



Pre-service EFL Teachers' Perceptions Regarding English Varieties and Their Relation with Language Ideologies

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Abstract

Framed within the Global Englishes paradigm, this paper examines the perceptions of Colombian pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers of English varieties across Kachru's three concentric circles. The focus is on intelligibility, teaching suitability and underlying language ideologies. Data were collected through a questionnaire, an English variety perception survey, and semi-structured interviews with participants from two public universities. The findings reveal three interrelated patterns. First, inner-circle Englishes, particularly American and British varieties, remain then dominant reference points, reflecting the persistence of standard language ideology. Second, participants' evaluations of intelligibility were more flexible, as several expanding-circle varieties, including Colombian English, were perceived as understandable and communicatively effective. Third, a clear ideological tension emerged between intelligibility and pedagogical legitimacy, with teaching authority and professionalism continuing to be closely associated with inner-circle norms. Participants' preferences were primarily shaped by sustained exposure through educational practices and media rather than by beliefs in inherent linguistic superiority. This points to the enduring influence of native-speakerism and prestige ideology in teacher education. At the same time, however, engagement with Global Englishes-informed tasks prompted moments of reflection and partial ideological reorientation. Overall, the study highlights teacher education as a site of ideological struggle and contributes regionally grounded evidence to Global Englishes debates in the Colombian English Language Teaching (ELT) context.

Keywords: English varieties, Global Englishes, language ideologies, pre-service English teachers, Standard English, teacher education.

Percepciones de los profesores en formación de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre las variedades del inglés y su relación con las ideologías lingüísticas

Resumen

Este artículo, enmarcado en el paradigma de Global Englishes, analiza las percepciones de profesores en formación de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en Colombia respecto a variedades del inglés en los tres círculos concéntricos de Kachru, con énfasis en inteligibilidad, idoneidad pedagógica e ideologías lingüísticas subyacentes. Se recopilaron datos mediante un cuestionario, una encuesta de percepción de variedades de inglés y entrevistas semiestructuradas con participantes de dos universidades públicas. Los hallazgos muestran tres patrones principales. Primero, las variedades de los círculos internos, especialmente el inglés americano y británico, continúan siendo referencias dominantes, lo que refleja la persistencia de la ideología del inglés estándar. Segundo, las evaluaciones de inteligibilidad fueron más flexibles, ya que varias variedades del círculo en expansión, incluido el inglés colombiano, se percibieron como comprensibles y efectivas comunicativamente. Tercero, surgió una tensión ideológica clara entre inteligibilidad y legitimidad pedagógica, pues la autoridad y el profesionalismo docente seguían asociados a normas de los círculos internos. Las preferencias de los participantes estuvieron principalmente moldeadas por la exposición sostenida a través de prácticas educativas y medios de comunicación, más que por creencias en superioridad lingüística, lo cual evidencia la influencia del *native-speakerism* y la ideología de prestigio. Al mismo tiempo, la participación en tareas informadas por Global Englishes promovió reflexión y reorientación ideológica parcial, hecho que muestra la formación docente como un espacio de lucha y transformación ideológica en el contexto colombiano de ELT.

Palabras clave: docentes de inglés en formación, formación docente, ideologías lingüísticas, inglés estándar, ingleses globales, variedades del inglés.

Percepções de professores em formação de inglês como língua estrangeira sobre as variedades do inglês e sua relação com as ideologias linguísticas

Resumo

Este artigo, fundamentado no paradigma dos Global Englishes, analisa as percepções de professores em formação de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) na Colômbia acerca das variedades do inglês nos três círculos concêntricos propostos por Kachru, com ênfase na inteligibilidade, adequação pedagógica e ideologias linguísticas subjacentes. A pesquisa adotou uma abordagem qualitativo-interpretativa, com coleta de dados realizada por meio de questionários, pesquisas de percepção de variedades do inglês e entrevistas semiestruturadas aplicadas a estudantes de licenciatura de duas universidades públicas colombianas. Os resultados evidenciam três tendências principais. Primeiramente, as variedades pertencentes aos círculos internos, especialmente o inglês estadunidense e o britânico, continuam sendo considerados modelos de referência, refletindo a permanência da ideologia do inglês padrão no contexto de formação docente. Em segundo lugar, observou-se maior flexibilidade nas avaliações de inteligibilidade, uma vez que diferentes variedades do círculo em expansão, incluindo o inglês colombiano, foram percebidas como compreensíveis e eficazes em termos comunicativos. Em terceiro lugar, identificou-se uma tensão ideológica entre inteligibilidade e legitimidade pedagógica, já que a autoridade e o profissionalismo docente permanecem associados às normas linguísticas dos círculos internos. As preferências dos participantes foram fortemente influenciadas pela exposição contínua a práticas educacionais e meios de comunicação, evidenciando a persistência do native-speakerism e das ideologias de prestígio linguístico. Ao mesmo tempo, atividades fundamentadas nos Global Englishes favoreceram processos de reflexão crítica e reorientação ideológica parcial no contexto colombiano de ensino de língua inglesa.

