



In-Service EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards English Varieties and Their Potential Implications for Colombian ELT

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of 55 Colombian in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from different regions toward twelve English varieties representing Kachru's three circles and examines their implications for English language teaching (ELT). Seeking to address a persistent gap in Global Englishes (GE) research in Colombia, the study adopted a mixed-methods design involving an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with ten volunteers. Findings reveal that American and British English remain the most valued and familiar varieties, a preference largely reinforced by institutional expectations, historical traditions, and deep-seated language ideologies. Nonetheless, several participants showed openness to other global varieties and recognized the need to raise students' awareness of English's linguistic diversity. Although inner-circle norms continue to dominate classroom practices, some teachers questioned native-speaker ideals and called for more inclusive perspectives in English language education. Overall, the study exposes the enduring influence of colonial legacies in Colombian ELT while signaling a gradual shift toward more plurilithic and context-sensitive understandings of English. It urges the field to begin embracing GE-informed orientations that value linguistic diversity and promote fairer, more contextually grounded educational practices.

Keywords

Attitudes; Colombia; English; language change; varieties.

Received: 12/10/2025 | Submitted to peers: 08/11/2025 | Accepted by peers: 13/01/2026 | Approved: 06/02/2026
DOI: 10.5294/edu.2026.29.1.2

Para citar este artículo / To reference this article / Para citar este artigo

Mosquera, J. E., López, J. L., & Montoya, J. F. (2026). In-Service EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards English Varieties and Their Potential Implications for Colombian ELT. *Educación y Educadores*, 29(1), e2912. <https://doi.org/10.5294/edu.2026.29.1.2>

Actitudes de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera hacia las variedades del inglés y sus posibles implicaciones para la enseñanza del inglés en Colombia

Resumen

Este estudio investiga las actitudes de 55 docentes colombianos de inglés en ejercicio, provenientes de diferentes regiones del país, hacia doce variedades del inglés que representan los tres círculos de Kachru y examina sus implicaciones para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Con el propósito de abordar una brecha persistente en la investigación sobre los Global Englishes (GE) en Colombia, el estudio adoptó un diseño de métodos mixtos que incluyó un cuestionario en línea y entrevistas semiestructuradas con diez docentes voluntarios. Los hallazgos revelan que el inglés estadounidense y británico siguen siendo las variedades más valoradas y familiares, una preferencia ampliamente reforzada por expectativas institucionales, tradiciones históricas e ideologías lingüísticas profundamente arraigadas. No obstante, varios participantes mostraron apertura a otras variedades del inglés y reconocieron la necesidad de sensibilizar a los estudiantes sobre la diversidad lingüística del idioma. Aunque las normas del círculo interno continúan dominando las prácticas de aula, algunos docentes cuestionaron los ideales del hablante nativo y abogaron por perspectivas más inclusivas en la enseñanza del idioma. En conjunto, el estudio evidencia la influencia persistente de los legados coloniales en la enseñanza del inglés en Colombia, al tiempo que señala un cambio gradual hacia comprensiones más plurilíngüicas y contextualmente sensibles del inglés. Asimismo, insta al campo a comenzar a adoptar orientaciones basadas en los GE que valoren la diversidad lingüística y promuevan prácticas educativas más equitativas y contextualizadas.

Palabras clave

Actitudes; cambio lingüístico, Colombia; inglés; variedades.

As atitudes dos professores de inglês como língua estrangeira em exercício em relação às variedades do inglês e suas possíveis implicações no ensino de inglês na Colômbia

Resumo

Este estudo investiga as atitudes de 55 professores colombianos de inglês como língua estrangeira (English as a Foreign Language [EFL]) em exercício, provenientes de diferentes regiões, em relação a 12 variedades do inglês que representam os três círculos de Kachru, e examina suas implicações para o ensino de língua inglesa (English Language Teaching [ELT]). Buscando preencher uma lacuna persistente nas pesquisas sobre os Global Englishes na Colômbia, o estudo adotou um delineamento de métodos mistos, o qual envolveu um questionário eletrônico e entrevistas semiestruturadas com 10 docentes voluntários. Os resultados indicam que o inglês americano e o britânico continuam sendo as variedades mais valorizadas e familiares, preferência amplamente reforçada por expectativas institucionais, tradições históricas e ideologias linguísticas profundamente enraizadas. No entanto, vários participantes demonstraram abertura a outras variedades desse idioma e reconheceram a necessidade de sensibilizar os estudantes para a diversidade linguística do inglês. Embora as normas do círculo interno ainda dominem as práticas em sala de aula, alguns professores questionaram o ideal do falante nativo e defenderam perspectivas mais inclusivas no ensino de línguas. De modo geral, o estudo evidencia a influência persistente dos legados coloniais no ensino de inglês na Colômbia, ao mesmo tempo que aponta uma mudança gradual em direção a perspectivas mais pluricêntricas e contextualmente situadas. Conclui-se que o campo deve começar a adotar orientações fundamentadas nos Global Englishes, que valorizem a diversidade linguística e promovam práticas educacionais mais equitativas e contextualizadas.

Palavras-chave

Atitudes; Colômbia; língua inglesa; mudança linguística; variedades.

Introduction

We deem it essential to open this article by acknowledging that English language education worldwide has been largely shaped by national and transnational language policies that define not only curricular orientations but also legitimate language norms, learning goals, and teacher expectations. These policy frameworks, often aligned with global economic and political agendas (Correa & Usma, 2013; Guerrero, 2008), have historically promoted particular models of English and specific benchmarks of linguistic legitimacy. Within this context, and due to current globalization dynamics, both the English language and English language teaching (ELT) have undergone significant global transformations. Emphasizing this shift is important because, whereas speech communities were once strongly invested in achieving native-like proficiency to be recognized as legitimate language users, the deeply ingrained ideal of speaking like a native speaker at all costs has gradually been questioned. This change seeks to more accurately reflect the identity markers of those who now use English as a vehicle for communication (Crystal, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Mourchid et al., 2023). Put differently, non-native English-speaking communities have increasingly reclaimed English (Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024), contributing to its progressive decentralization and repositioning as a language owned by those who use it for social, academic, and linguistic purposes.

The previously noted situation is comprehensible, considering that English has transcended national boundaries and territorial limitations, reaching global populations that would not have traditionally envisioned the language occupying such a central role in their societies. As a consequence of this global spread, English has gradually diversified, giving rise to what are commonly referred to as “English varieties.” The notion of Global Englishes (GE), or English varieties, has been increasingly employed in sociolinguistics and language variation studies since the seminal contributions

of Jennifer Jenkins (2015) on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and of Kachru (1990) and Smith (1976) on World Englishes (WE). Broadly speaking, English varieties refer to “indigenized” or “territorialized” forms of English that emerge from sustained contact between English and local languages within the sociocultural contexts in which it has spread. Although the recognition of GE varieties has advanced at a relatively slow pace, it has gained increasing visibility worldwide over the past two decades. In the Colombian context, however, this recognition remains limited and is only beginning to acquire moderate academic and pedagogical visibility.

