledge may become a barrier that prevents teachers from positioning themselves within these new approaches, leading them to continue prioritizing the native varieties of English, as it was also unveiled in a similar research carried out in Colombia^[79].

Due to the diverse sociocultural and geographical movements in societies and the increasing use of English worldwide, examining teachers' global understandings of the epistemological and ontological views of teaching and learning English globally is highly relevant. To this end, researching on teaching practices from a non-essentialist view is crucial so as to step forward the development of intercultural strength while learning ELF or EIL that makes sense for all language users. Although awareness of what it means to teach English under the umbrella of interculturality, either as ELF or EIL, cannot be directly taught, it can be enhanced through reflective processes that provide teachers with the opportunity to explore, question, and make informed decisions about their teaching practices in English. Such reflection encourages them to embrace their non-native identity in the language they teach and to critically examine their thinking, beliefs, and assumptions in light of the complexities of ELF and EIL, as stated by Lopriore and Vettorel^[53].

Finally, teachers' beliefs extend the discussion by highlighting a critical policy-practice disjunction, illustrating that the teacher's ingrained belief system acts as a key impediment to the uptake of macro-level intercultural policies. The preference for a narrow standard often translates into a monocultural definition of language correctness, thereby sidelining the development of intercultural communicative competence^[80]. This necessitates a shift in scholarly focus toward transforming educators' belief systems and integrating critical language awareness into teachers' education to bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and classroom realities^[81]. The ongoing contradiction between EFL educators' academic acceptance of ELF/EIL concepts and their practical commitment to native-speakerism proves that the ideological struggle over

English ownership is ultimately won or lost in scholarly theory or policy documents, but within the untransformed belief system of the individual educator.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the beliefs of teacher educators in Brazil and Chile regarding the integration of interculturality into ELF/EIL teaching. The findings reveal a persistent gap between policy and practice: while participants were aware of curricular reforms that reposition English as a lingua franca or an international language, they reported uncertainty about how to implement these approaches in classroom contexts.

Three key insights emerge. First, native-speaker norms continue to exert influence, particularly in pronunciation and assessment, despite participants stated preference for intelligibility and intercultural awareness. Second, interculturality is valued as an ethical orientation—associated with respect, empathy, and equality—but is not systematically incorporated into pedagogy. Third, teacher identity plays a central role in mediating these tensions, as educators negotiate their positions as NNSs within global English discourses.

By situating these findings in Latin American contexts, the study contributes empirical evidence from a region largely absent in ELF/EIL research. It shows how top-down reforms can generate awareness but not necessarily provide the tools needed for pedagogical change. For policy makers, this underscores the importance of clearer guidelines and resources to support implementation. For teacher education programmes, it highlights the need to explicitly address intercultural competence and identity negotiation as part of professional preparation.

Ultimately, the study demonstrates that advancing ELF/EIL with an intercultural orientation requires more than curricular mandates. It demands sustained investment in teacher education that bridges the policy–practice divide and empowers educators to enact pedagogies that reflect the pluricentric, dynamic, and intercultural realities of English today.

Author Contributions

The contributions of the authors are as follows: V.S.R.

conceptualized the study, developed the methodology and analytical approach, investigation, wrote the initial draft and then contributed editing, and supervised the research execution. L.A.F. contributed to the methodology, investigation and reviewed the initial draft, formal analysis, and wrote the results. E.A.H. contributed the methodology and investigation, provided additional support in editing and formatting. C.G.M. contributed to the investigation, results and conclusion. K.R.F. improved the initial draft and provided additional support in editing and formatting. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This work was supported by Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo-ANID, Proyecto Fomento a la Vinculación Internacional - FOVI240012. Chile.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to its minimal risk nature, involving only voluntary interviews with adult participants who provided informed consent. The study did not collect sensitive personal data, pose harm to participants, or involve vulnerable populations.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

Data is unavailable due to privacy of participants.

Acknowledgments

Kyria Rebeca Finardi wishes to thank Brazilian agencies Cnpq and Fapes for support for research.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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