Palavras-chave: professores de inglês em formação, formação docente, ideologias linguísticas, inglês padrão, Global Englishes, variedades do inglês.

Perceptions des futurs enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère concernant les variétés de l'anglais et leur lien avec les idéologies linguistiques

Résumé

S'inscrivant dans le paradigme des Global Englishes, cet article analyse les perceptions des enseignants en formation d'anglais langue étrangère (EFL) en Colombie concernant les variétés de l'anglais dans les trois cercles concentriques de Kachru, en mettant l'accent sur l'intelligibilité, l'adéquation pédagogique et les idéologies linguistiques sous-jacentes. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire, d'une enquête sur la perception des variétés de l'anglais et d'entretiens semi-structurés avec des participants issus de deux universités publiques. Les résultats révèlent trois grandes tendances. Premièrement, les variétés des cercles internes, en particulier l'anglais américain et britannique, restent les références dominantes, reflétant ainsi la persistance de l'idéologie de l'anglais standard. Deuxièmement, les évaluations de l'intelligibilité se sont révélées plus souples, plusieurs variétés du cercle en expansion, dont l'anglais colombien, étant perçues comme compréhensibles et efficaces sur le plan de la communication. Troisièmement, une tension idéologique claire est apparue entre intelligibilité et légitimité pédagogique, car l'autorité et le professionnalisme des enseignants restaient associés aux normes des cercles internes. Les préférences des participants ont principalement été façonnées par une exposition soutenue à travers les pratiques éducatives et les médias. Plutôt que par des croyances en une supériorité linguistique, ce qui met en évidence l'influence du « native-speakerisme » et de l'idéologie du prestige. Parallèlement, la participation à des activités inspirées par les « Global Englishes » a favorisé la réflexion et une réorientation idéologique partielle, montrant ainsi que la formation des enseignants constitue un espace de lutte et de transformation idéologique dans le contexte colombien de l'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère (ELT).

Mots-clés: enseignants d'anglais en formation, formation des enseignants, idéologies linguistiques, anglais standard, Global.

Introduction

English is often portrayed as a key resource for social mobility, access to higher education and participation in globalized economies due to its status as a global language. Authors such as Nunan (2001), Graddol (2006), and Crystal (2013) have long emphasized the central role of English in areas such as science, technology, and education. While these benefits continue to be widely acknowledged, recent scholarship in English Language Teaching (ELT) has increasingly questioned the ideological conditions under which English circulates globally, and the unequal consequences of its use (Mackenzie, 2020). In particular, research grounded in Global Englishes and critical, decolonial epistemologies from the Global South (León, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2017) has challenged the persistent privileging of particular English varieties associated with Inner Circle contexts. This research has emphasized that users of different English varieties are frequently viewed as inferior, illegitimate, or less competent.

From this perspective, the use of diverse English varieties should be understood as a natural consequence of linguistic diversity and global language contact. However, such diversity is not always valued within ELT. Historically, the field has been largely shaped by Anglo-centric norms that define what counts as “good” or “correct” English, frequently equating effective language use with approximation to American or British English varieties (Kachru, 1992; Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024). This long-standing reliance on pedagogical models, methodologies, and assessment practices developed in Inner Circle contexts has contributed to the normalization of language ideologies that privilege standardized English varieties while marginalizing alternative Englishes and their users. As a result, ELT has functioned not only as a pedagogical enterprise but also as a site where ideologies of standardization, prestige, and native-speakerism are reproduced.

These dynamics are particularly visible in the Colombian ELT context, where multiple and sometimes contradictory language ideologies regarding English continue to circulate. A common belief is that native speakers of Inner Circle English varieties are inherently better English teachers than locally trained non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), regardless of the latter's academic preparation or professional experience (Viáfara, 2016). Additional ideologies include the exclusive use of English in the classroom, the early-start fallacy, and the assumption that closer alignment with Inner Circle English varieties leads to greater communicative success.

Despite international initiatives and position statements advocating for more equitable and inclusive perspectives on English use (TESOL, 2006; Richardson, 2016), these ideologies remain deeply entrenched in Colombian ELT. Their persistence has been reinforced by government-driven bilingualism policies that often promote decontextualized and idealized models of English, implicitly equating “being bilingual” with approximating American or British English varieties while overlooking local sociolinguistic realities (Correa & Usma, 2013; Guerrero, 2008).