Cross-country, particularly in recent years, several research initiatives have emphasized the need to move ELT and English teacher education programs toward paradigms that more explicitly acknowledge the plurality of English in contemporary contexts. Representative of this line of inquiry are the empirical and conceptual contributions of García (2013), González (2020), Macías (2010), Macías and Mosquera-Pérez (2024), Mora (2022), and Vargas-Arevalo (2025), who, through different analytical lenses, have consistently shown that English education in Colombia has been historically anchored to inner-circle norms. These norms continue to position native English-speaking communities and their linguistic practices as the primary models to be emulated. Consequently, these authors argue that, given its sociolinguistic and cultural characteristics, Colombia constitutes fertile ground for the adoption of more plurilithic paradigms in English education (Boonsuk, 2025).

In line with these national and global scholarly conversations, key areas such as English teacher education, language assessment, ELT materials, and teachers’ professional development have been identified as domains that should be permeated by GE perspectives in order to foster meaningful change in English teaching practices. Ironically, however, most Colombian studies framed within pro-language variation paradigms (León, 2018) have focused pri-

marily on pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, graduate students in language education programs, or English teachers working in private educational contexts. To date, studies examining the perceptions of in-service English teachers from diverse regions of the country remain scarce.

This study constitutes a contribution in that regard. By examining the perceptions that English teachers from various regions of the country hold toward twelve English varieties across Kachru's (1992) inner, expanding, and outer circles, the study not only explores the degree of awareness and the overall impressions participants hold regarding these varieties, but also seeks to generate initial insights into how a GE-informed pedagogy in ELT might begin to take shape. This focus is particularly relevant given that contemporary educational approaches, including those informing English language education, are increasingly expected to reflect a more accurate and inclusive view of society, one that does not perpetuate hegemonic models of language and education.

In doing so, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the explicit attitudes of Colombian in-service EFL teachers toward twelve English varieties across Kachru's three circles?
2. What factors or reasons underlie these attitudes (e.g., convenience, institutional norms, or ideological orientations)?
3. What implications arise from these attitudes for ELT in Colombia?

Theoretical Notions

Two theoretical constructs guided this inquiry: A) the global spread of English, and B) language attitudes and measurement of language attitudes. We present the first of the constructs addressed in the study below.

The Global Spread of English

For a long time, English was perceived as a monolithic language. This is partially understandable, given that English was long associated with native-speaking communities in the inner circle, such as the United States, England, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Nevertheless, the growing spread of English as a global lingua franca has made it inevitable to move beyond viewing English as a single entity and to recognize it instead as a series of varieties that constitute its diversity. This transition in the use of terms began partly because scholars from the global academic community maintained that traditional English as an EFL did not truly encapsulate the diverse global processes English experiences as it enters new sociolinguistic territories. This argument gained further relevance with the emergence and eventual establishment of the field of WE, initiated by Kachru and Smith in 1985, through the creation of the journal *World Englishes*.

According to Jenkins (2015), although “[t]he oldest model of the spread of English is that of Strevens” (p. 12) one of the most influential shaping the field today is Kachru's three concentric model (Almegren, 2018; Jenkins, 2015; McKenzie, 2006; Sykes, 2010; Zhang, 2010), which has triggered “an awareness of varieties of English and engendered a large number of critical debates about the traditional view of English language as the language of particular countries” (Ahn, 2014, p. 29). The Kachruvian model, a model largely employed in sociolinguistics when referring to English varieties, has served, in the view of Ahn (2014, p. 24), to challenge “the traditional view of English as the language of a particular country” and has instead sought to acknowledge that English belong to all those who use it as a vehicle or bridge of communication (Firth, 1996). The Kachruvian model advocates for the need to more consistently recognize the pluralization affecting English uses and users in today's world (Boonsuk, 2025), especially considering that non-native English users have already outnumbered their counterparts (Crystal, 2003).

Kachru (1992) suggests that the English-speaking world is divided into three circles. The first, the inner circle, refers to countries whose first language is English. The traditional nations comprising this circle are Australia, Canada, England, and the United States, and have been largely viewed as endonormative or norm-developing as these territories have largely defined how English should be taught and how prospective English teachers should be trained (Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024). However, according to critical applied linguists, this has perpetuated colonialism in knowledge, being, and power (Núñez-Pardo, 2022).

The second circle, the expanding nations circle, is commonly linked with countries where English continues to be associated with the traditional EFL model, and with nations where, despite being actively taught across institutional and governmental establishments, English is not frequently used outside such settings. Colombia, Perú, Poland, and Russia, to mention a few, are good examples of this. Finally, the outer circle is connected with former British colonies where English is still “employed for a range of educational and administrative purposes” (McKenzie, 2010, p. 2). Some nations that the outer circle comprises are India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Following Baratta (2019, as cited in Mourchid & Brigui, 2023, p. 3), “Outer and Expanding Circle Englishes are referred to as Non-Inner Circle Englishes (NICE) in the present study, whereas World Englishes is used when reference is made to all three circles.”

It is important to note that, while the Kachruvian three-circle model has been widely associated with the WE paradigm initiated by Kachru and Smith, in this study, we assume GE varieties from a GE perspective. There are two powerful reasons to address this option. First, while WE seeks to spark appreciation and recognition of GE varieties, WE, like English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), has been heavily criticized for attempting to codify the phonological, syntactic, discursive, pragmatic, and grammatical

particularities across the English varieties it seeks to raise awareness of (León, 2018). And second, because while WE and other pro-language variation approaches (León, 2018), like English as an International Language (EIL) and ELF, have focused on understanding the linguistic interactions between natives and non-natives and have similarly made an attempt to encapsulate English in linguistic standards, something they often claim to resist, GE is a recent paradigm that integrates theory and praxis. Simply put, it is a paradigm that seeks to provoke a change in ELT at all levels and directions, including the hiring practices that have so heavily affected non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) worldwide (see Boonsuk, 2025; León, 2018; Prabjandee & Fang, 2022; Rose & Galloway, 2019; and Xie & Fang, 2022, for a more detailed discussion about the differentiating factors between GE and the other existing language variation approaches like EIL, ELF, and WE).

Language Attitudes and Approaches to Examine Language Attitudes

The second theoretical guiding notion of this study is language attitudes and approaches to examining them. In academia, language attitudes have typically been conceptualized as the interrelation between a given language, English in this case, and the potential attitudes or behaviors it evokes among its speakers. According to McKenzie (2010, p. 26), language attitudes “is a term which encompasses a broad range of possible empirical studies, concerned with a number of specific attitudes” (p. 26). Along the same lines, to Baker (1992, as cited in Mourchid & Brigui, 2023, p. 2) language attitudes are connected to multiple dimensions and can be examined to understand: 1) how individuals perceive a language variation, dialect and speech style, 2) their perceptions of learning a new language, 3) their attitudes toward minority languages, 4) their attitudes toward linguistic or social communities, 5) their attitudes toward language lessons or in-

struction, 6) their views on the uses and functions of a particular language, and 7) their language preferences. In this study, we adhered to options 1 and 6 due to the nature of the study. However, any conclusions drawn are likely to have implications for dimensions 2, 6, and 7: attitude towards learning a new language, attitude towards the uses of a specific language, and attitude towards language preference (Mourchid & Brigui, 2023).

As for approaches to explore language attitudes, three can be employed. These are the societal, direct, and indirect approaches. According to McKenzie (2010), although the societal treatment approach is rarely mentioned in the scholarly literature, it offers potential for studying language attitudes because of the multiple angles it seeks to examine. By integrating observation, ethnographic studies, and content analysis, this approach often draws interesting conclusions regarding stereotypical associations of languages and language varieties held by their speakers. McKenzie (2010) asserts that

Societal treatment analyses are often considered insufficiently rigorous by many mainstream language attitude researchers from the social psychological tradition. It may be most appropriate, however, to undertake a societal treatment approach in contexts where access to informants is not possible under completely natural conditions or where there are limitations on time and/or space. (p. 41)

These characteristics thus constitute an excellent set of resources for studying language variation, as is the case with English varieties, in non-natural conditions such as classroom environments where EFL teachers are typically encountered.