Despite the growing body of research examining English language ideologies and native-speakerism in Colombian ELT (Viáfara, 2016; Guerrero, 2008), empirical studies exploring how pre-service teachers interpret and position themselves toward different English varieties from a Global Englishes perspective remain limited. Much of the existing literature has focused on policy critiques or on documenting the persistence of native-speakerist assumptions. Often, the ways in which future teachers themselves negotiate, reproduce, or potentially challenge these ideologies during their professional development are left unexplored. Addressing this gap, the present study examines pre-service EFL teachers' preferences regarding English varieties and the ideological meanings attached to those preferences. By examining these attitudes across two public university contexts in Colombia, the study provides empirical insight into how dominant language ideologies circulate within teacher education and how they may simultaneously be contested or reinterpreted by future educators.

Given the central role that language ideologies play in shaping ELT practices at macro, meso, and micro levels (Gómez-Gaitán et al., 2023), this study draws on data from two groups of pre-service EFL teachers enrolled in public universities located in the southwestern and central-eastern regions of Colombia. By foregrounding pre-service teachers' voices, the study aims to move beyond merely confirming the presence of native-speakerism and instead explores how these future educators simultaneously reproduce, negotiate, and at times challenge dominant English language ideologies within Colombian ELT. By doing so, the study makes a contribution to the ongoing discussions within the field of Global Englishes. It does this by highlighting the ideological tensions that shape understandings of English varieties in teacher education and by identifying implications for more pluralistic and critically informed approaches to English in the Colombian context. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant preferences of pre-service EFL teachers from two public universities in Colombia regarding English varieties?
2. In what ways do these preferences reflect, reproduce, or challenge dominant English language ideologies in the field of English language teaching and learning in Colombia?

1. Theoretical Considerations

1.1 Global Englishes

Defined as “an inclusive paradigm looking at the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural diversity and fluidity of English use and users in a globalized world” (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 4) Global Englishes is both, a paradigm and an approach that emerged to explore the multiple and multifaceted ways in which English operates in 21st century society. Partially combining principles of other prolanguage variation approaches such as English as a Lingua Franca, English as an International Language and World Englishes, translanguaging, and the multilingual turn (Rose & Galloway, 2019), Global Englishes

actively invites to reconsider and resignify the traditional Anglo centric principles upon which English education was conceived with the intention of making the field more appropriate and and meaningful for those whose sociolinguistic realities deviate from those stemming from the inner circle.

It is important to note that while Global Englishes was originally conceived as an umbrella term in an attempt to unify theory and praxis, Global Englishes brings together the most essential distinctive principles of the previously mentioned prolanguage variation approaches. In other terms, Global Englishes is connected to English as a *Lingua Franca* in the sense that it seeks to understand mutual intelligibility and adaptability in communication among users with diverse linguistic backgrounds and for whom often English is the only available vehicle of communication, to English as an International Language because it centers its attention on English functional and intercultural dimensions and on how speakers enact their individuals and collective identities when engaging in third spaces of interaction (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2012) and to World Englishes because it emphasizes the legitimacy of localized English varieties, which are shaped by the sociocultural realities of their users (Boonsuk, 2025, p. 1).

Drawing on these convergent yet distinctive characteristics, Global Englishes recognizes the current dynamic and fluid nature of English in global contexts, while also respecting and appreciating the wide range of languages and cultures involved in these interactions. Directly aligning with pro language variation approaches that recognize and highlight the need to already have a paradigm shift in English education at all levels (Prabjandee, 2019) and with similar paradigms such as multilingualism, multiculturalism, and translanguaging that are equally making an effort to celebrate the existing local and global diversity, Global Englishes challenges traditional monolingual norms that have historically affected the field. Simply put, Global Englishes is both, a paradigm and an approach that, through a direct combination of principles deriving from English as a *Lingua Franca*, English as an International Language, and World Englishes, emerged to “analyzing English’s evolving diversity and complexity in a globalized world” (Boonsuk, 2025, p. 1).

Concerning the Global Englishes field, Boonsuk (2025) stresses that Global Englishes “challenges the notion of an idealized, monolithic English rooted in native-speaker norms” (p.1). In his view, if well implemented in pedagogical settings, Global Englishes has the capacity to promote a more open and inclusive understanding of English’s dynamics shaped by diverse cultural and linguistic factors (Pennycook, 2007; Rose et al., 2021). One of the key distinctive factors of Global Englishes is that it sets the ground for dismantling the pervasive myth of linguistic superiority often associated with standard English varieties such as British (BrE) and American English (AmE). By making an attempt to raise respectful attitudes toward linguistic varieties, Global Englishes also encourages non-native English users to take pride in their ways of approaching and utilizing English. Additionally, it explores ways to reconceptualize the ELT field to raise awareness about the multiple factors affecting global ELT and shift toward a paradigm that appreciates

global communication through English. However, despite this driving intention, it seems that classroom practices, including those in Colombia, remain anchored in monolithic approaches that continue to prioritize native-like proficiency and perpetuate, voluntarily or involuntarily, a Western-centric worldview (Matsuda, 2002). This disconnect suggests an urgent immediate need for research and pedagogical frameworks that integrate Global Englishes principles more effectively into today's ELT practices and teacher preparation.

1.2 From Monocentric to Pluricentric Views of English in ELT

Prabjandee and Fang (2022), Karakaş (2023) and Boonsuk (2025) concur with the fact that Global Englishes seeks to influence all the dimensions inherent to ELT worldwide, from language policies, teaching and learning approaches, ELT materials, and language assessment procedures. Even though the Global Englishes paradigm is based on the principles of other prolanguage variation approaches, such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL) and World Englishes, Global Englishes is a paradigm that recognizes the global ownership of English by non-native communities from the expanding and outer circle nations.

This is an essential distinctive feature of Global Englishes, and of Global Englishes Language Teaching, which is the pedagogical shift it invites to go adopt. While Global Englishes makes an effort to foster a sense of ownership of the English language among learners, traditional ELT pedagogies, partly deriving from traditional English as a foreign language models, continue to perceive non-native learners as eternal learners. In other words, while the first seeks to challenge deeply ingrained views of English, often those that reduce non-native users to deficient speakers of the English language, the second has been reported, according to a considerable number of global scholars, to fail to acknowledge the real sociolinguistic reality of today's world. Consequently, some academics, particularly those based in countries where English is becoming more prevalent, believe that a Global Englishes approach to ELT is the way forward.

It becomes essential to note that Global Englishes, and Global English Language Teaching which is the pedagogical framework deriving from it do not defend the idea of using or recurring to English in any way, as it has sometimes been misinterpreted. What these two notions support is the eventual dismantling of educational systems and international language assessments that establish a linguistic hierarchy that privileges native-speaker English varieties and norms while marginalizing other linguistic realities (Rose & Galloway, 2019). In the words of Boonsuk (2025, p.3) this blind and often uninformed preference toward inner circle dynamics deriving from territories like the United States and England promotes a disconnect "between classroom practices and the realities of global English use". According to Boonsuk (2025), a pluralistic approach, as it is the case of Global Englishes, has the potential to challenge these standards and set the ground for more realistic views of English to happen. In Jenkins' (2007) and Rose and Galloway's (2019) views, Global Englishes is an approach that holds potential to

empower learners to engage confidently and effectively with diverse forms of English in global contexts (Boonsuk, 2025).

However, shifting from a monocentric to a pluricentric perspective in English Language Teaching (ELT) has multiple implications, especially in contexts like Colombia where a considerable number of professionals in the field continue to blindly rely on native speaker norms that often fail to equip learners for the realities of 21st century communication. Although Colombian English speakers are more likely to interact with other non-native speakers than native speakers in real-life contexts, many ELT educators continue to rely on native speaker norms. This contributes to negative perceptions and marginalising attitudes towards global non-native varieties of English and the communities that use them. Ultimately, this situation reinforces linguistic heterogeneity, hegemony, and language hierarchies, even among local English speakers. Some speakers can produce sounds that are more similar to those of native speakers, while others have an obvious accent when speaking the language. As a direct consequence of these circumstances, non-native English varieties or Colombian English speakers may often perceive non-native English varieties as deficient when comparing them with their counterpart, creating a barrier that impedes appreciating English super diversity in today's interconnected society.

This perception constitutes an evident gap between real world communication through English and classroom practices that do not provide learners with the skills to navigate current communication circumstances. Assuming a GELT approach to ELT may help positively change said situation. According to Boonsuk (2025), by more actively integrating the principles of GE, this approach has the capacity (2025) to better prepare learners for the sociolinguistic diversity of English today. Nonetheless, and in line with Boonsuk and Karakaş (2025) and Prabjandee (2022) invite to consider for such an implementation to happen, it requires re-formulating ELT including assessment, instructional materials, and pedagogical practices with GE. A progressive attitudinal adjustment (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) therefore may help.

2. Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods research design, primarily focusing on qualitative data, to examine pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' attitudes towards English varieties and the language ideologies underlying these attitudes. Mixed methods were deemed appropriate as they allow for the integration of quantitative trends and qualitative insights, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of complex sociolinguistic and ideological phenomena in teacher education (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, quantitative data provided an overview of participants' preferences regarding English varieties, while qualitative data offered deeper insights into how such preferences are ideologically constructed, justified, and negotiated. The integration of both strands thus strengthened the analytical depth and interpretive scope of the research.