The second approach of the three approaches to language attitudes is the direct approach. Zhang (2010) noticed that the direct approach “is characterized by a greater degree of obtrusiveness since informants are asked direct questions about their

attitudes, usually through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews” (p. 89). In a similar vein, Garrett et al. (2003) state that the direct approach “is characterized by elicitation: the asking of direct questions about language evaluation, preference, etc., usually through questionnaires and/or interviews” (p. 16). This, in Garrett (2010), represents an interesting approach to examining and analyzing individuals' language attitudes because it directly asks people about their attitudes. In other words, it provides a simple yet effective way to ask questions and understand individuals' views on a given fact. In the words of Garrett (2010), “[a]t one level, it [the direct approach] may seem the most obvious way to get at people's attitudes: i.e., to ask them what their attitudes are” (p. 39).

The last approach is the indirect approach. McKenzie (2010) theorized that this approach is an indirect means of obtaining information from individuals involved in a research experience. Unlike the direct approach, the indirect approach resorts to more subtle data-gathering techniques. In other words, the study's intention and overall purposes are made less obvious to the participants. Concerning the indirect approach, McKenzie (2010) holds that “This approach is particularly useful when it would be considered impossible or counter-productive to directly question informants on their perceptions of the attitudinal object” (p. 45).

According to McKenzie (2010), language attitudes research can draw on a combination of the three because, by resorting to direct and indirect techniques, an interconnected approach can uncover language attitudes towards language varieties embedded in societal contexts. For this study, however, and following Mourchid and Brigui's (2023) similar reasons, we decided to rely only on a direct approach to language attitudes because although English varieties may be largely associated by some people with deficient varieties of English, reflecting the often stereotypical perceptions people have of

speaking English or of using the language, we mostly wanted to explore the attitudes our participant ELF teachers had toward a group of English varieties at the level of speech. Although it would have been highly significant to explore other dimensions deriving from this analysis, we believe these aspects could be addressed in future studies, perhaps by combining teachers' variety preferences with the language ideologies underlying them.

Methodology

A mixed-methods research design with a primarily qualitative focus was followed to explore participants' attitudes toward English varieties. This design was selected because mixed methods allow the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, providing a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that one of the main strengths of mixed-methods research lies in its ability to draw on both qualitative and quantitative data while minimizing the limitations of each approach (p. 297). They further argue that, through the use of multiple instruments and strategies, mixed methods enable a more complete understanding of research problems and questions (p. 298).

Context and Participants

We used one main strategy to recruit participants for this study. In particular, we disseminated an open call via social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and simultaneously shared an online questionnaire created in Google Forms with potential participants. This instrument included a detailed explanation of the research objectives, along with initial statements designed to gather preliminary information. Attaching the questionnaire to the open call had a clear purpose: to collect demographic details, including participants' names, preferred pseudonyms, ages, workplaces, Email addresses, and telephone numbers. This information

enabled future communication with those genuinely interested in contributing to the study. We adopted this approach because participant recruitment is often one of the most challenging aspects of research. Providing full details and objectives from the outset allowed us to reach English teachers across Colombia who were sincerely motivated to engage with the study and reflect on the role and implications of prioritizing or disregarding both traditional and non-traditional English varieties in ELT.

By promoting the open call and disseminating the questionnaire, we also sought to ensure that those who expressed interest would remain committed throughout the study's different stages. As previously noted, our recruitment strategy followed the principles of convenience sampling, which, as Marshall (1996) puts it, involves inviting individuals who meet the specific characteristics required for the research. This approach was essential for identifying participants whose profiles aligned with our objectives and who were likely to engage meaningfully in the process.

In total, 55 English teachers, 25 male and 30 female, from diverse regions of Colombia participated in the study. They were based in cities such as Bogotá, Tunja, Neiva, and Cúcuta, as well as one in Lima, Peru, and worked full-time in public and private institutions ranging from primary to tertiary education. All participants were Colombian and held bachelor's degrees in ELT, meaning that English teaching formed the foundation of their professional careers. This is a noteworthy aspect in the national context, as individuals with undergraduate degrees in other disciplines can also pursue a master's program to qualify as English teachers, provided they demonstrate proficiency in the language. Having 55 participants with a B.A. in ELT, therefore, offered a valuable opportunity to gain deeper insights into the predominance of certain English varieties that have historically governed the field. Table 1 presents detailed profiles of the participants.

Table 1. Participants' Profiles

Personal details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	25	45.4
Female	30	54.5
Age		
20–30	17	30.9
30–40	28	50.9
40–50	8	14.4
Over 50	2	3.6
Education		
Bachelor's degree	23	41.8
Master's degree	28	50.9
Doctoral degree	4	7.2
University or school affiliation		
Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia	15	27.2
Universidad Surcolombiana	4	7.27
Colegio Comfaboy	5	9.09
Institución Educativa Luis Ángel Arango	1	1.82
Universidad de los Andes	1	1.82
Universidad de Pamplona	1	1.82
Colegio Dulce Corazón de María	1	1.82
Instituto Técnico y Académico Scout José Martí	1	1.82
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana	1	1.82
Universidad Antonio Nariño	1	1.82
Colegio de Boyacá	1	1.82
Colegio NUSEFA	1	1.82
Gimnasio los Arrayanes	1	1.82
Normal de Socha	1	1.82
Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA)	1	1.82
Universidad de la Amazonía	1	1.82
Universidad Santo Tomás	1	1.82
Universidad del Valle	1	1.82

Personal details	Frequency	Percentage
Institución Educativa San Miguel	1	1.82
Colegio Juan Rey	1	1.82
Universidad Industrial de Santander	1	1.82
Institución Educativa Salamanca	1	1.82
Universidad Peruana Unión	1	1.82
Colegio Bilingüe San Viator	1	1.82
Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD)	1	1.82
Otanche English Institute	1	1.82
Institución Educativa Pompilio Martínez	1	1.82
Did not specify	7	12.73
Having lived in or visited English-speaking countries		
Yes	27	49.1
No	28	50.9
Language proficiency		
Beginner	0	0
Intermediate	9	16.4
Upper intermediate	23	41.8
Advanced	23	41.8

Source: Own elaboration

Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis

Once we confirmed the participation of 55 English teachers from various regions of Colombia via a follow-up email, we sent them an online questionnaire via Google Forms.¹ The instrument included multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions, all designed to explore participants' perceptions of specific English varieties within Kachru's three circles. Multiple-choice questions were used to capture participants' direct preferences for particular

varieties, while Likert-scale items allowed systematic assessment of agreement with statements about the perceived legitimacy and use of each variety. Open-ended questions provided participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their perspectives in their own words. The use of multiple-choice questions was informed by Chien's (2018) argument that this format constitutes a direct and effective approach for examining participants' preferences concerning particular elements, language situations, or varieties. Likewise, the inclusion of a Likert scale was justified based on the perspectives of Episcopo (2009), Liou (2010), and Rousseau (2012), who highlight this tool as an excellent means to systematically elicit participants' overt perceptions of English variations,

¹ The questionnaire employed in this study has not been included in the manuscript to maintain conciseness and avoid substantially increasing the word count. Interested readers who wish to consult the instrument are invited to contact the authors directly.

encompassing both native and nonnative forms (Chien, 2018, p. 91).