2.1 Context and Participants

The study was conducted in two undergraduate English language teacher education programs at public universities located in Florencia (Caquetá) and Tunja (Boyacá), Colombia. These programs were selected as they constitute key institutional spaces where future English teachers construct their linguistic repertoires, pedagogical beliefs, and professional identities. Despite their geographical distance and distinct regional characteristics, both programs share a common institutional mandate: the preparation of English teachers for the Colombian educational system.

Beyond these institutional similarities, the settings were purposefully selected due to their relevance for examining how language ideologies, particularly those related to English varieties and native speakerism, are negotiated within teacher education. Although critical, reflective, and decolonial perspectives on English are increasingly present in Colombian ELT discourses, teacher education programs may continue to operate as sites where pre-service teachers reproduce, contest, or reconfigure dominant ideologies concerning language legitimacy and teacher authority. Furthermore, while previous Colombian studies have addressed language ideologies in ELT, research specifically focusing on pre-service teachers' preferences for English varieties and their ideological underpinnings remains limited, especially across geographically and socioculturally distinct regions.

A total of 24 pre-service EFL teachers participated in the study. All participants were enrolled in the aforementioned programs and represented different stages of their undergraduate education. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 25 years old (see Table 1). Participant selection followed a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling, allowing access to individuals who met the study's criteria and were willing to engage reflectively with questions concerning English varieties and language ideologies (Karakaş & Boonsuk, 2024).

From a methodological standpoint, the relatively small sample size requires careful consideration. While it limits the possibility of statistical generalization, the study does not seek to produce representative claims about all Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. Instead, it adopts an exploratory and interpretive orientation, where depth of engagement, reflexivity, and contextual richness are prioritized over breadth. In this sense, transferability is supported through thick contextual description, transparent reporting of participant characteristics, and detailed accounts of data collection and analysis procedures, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings for comparable teacher education contexts.

Moreover, the focus on language ideologies, understood as socially situated, historically embedded, and locally negotiated, renders smaller, context-sensitive samples methodologically appropriate. The aim is not to measure frequency or prevalence, but to examine how ideologies surrounding English varieties are articulated, rationalized, and pedagogically positioned by pre-service teachers within specific institutional environments.

Participants voluntarily joined the study after being informed about its aims, scope, and potential contributions to ELT and initial teacher education. To ensure anonymity, participants are identified in the findings as PET1, PET2, and so forth.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	14	58.3%
	Male	10	41.7%
Age	Below 20	3	12.5%
	21-25	18	75%
	Above 26	3	12.5%
University	Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC)	14	58.3%
	Universidad de la Amazonia (UDLA)	10	41.7%
Semester	5th	2	8.3%
	6th	1	4.2%
	7th	0	0
	8th	20	83.3%
	9th	1	4.2%

Source: Authors' elaboration

2.2 Data Collection Tools, Data Gathering, and Data Analysis

Three data collection instruments were employed to address the research objectives: an Entry Questionnaire (EQ), an English Variety Perception Survey (EVPS), and a Semi-Structured Interview (SSI). The use of multiple instruments allowed for methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

The Entry Questionnaire (EQ) was administered at the beginning of the study to collect demographic information and to elicit participants' initial perceptions regarding English varieties. Questionnaires are particularly useful for capturing participants' self-reported beliefs and attitudes toward specific constructs (Cohen et al., 2018). The EQ consisted of six sections: the first gathered demographic information (age, pseudonym, university affiliation, and semester), while Sections 2–6 focused on participants' initial views on standard and non-standard English varieties, intelligibility, and legitimacy in ELT.

The second instrument, the English Variety Perception Survey (EVPS), was designed specifically for this study because no existing instrument in the Colombian ELT literature fully addressed the research aims. The EVPS sought to expose participants to a broad range of English varieties that are typically underrepresented in Colombian ELT contexts. The survey was administered in two stages. EVPS-1 exposed participants to

English varieties from Inner Circle and Expanding Circle contexts, while EVPS-2 focused exclusively on Outer Circle varieties. Across both stages, participants listened to 15 English varieties: four from Inner Circle contexts (British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand English), seven from Expanding Circle contexts (Brazilian, Korean, Colombian, Chinese, Russian, and San Andrés Creole English), and four from Outer Circle contexts (Singaporean, Philippine, Indian, and Jamaican English).

Several measures were taken to reduce potential bias in the EVPS. Audio samples were selected based on comparable length, communicative purpose, and audio quality, and all recordings featured speakers engaged in spontaneous or semi-spontaneous speech rather than scripted performances. Speaker identities and national labels were withheld during the listening phase to minimize evaluative bias based on country recognition. While the EVPS does not claim psychometric generalizability, its content validity was ensured through alignment with prior research on English varieties and Global Englishes (Jenkins, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2018) and through peer review by two ELT researchers familiar with GE-informed research.

Finally, a Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) consisting of ten open-ended questions was conducted with selected participants. Interview questions were informed by participants' responses to the EQ and EVPS and aimed to explore, deepen, or problematize emerging patterns. The SSI allowed participants to articulate their reasoning, tensions, and reflections regarding English varieties and related ideologies, thus adding interpretive depth to the dataset.

As for the data analysis, data from the three instruments were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2011). An inductive, data-driven coding process was followed: EQ and EVPS responses were coded descriptively to capture attitudes, intelligibility, and teaching suitability, while SSI transcripts were analyzed to generate codes reflecting reasoning, ideological positions, and reflections on native-speaker norms, prestige ideology, and Global Englishes principles.

Initial codes functioned as subcategories, which were grouped into broader analytical categories representing shared dimensions across the dataset, including perceptions of English varieties, views on Global Englishes in curricula, and perceived pedagogical implications. Codes from all instruments were compared to identify convergent and divergent perspectives, enabling analytical triangulation.

Trustworthiness was ensured by conducting multiple readings, cross-checked coding, and supporting quotations. The iterative and reflexive analytic process allowed us to move from raw data to a nuanced understanding of the interplay between intelligibility, teaching suitability, and language ideologies, highlighting both tensions and emerging reconfigurations in participants' perceptions. In reporting the findings, participant quotations are labeled with the instrument from which they were drawn (EQ, EVPS, or

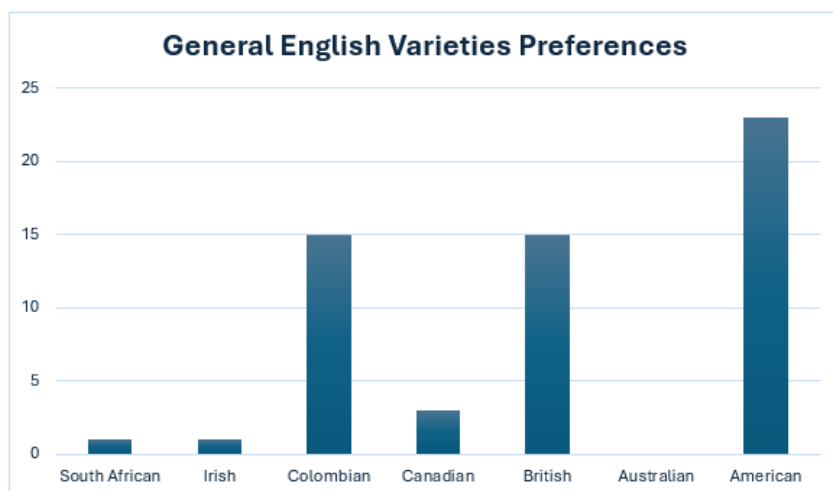
SSI), providing contextual clarity and grounding each statement in the corresponding source of evidence.

3. Findings

3.1 Inner-Circle Englishes as the Default Norm in Teacher Education

Participants' overall preferences reveal a marked orientation toward inner-circle Englishes, particularly American and British English, which continue to function as dominant reference points in Colombian pre-service English teacher education. As illustrated in Figure 1, these varieties were consistently ranked higher than expanding- and outer-circle Englishes in participants' general preferences.

Figure 1. Participants' General English Varieties Preferences



Source: Authors' elaboration

Participants frequently justified these preferences by appealing to familiarity, exposure, and perceived legitimacy. For example, the Entry Questionnaire (EQ) responses highlighted repeated exposure as a key factor:

“Those are the most common varieties” (PET16, EQ).
 “They are the most commonly used” (PET1, EQ).

Similarly, the Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) revealed comprehension as a driver of preference. PET7 explained:

“They tend to be the ones I understand the most” (PET7, SSI).

Several participants explicitly traced this familiarity to institutional trajectories in school and university contexts. PET13 explained:

“Mainly in Colombia, most of the schools teach American English. For this reason, we feel more familiar with that English” (SSI).

PET10 further reinforced this institutional dimension by highlighting curricular and media influences:

“At the university the professors teach them. I also read books by American or British authors and often watch films where the characters speak in these accents” (SSI).

As observed above, these responses suggest that participants' preferences are not simply individual linguistic choices but reflections of broader ideological formations circulating within ELT and teacher education. The association between familiarity and correctness resonates with what has been conceptualized as standard language ideology, whereby particular varieties are constructed as inherently more legitimate and appropriate than others. In many ELT contexts, such legitimacy is historically attached to American and British English, which are frequently positioned as the implicit linguistic benchmarks of correctness, neutrality, and pedagogical authority.