The selection of English varieties presented in the questionnaire was guided by Kachru's three concentric circles model, as described earlier. Accordingly, the instrument incorporated four varieties from the inner circle (American English, Australian English, British English, and Canadian English), five from the expanding circle (Brazilian English, Chinese English, Japanese English, Russian English, and Thai English), and three from the outer circle (Filipino English, Indian English, and Singaporean English) (Table 2).

The rationale for selecting the inner-circle varieties lies in their longstanding association with linguistic prestige and their frequent positioning as preferred models or destinations for individuals seeking to improve their English proficiency. The expanding-circle varieties were selected based on both demographic and sociocultural considerations. Specifically, China and Russia are among the most populous countries worldwide, making it highly likely to encounter substantial numbers of non-native English speakers in these contexts. In addition, Brazilian, Japanese, and Thai English were included due to the growing academic, professional, and migratory interest of Colombian citizens in these

countries in recent years. Finally, the outer-circle varieties were chosen because they represent some of the most widely used and institutionalized forms of English within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These varieties were also considered particularly relevant, as it is within these contexts that English has been extensively shaped and negotiated by non-native speakers in everyday, educational, professional, and administrative domains.

To ensure the questionnaire's validity and strengthen the study's scientific rigor, the instrument was reviewed and refined in consultation with a colleague with experience in research design. In addition, it was piloted with a small group of participants and subsequently refined to improve clarity, coherence, and reliability. This process allowed us to verify the suitability of items and response formats, as well as to ensure that the instrument accurately captured the intended perceptions. Participants provided informed consent by agreeing to complete the Google Form, thereby ensuring ethical compliance. Furthermore, demographic variables such as gender, age, and institutional affiliation were collected to contextualize the sample; however, these factors were not analyzed quantitatively, in line with the study's primarily qualitative focus, which prioritized the identification of emergent patterns and themes across participants' responses.

Table 2. English Varieties Chosen for the Study

Speech Variety	Origin	Circle	Status
American English	USA	Inner	Official
British English	UK	Inner	De facto official language
Canadian English	Canada	Inner	Official with French
Australian English	Australia	Inner	Official
Brazilian English	Brazil	Expanding	Foreign
Chinese English	China	Expanding	Foreign
Japanese English	Japan	Expanding	Foreign

Speech Variety	Origin	Circle	Status
Russian English	Russia	Expanding	Foreign
Thai English	Thailand	Expanding	Foreign. Thai is the official language
Filipino English	Philippines	Outer	Official (co-official with Filipino; functions as a second language)
Indian English	India	Outer	Associate official language (alongside Hindi; used as a second language in administration, education, and interregional communication)
Singaporean English	Singapore	Outer	De facto national language (official language among four: English, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil; dominant in education, government, and public life)

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, after the online questionnaire was implemented and shared with the 55 English teachers, a semi-structured online interview was conducted. To determine how many participants would be willing to participate in this final stage of the study, we sent them an email explaining the rationale for this third tool. Of the total 55 participants, 10, who were Ana, Mario, Edward, Peter, Eliza, Daniela, Lucía, Carlos, Sofia, and Andrés (pseudonyms self-assigned by the participants) agreed to take part in the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted online between June and August 2025 and were recorded with the participants' consent. Most sessions lasted 30–40 minutes and were subsequently stored in a dedicated Google Drive folder for analysis.

Importantly, the main purpose of implementing this instrument was to either contrast or expand upon data initially gathered through the online questionnaire. Specifically, the online semi-structured interviews aimed to elicit more qualitative insights; although some qualitative data had already been collected through the questionnaire administered to 55 English teachers, the interviews allowed participants to express their perspectives in greater depth regarding the factors under study. This approach aligns with the views of Creswell and Creswell (2018), Saldaña (2011), and Stake (2010), who

argue that while other data collection tools provide valuable opportunities to understand phenomena in depth, semi-structured interviews offer the potential to uncover aspects initially mentioned by participants that might otherwise be overlooked in subsequent stages of exploration and analysis.

For the analysis, we employed a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2011), which enabled us to systematically identify, organize, and interpret patterns across participants' responses. The analysis followed an inductive and data-driven coding process. As a first step, we conducted open coding by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and questionnaire responses to identify meaningful units of analysis, such as recurrent statements, evaluative comments, and reflections directly connected to the research questions.

These initial codes served as subcategories and were subsequently grouped into broader analytical categories that capture shared dimensions across the dataset, including participants' attitudes toward English varieties, their views on the inclusion of GE in curricula, and their perceived pedagogical implications. In the final stage, these categories were synthesized into overarching themes that not only highlighted recurring perspectives but also revealed areas of ambivalence, tension, and poten-

tial for pedagogical change. This analytic procedure was iterative and reflexive, moving back and forth between the data and the literature, thus ensuring that the findings were both grounded in the participants' voices and theoretically informed.

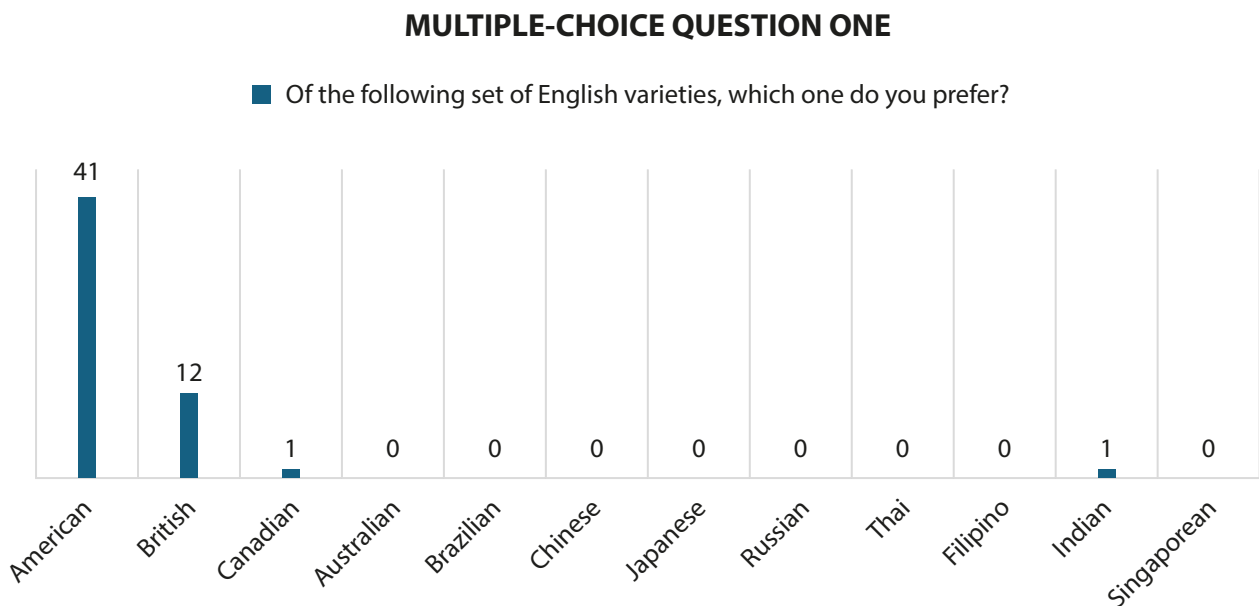
Results and Discussion

English Teachers' Attitudes toward English Varieties

This section presents an analysis of in-service EFL teachers' explicit attitudes towards the English varieties included in the study, operationalized through the questionnaire's multiple-choice section. Specifically, 55 in-service EFL teachers were asked to respond to a set of items designed to capture different attitudinal dimensions, including: (1) preference, (2) familiarity, (3) perceived appropriateness for everyday communication, and (4) perceived suitability for teaching and learning purposes.