From a Global Englishes perspective, this pattern can also be interpreted through the lens of exonormativity (Matsuda, 2012), a condition in which language norms are derived from external reference communities rather than local linguistic realities. In many EFL contexts, including Colombia, English language education has historically relied on teaching materials, assessment practices, and curricular models rooted in American or British English. As a result, exposure to these varieties across the educational trajectory, from primary and secondary education to university programs, contributes to their naturalization as the default models of English. Global Englishes scholarship has consistently noted that such institutionalized exposure marginalizes the visibility and legitimacy of other English varieties within ELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Prabjandee & Fang, 2022; Karakaş & Boonsuk, 2024; Boonsuk, 2025).

In addition to familiarity, some participants framed inner-circle Englishes, particularly British English, as markers of authority and professional status. PET12 stated:

“British English sounds more formal and prestigious, like the real English teachers should speak” (EVPS).

This characterization illustrates the operation of prestige ideology, through which symbolic value and professional authority become attached to specific English varieties independently of their communicative relevance. Within this ideological framework, proximity to inner-circle norms becomes associated with expertise, professionalism, and pedagogical legitimacy. Closely intertwined with this dynamic is native-speakerism,

which positions native-speaker varieties as the idealized targets of language learning and teaching.

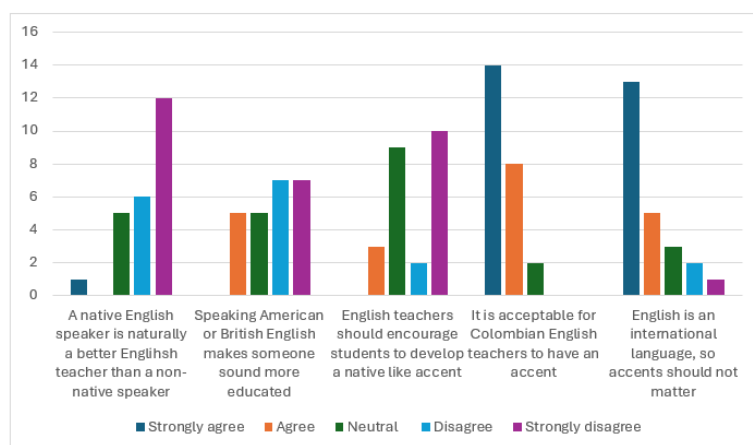
Although a small number of participants selected less traditional varieties, such as Colombian or Irish English, these choices remained marginal within the overall dataset. Even when local or non-dominant varieties were acknowledged, they were often positioned as secondary or contextually constrained. As PET3 explained:

“Colombian English is understandable, but for teaching I still think American English is better because students expect that one” (SSI).

Importantly, the responses of participants suggest that these ideologies are not just personal beliefs, but rather socially perpetuated attitudes ingrained in teacher training and wider ELT structures. The continued prominence of American and British English in textbooks, teaching materials, academic references, and classroom practices contributes to the reproduction of hierarchical language norms. In this sense, teacher education programs may inadvertently sustain hegemonic models of English even while simultaneously promoting discourses of inclusion, critical awareness, and Global Englishes perspectives.

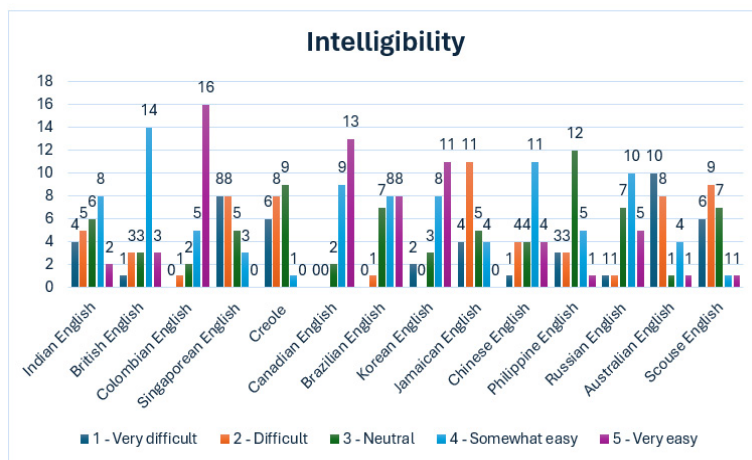
3.2 Intelligibility and the Partial Destabilization of Standard Language Ideology

While inner-circle Englishes dominated participants' general preferences, evaluations of intelligibility reveal a more complex and less hierarchical pattern. As shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, intelligibility was not perceived as an exclusive attribute of inner-circle Englishes, complicating assumptions that equate understanding with standardized native norms (EVPS).