Figure 1 shows that when asked about their preferred English variety, the majority of participants chose either American or British English (74.5% and 21.8%, respectively). Only a few selected Canadian or Indian English (1.8% each). None of them, however, chose Brazilian, Russian, Thai, Australian, or any other English variety available. Overall, these numbers seem to indicate that English varieties of the inner circle, such as American and British English, are preferred over other English varieties of the expanding and outer circles, and even over Australian English, which, ironically, is part of the inner circle. When further inquired about this particular situation, the participants provided various responses to justify the selection. Explicitly, Participant 1 affirmed that "Even though I know there are many varieties of British English, I would say that English from Great Britain is the 'original variety.' Apart from it, it sounds much more elegant and appealing." Following a rather convergent train of thought, participants held:

Figure 1. English Teachers' Responses to Their Preferred English Variety



Source: Own elaboration

I prefer this variety just out of convenience. It's the English I grew learning. Besides, as a private school teacher, provider of a service, I feel my administrators and parents expect the students to learn this variety of English, or the British one, as they're not acquainted with others. (Participant 4)

I prefer American English because it is more common and easier to learn than other varieties, so it feels more natural and familiar to me. (Participant 42)

I like the British accent because it's more musical and has a certain elegance to it. The way the words are pronounced feels smoother and more refined, almost like listening to a melody. Some words even sound like they have a slight French touch, like rendezvous, for example, which adds to its charm and sophistication. (Participant 45)

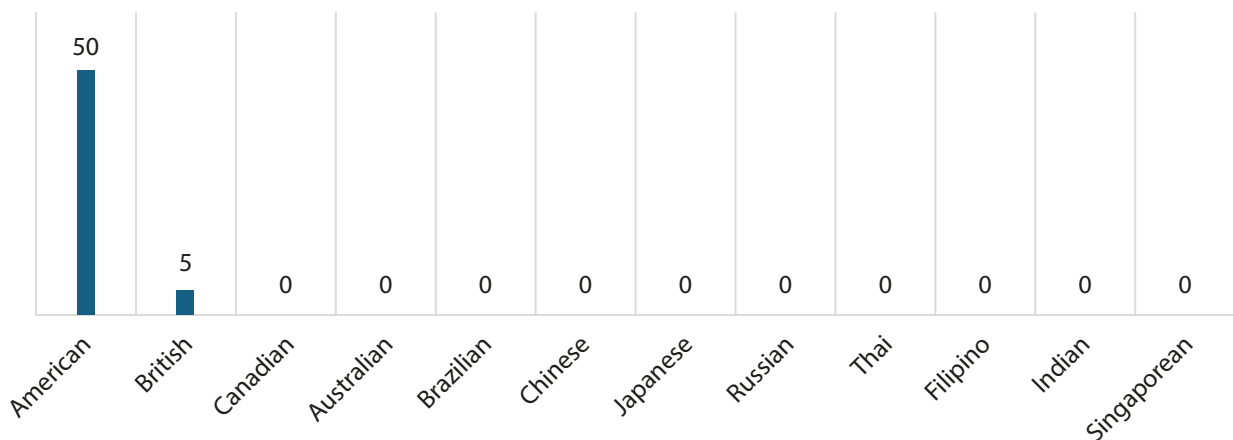
As seen above, the participants reported selecting either American or British English as their preferred varieties because of convenience, as these are the most expected varieties to be mastered among learners due to their association with positive values such as “elegance,” or simply because they are the most commonly encountered varieties in ELT contexts, not only locally in Colombia but also in other educational and professional spheres at a global level. Although several teachers do not have a particular preference for a specific English variety, inner-circle varieties such as American and British English are predominant globally. Specifically, Participant 50 argued that he had “no particular preference, but that was not an option. I felt forced to pick American English in accordance with my previous response.” On the other hand, Participant 51 commented, “I wrote American English, but, actually, I don't have a preference regarding the variety of English. I consider all the varieties important and welcome.”

When asked which English variety they were most familiar with, most participants pointed to the American and British varieties, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. English Teachers' Responses to Their Most Familiar English Variety

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION TWO

■ Of the following section of English varieties, which one you are most familiar with?



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2 shows that, once again, the vast majority of English teachers reported that American and British English are the English varieties they are most familiar with (90.9% and 9.1%, respectively). Apart from those two inner circle English varieties, the other options were not selected by them. These numbers indicate that, whereas English is used globally by diverse speech communities across the three Kachruvian circles, American and British English remain predominant, as they are the varieties EFL teachers encounter most often. When asked about this situation more profoundly, the participants maintained:

Because since I studied at school, I just know this type of English. (Participant 2)

Is the one I get the most exposition [sic] to, same as the British one. (Participant 3)

American English is one mainstream variety. During my undergrad days, I was taught English with an American English textbook series. Nowadays, in my job, I continue to use textbooks aligned with American English spelling and pronunciation conventions. (Participant 6)

Lots of materials I use and topics in class are focused on American culture; it's also the most standardized. (Participant 45)

As with the first question, participants indicated that they were primarily familiar with American or British English varieties because these varieties are the most visible in ELT materials and across the educational spectrum, including primary, secondary, and undergraduate levels. This specific set of particularities has been explained by contemporary GE scholars like Boonsuk (2025), Karakaş and Boonsuk (2024), Prabjandee and Fang (2022), and Rose and Galloway (2019), who contend that traditional ELT and, consequently, initial English teacher education have marginalized the existence of other ways of using English in the world. This, they suggest, occurs because of the exonormative condition (Matsuda,

2012), characterizing English education in the majority of underdeveloped and developing nations.

These responses resonate with what participants eventually shared in the third and fourth questionnaire questions. When asked about the English varieties they deemed most useful for daily life communication, and for the English varieties they thought were the most appropriate for general teaching and learning purposes, they generally argued, with very few exceptions, thinking that American and British English were the most appropriate for both purposes (Figures 3 and 4).

Explicitly, many of them believed that either American or British English is the most appropriate English variety for communication and for educational purposes because these are the two predominant varieties non-native English learners commonly encounter worldwide, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

It is the variety my students understand, and with which we all communicate. It doesn't require so much effort, unlike other English varieties. Similarly, it is easier to find podcasts or TV series in American English. (Participant 1)

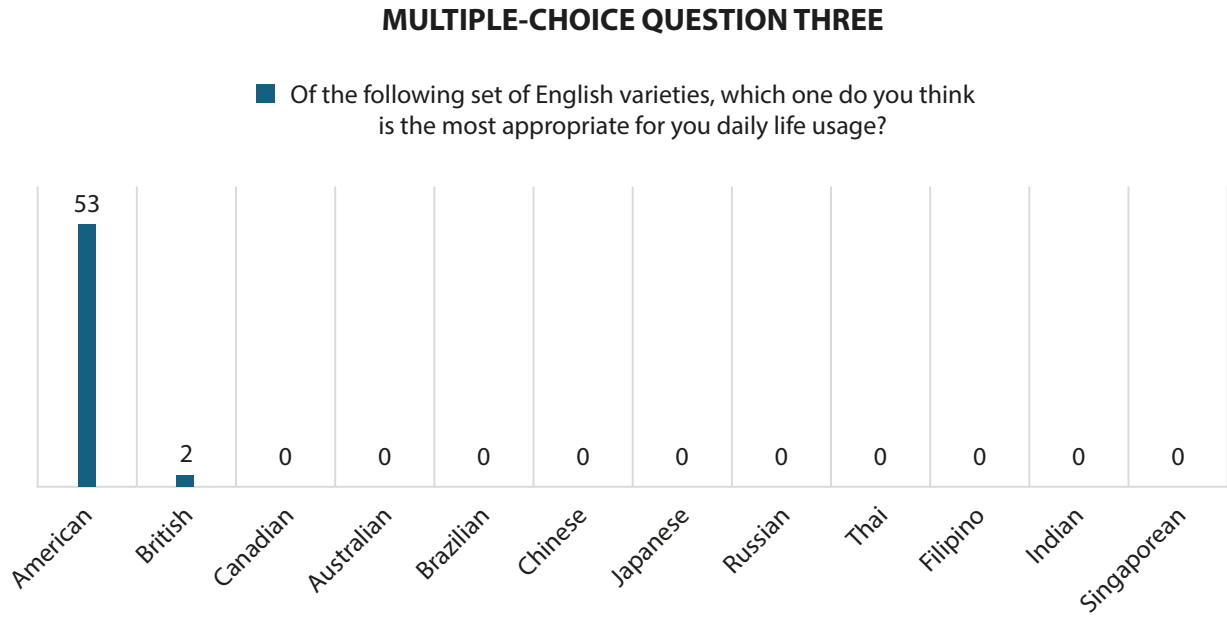
Whether we like it or not, American English is the most used around the world. (Participant 3)

I never made an effort to imitate any variety other than American English. I learned about the varieties of English late in my undergraduate program. I thought they were interesting, but never tried to inform myself better about them. (Participant 3)

Is one of the most used varieties in the world. (Participant 5)

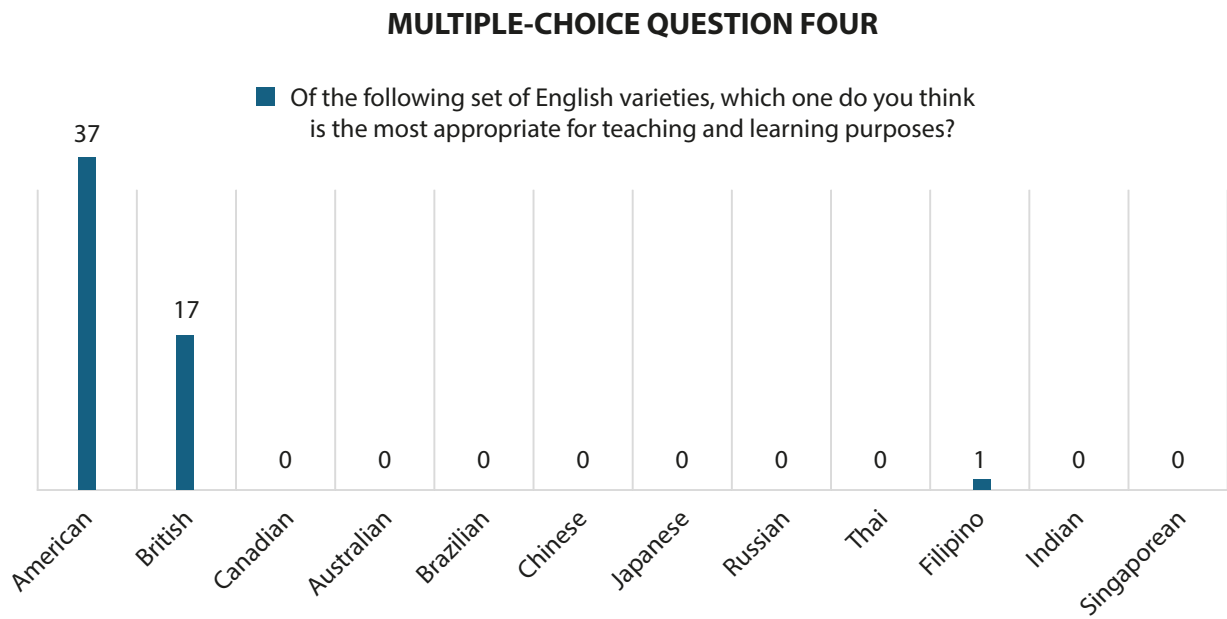
Notably, this set of data echoes what the 55 participants manifested when inquired about these particularities. American and British English, whether people like it or not, are the most powerful varieties of English because of their colonial his-

Figure 3. English Teachers' Responses to the Most Appropriate English Variety to Use in Daily Life



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 4. English Teachers' Responses to Which English Variety They Deem Most Appropriate for Teaching and Learning Purposes



Source: Own elaboration

torical pervasiveness, not only in social media but also in educational settings such as English language teacher education programs, where prospective English teachers are exposed to these varieties. Of all the English teachers partaking in the study, only Participants 50 and 51 claimed to go against the idea of promoting standard Englishes, as reflected in their words:

I don't have any preference; I understand I have my own variety, and there are some characteristics that I have adopted from other varieties. Then, why do I have to prefer one over the others? (Participant 50)

I have no particular preferences, but that was not an option. I felt forced to pick American English in accordance with my previous response. (Participant 51)

This might occur, however, mostly because these two participants are English teacher educators with advanced degrees (PhD) who have been actively involved in the research field of a critical and decolonial perspective for years. Nevertheless, when the participants have not studied these characteristics, there seems to exist a predilection for the two aforementioned English varieties. This is, therefore, in line with what ELF and GE scholars have been suggesting: more research on English varieties, as well as initiatives to raise awareness of their existence and potential applicability, are urgently needed.

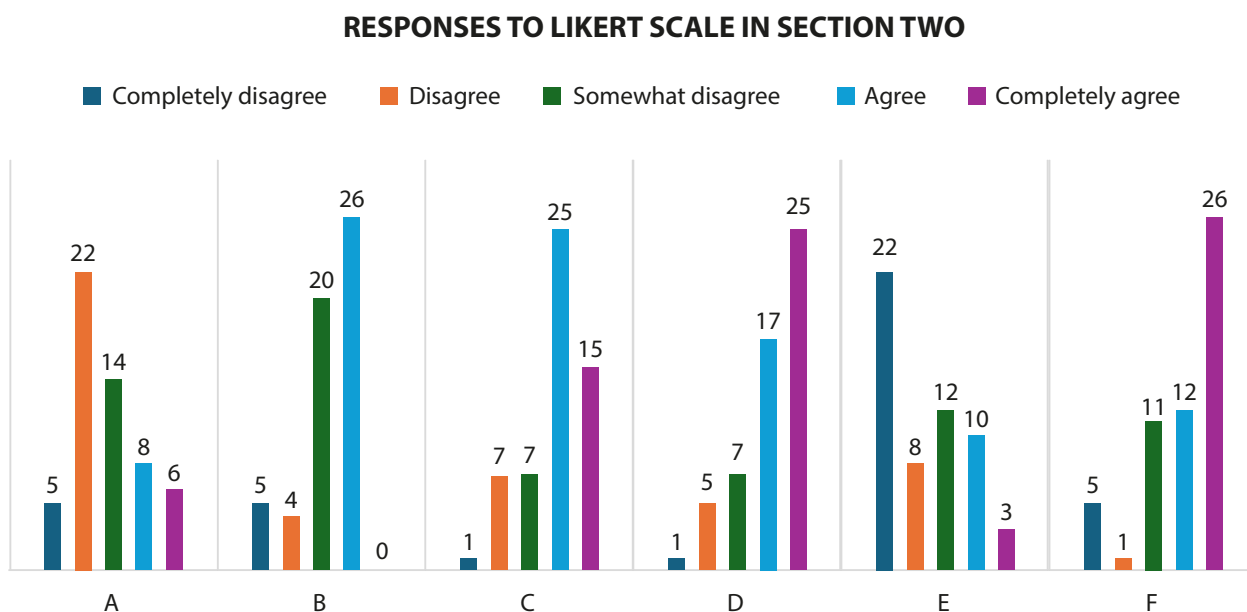
EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Key Implications of Global Englishes

This section presents a detailed account of the findings from the second part of the Likert-scale task developed by the participants. The questionnaire asked teachers to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with six statements on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The statements were proposed as follows: A) It is important for me to learn from native English speaking teachers, B) I am interested in learning/knowing

about the differences that exist among different varieties of English such as Thai English and Indian English, C) To pass exams in English (like TOEFL and IELTS) I need to understand speakers of different varieties, D) To make friends from across the world, I need to understand both native and non-native speakers, E) I feel I would be more successful if I speak without an accent, F) People's accents do not really matter to me as long as I can understand the communication that takes place.

Figure 5 presents participants' responses to each of the six statements included in the questionnaire. The data first reveal participants' views on the importance of having native English-speaking teachers for language learning. Specifically, 5 respondents (9.1%) completely disagreed, 22 (40%) disagreed, and 14 (25.5%) somewhat disagreed. In contrast, 8 participants (14.5%) agreed, and 6 (10.9%) completely agreed. These results indicate that, although participants in the first section of the instrument expressed a preference for American or British English due to the widespread pervasiveness of these varieties, in the second section, the majority adopted a critical stance toward the belief that English should be learned exclusively from native-speaking teachers. Interestingly, these findings contrast with studies such as Dhami (2022), which reported that participants maintained a strong, almost unquestioning preference for inner-circle English and native-speaking educators, even after engaging in GE-oriented activities. This ambivalence suggests that, while some openness exists among individuals to learn about GE varieties, further research in the Colombian context is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

The participants' responses also provided insights into other aspects related to GE. Based on their answers, it was evident that most participants believed that learning more about different English varieties and the speech communities that use them could have a positive impact on both professional and communicative dimensions. In this regard, a

Figure 5. Responses to Statements A to F of the Likert-Scale Section

Source: Own elaboration

majority (46 participants, 83.7%) expressed openness to learning about GE varieties, such as Thai and Indian English, and 40 participants (72.7%) indicated that becoming familiar with these varieties could even enhance their performance on large-scale tests such as the TOEFL or IELTS. These perspectives were further reflected in responses to statements D, E, and F. For instance, 42 participants (72.4%) agreed that, in order to interact effectively with contemporary native and non-native English-speaking communities, it is necessary to understand both standard and non-standard Englishes. Regarding statement E, more than half of the participants (42 participants, 72.4%) reported that speaking without an accent would not make them feel like more successful English users, while 38 participants (69.1%) acknowledged that a person's accent or variety of English does not matter as long as effective communication is achieved.

Taken together, the responses shared by the participants suggest that despite a strong attachment to native standard English varieties such as American and British English, partly as a result of a pervasive deeply ingrained legacy of colonialism in the ELT field in particular and in society in general, the respondents have an initial awareness of non-standard English varieties and other communicative and professional aspects that could benefit from potentially engaging with the GE paradigm in ELT. Specifically, based on what the participants stressed, engaging learners and prospective teachers of English with English varieties from a global perspective could serve initially to reconsider and resignify the role and status of target interlocutors and English teachers, to defy pre-established cultural norms, and to see culture as a resource and not as a hindrance, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Distinctions between Traditional ELT and GELT (Global English Language Teaching Informed Pedagogy) by Rose and Galloway (2019)

Aspect	Traditional ELT	GELT
Target interlocutor	NES	All English users
Owners	Inner circle	Global
Target culture	Static native English cultures	Fluid cultures
Norm	Standard English	Diverse, flexible, and multiple forms
Teachers	Non-native English-speaking teachers (same first language) and native English-speaking teachers	Qualified, competent teachers (same and different first languages)
Role model	NES	Expert users
Sources of materials	NNES and NES	Salient English-speaking communities and contexts
Other languages and cultures	Seen as hindrances and a source of interference	Seen as a resource like others
Needs	Inner circle	Globally defined
Assessment criterion	Accuracy according to prescriptive standards	Communicative competence
Goals of learning	Native-like proficiency	Multicompetent user
Ideology	Underpinned by an exclusive and ethnocentric view of English	Underpinned by an inclusive Global Englishes perspective
Orientation	Monolingual	Multilingual/translingual

Source: Own elaboration

Although, as participants suggested, there may be a long way to go to fully adopt a GE-informed perspective—or a GELT approach, as Galloway (2024) terms it—their responses reveal an emerging recognition of a dual stance within the field. On one hand, EFL teachers tend to select American or British English as their default varieties because these were the models imposed on them during their own learning, or because societal and institutional pressures continue to favor these varieties. On the other hand, when invited to reflect on communicative and professional situations from a GE perspective, participants

acknowledge a deliberate need to begin challenging traditional ELT norms. Notably, this dual position is echoed not only by the majority of participants in this study but also by GE scholars, who argue that while the ELT field should not entirely abandon traditional varieties, it must also recognize, value, and integrate other English varieties into teaching and learning. This is particularly important if a more glocal (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), context-sensitive, and pluricentric approach is desired (Boonsuk, 2025), one that respects and appreciates the full spectrum of GE (Baker, 2024; Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024).

Global Englishes and Pedagogical Implications for Colombian ELT

This third category presents participants' views on the possibility and pedagogical implications of teaching and learning English from a GE perspective. When asked whether future learners should be given the opportunity to study English varieties, a considerable majority (48 = 87.3%) recognized that learners should engage with instruction related to GE, while only a small minority (7 = 12.7%) disagreed. Following, we present some of the participants' words taken from both the online questionnaire and from the interview:

English teachers should expose their students to different varieties of English. Allow them to listen and learn expressions from other varieties different than American and British. There are many TV series, podcasts, or YouTube videos the teachers could use. (Participant 1)

That could serve to dismantle the idea that a variety is superior and avoiding introducing ideas that there is a native speaker who is superior that [sic] the other speakers of that language. Additionally, I would encourage them to see themselves as valid English speakers, not only users. (Participant 10)

I think it is important to create awareness about the different varieties of English by exposing students to them. We, as teachers, could apply different engaging and interactive strategies in the classroom. Some strategies might include authentic materials which easily can be [sic] found online; cultural exchange experiences, if possible; exploring language identity and different cultures. Always having in mind the students' contexts and needs. (Participant 17)

As illustrated, a considerable number of participants agree that it is important to begin integrating content and strategies to address the teaching and learning of English from a GE perspective. They

argue that this could foster more pluralistic and realistic views of the English language, helping to leave behind a traditional orthodoxy that has nurtured the idea of English as a pure or neutral language. Nevertheless, while a significant number of participants acknowledged that it is important for current Colombian ELT to integrate GE, they also recognized some pedagogical implications that could arise from such an integration.

...in schools... the guidelines do not include Global Englishes. Maybe at the university, in other subjects, but in the ones I teach (teaching practicum), that topic is not included. I do believe that it is extremely important to include these issues at the university level... future teachers cannot keep replicating the idea that the only two Englishes that exist are American and British... (Ana)

...another barrier could be the lack of teacher education... teachers do not read or research about Global Englishes, so their classroom decisions are not conscious. (Lucía)

...at university, we were only bombarded with British and American English... sounding British or American was considered a compliment. (Carlos)

I don't remember a specific Global Englishes course... but in intercultural subjects, professors sometimes included experiences from Australia or India... and the university received native speakers from different countries like the U.S., India, Trinidad and Tobago. (Peter)

The excerpts above present participants' views on the potential implications of integrating GE into ELT. As they manifest, schools and university curricula do not integrate these themes into their syllabi, thereby limiting teachers' and students' overall opportunities to critically reflect on linguistic diversity. This absence not only reinforces the dominance of American and British English models but also perpetuates restrictive ideologies that narrow students' understanding of English as a global resource.

Integrating GE into curricula could, therefore, open spaces for questioning such hegemonies, fostering intelligibility-based practices, and legitimizing diverse identities and voices in the Colombian ELT context. This is reflected in the comments further made by Edward, Andrés, Mario, Sofía, Eliza, and Daniela, who stressed that

...I would have loved to be taught English varieties... teaching these English varieties would help students... to feel less inhibited, to start speaking more, because English is a language at the service of everyone. (Edward)

We are not native speakers but English teachers... we need to motivate students to use the language. (Andrés)

I think [exposure to different English varieties] to a high [sic] extent... students should be prepared to interact with speakers from different regions, not just the U.S. or U.K. (Mario)

Focus on intelligibility and context of use... prepares students for communication in the real world, not just typical exams. (Sofía)

Challenges? Training gaps, literature material, social preferences... We are so used to the textbooks we are given. Even when audios claim to show people from around the world, they all speak perfect American or British English. (Daniela)

Assembled, these excerpts suggest that participants are aware of the absence of the GE theme in curricula at all educational levels in Colombia, thereby constituting a major obstacle to the teaching and learning of English from a GE perspective. Importantly, participants reported that the absence of curricula adapted to address the current sociolinguistic reality of English was one of the biggest implications. A deliberate lack of ELT materials from a GE stance and limited exposure of participants themselves to non-standard English varieties also pose difficulties for their inclusion in ELT. Interest-

ingly, despite these issues arising, they still claimed that moving from EFL to GELT in ELT could yield interesting results. Specifically, they thought that promoting a GE perspective in language teaching and learning could “strengthen the students’ linguistic skills, because they would not only be learning specific vocabulary but also the culture of the people who speak it” (Ana). Additionally, teaching about English varieties could serve to “expose students to the content created by people from other countries to their pronunciation or accents. In this way, we will learn to accept it more naturally” (Andrés). Ultimately, and as affirmed by Mario, “students should be prepared to interact with speakers from different regions, not just the U.S. or U.K.”

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

The first finding from the study concerns participants’ perceptions of English varieties. As explained above, when asked about the varieties they most encountered and those they considered most appropriate for teaching and learning, a significant number of participants chose either American or British English. Although fewer of them were aware of the plurality of English and claimed not to have a predilection for any variety, it was evident that most selected the varieties because of historical and sociocultural inclinations toward them. This result resonates with the findings of research studies by Almegren (2018), Chien (2018), Jindapitak and Teo (2012), and Mourchid and Brigui (2023), which similarly reported that participants’ attachment was to inner-circle English varieties. Thus, even though some participants may possess some knowledge and awareness of GE varieties, the ELT field does not seem to have laid the groundwork for their inclusion. More research and initiatives in this regard are urgently needed.

The second finding of this study concerns dimensions of the GE paradigm. While most of the participants initially acknowledged having a strong,

almost inevitable inclination for American or British English due to different traditional, historical, sociocultural, and pedagogical circumstances, they simultaneously reported believing that accents or the kind of English people speak should not matter as long as they allow communication and interaction to take place. This result is quite contradictory, bearing in mind that while traditional ELT has been increasingly criticized for not opening spaces for critical and reflective engagement with the English language, the participants seem to be partly aware of the need to understand the diversity of English from a global perspective due to firsthand experiences they have had with the language. Essentially, this highlights the need to integrate ELT approaches that go beyond traditional cognitive-linguistic stances and actively engage learners with sociocultural dynamics that more accurately reflect the reality of English in today's world.

Lastly, the third conclusion is directly connected to the second one. Although the participants reported that a lack of ELT materials, experience with non-standard English varieties, and the absence of the GE theme in institutional curricula hinder a shift toward a GELT stance, they also acknowledged that such a shift could represent an opportunity to develop skills and models that traditional ELT has not allowed. For instance, most participants recognized that engaging with GE could foster more inclusive pedagogical practices, encourage critical reflection on linguistic diversity, and strengthen the intercultural dimension, while also inviting those exposed to such knowledge to resignify what it means to be an English user. Based on the participants' insights, it seems that GE practices hold the potential not only to challenge many taken-for-granted practices that have historically shaped ELT. In addition, it seems that GE can contribute to dismantling epistemic barriers that have failed to recognize the plurality of English today.

To finish, we think it is paramount to share with other researchers the need to continue advanc-

ing GE research. Our study shed light on various factors that strongly influence participants' reasons for preferring certain English varieties. Interestingly, this was not only a matter of personal choice but also a dimension deeply and inevitably shaped by historical, social, and institutional forces that sustain particular ideologies of English. For example, while most participants were from Colombia, one was based in Lima, Peru, highlighting the potential for cross-country differences within Latin America. For this reason, we suggest that further studies should not only explore teachers' and learners' attitudes, but also critically examine whether the curricula and the broader institutional frameworks in which they are immersed actually allow for the inclusion of GE. Undertaking this action could help uncover the systemic constraints that prevent more pluralistic approaches to ELT and provide valuable insights into how educational policies and practices might be reoriented toward a more equitable and inclusive GELT perspective. Future research would benefit from expanding this analysis across Latin America to better understand the diverse sociocultural and institutional realities that shape ELT.

Ethical Implications

This research ensured informed consent from all participants and protected their privacy and confidentiality by using anonymous data.

Authors' Contributions

Jhon Eduardo Mosquera Pérez: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Supervision, and Writing (Review of draft and revision/editing); Julieth Lorena López Acevedo: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Supervision, and Writing (Review of draft and revision/editing); Jhonnatan Felipe Montoya Quiceno: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Supervision, and Writing (Review of draft and revision/editing).

Competing Interest

The authors of this work declare that they have no conflict of interest that could influence the impartiality, objectivity, or information presented in this research article.

Funding

No funding was received to carry out this research study.

AI Disclosure

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT to support language editing and improve clarity in some sections of the manuscript. All outputs were carefully reviewed, revised, and integrated by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final content of the published article.

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