Source: Authors' elaboration

Figure 3. Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Intelligibility Across Varieties of English



Source: authors' elaboration

Although American, British, and Australian English were generally rated as easy to understand, several expanding-circle varieties, particularly Colombian and Philippine English, were also perceived as highly intelligible (EVPS). Participants frequently associated intelligibility with familiarity, exposure, and shared communicative resources rather than with linguistic origin or nativeness. PET9 articulated this clearly:

“Colombian English is easy to understand because we share similar ways of pronouncing words and we are used to hearing it” (PET9, SSI).

Other participants foregrounded communicative effectiveness and pedagogical clarity over adherence to idealized norms. PET7 emphasized:

“What is really important is your proficiency in the language, your methodology and your ability to communicate effectively with students” (PET7, EQ).

Similarly, PET18 stated:

“I don't think an English teacher's accent really changes how well they teach. What matters most is if they speak clearly and explain things in a way that's easy to understand” (PET18, SSI).

These reflections resonate with Global Englishes principles, which conceptualize intelligibility as interactionally achieved and context-dependent rather than inherently tied to native-speaker norms. From this perspective, successful communication emerges through shared linguistic resources, accommodation strategies, and contextual familiarity rather than strict adherence to standardized varieties.

“Sometimes native speakers speak very fast and it’s actually harder to understand than non-native speakers” (PET4, SSI).

From an analytical perspective, these findings suggest a partial destabilization of standard language ideology within pre-service teacher education. Intelligibility emerges as a negotiable and experience-based criterion, shaped by lived communicative encounters rather than by abstract linguistic hierarchies. However, this destabilization remains uneven and fragile.

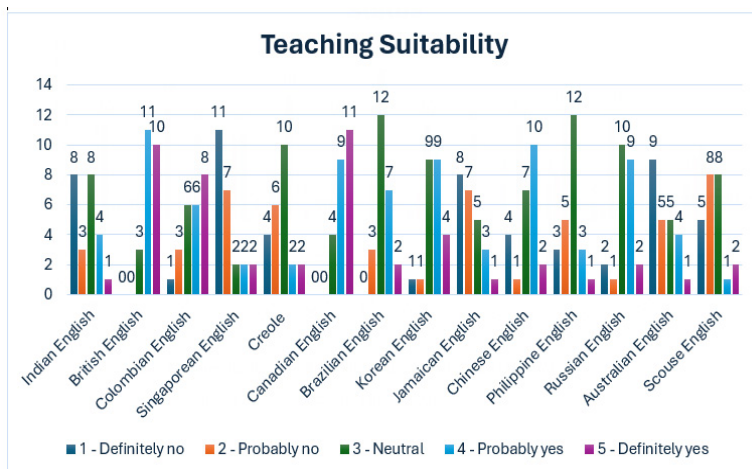
While participants increasingly recognize intelligibility in expanding-circle Englishes, this recognition does not necessarily translate into broader ideological shifts regarding legitimacy, authority, or pedagogical value. In other words, communicative effectiveness is acknowledged, but not fully legitimized within the domain of formal instruction.

These responses reveal an important ideological tension within pre-service teacher education. Although participants show a clear attachment to standardized inner-circle varieties such as American and British English, they also demonstrate an emerging awareness that intelligibility and communicative effectiveness are not exclusive properties of these varieties. Similar patterns have been reported in previous studies examining attitudes toward English varieties in different educational contexts, where participants often recognize the plurality of English while still maintaining a preference for inner-circle norms (Almegren, 2018; Chien, 2018; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012; Mourchid & Brigui, 2023). Such findings suggest that while awareness of global English variation may be gradually increasing among teachers and learners, ELT structures have not yet fully created the pedagogical conditions necessary for the systematic inclusion of diverse English varieties in teacher education.

Conversely, participants’ reflections on intelligibility also suggest a more flexible approach to English usage, one that resonates with Global Englishes and Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) perspectives. When invited to reflect on communicative effectiveness, several participants emphasized clarity, pedagogical competence, and mutual understanding rather than strict conformity to native-speaker norms. This suggests the possibility of gradually reconfiguring traditional assumptions about legitimacy in ELT. From a Global Englishes perspective, such shifts do not necessarily imply abandoning traditionally dominant varieties such as American or British English, but rather recognizing and integrating a broader spectrum of English varieties into teaching and learning practices. As scholars in this area argue, fostering this broader recognition may contribute to the development of more global, context-sensitive, and pluricentric approaches to ELT (Kumaravadelu, 2003; Baker, 2024; Boonsuk, 2025), in which linguistic diversity is approached not as a pedagogical limitation but as a communicative and cultural resource.

3.3 Teaching Suitability, Pedagogical Legitimacy, and the Reproduction of Native-Speakerism

Despite participants had relatively flexible views on intelligibility, their evaluations of teaching suitability revealed a stronger reaffirmation of hierarchical language ideologies. As illustrated in Figure 4, inner-circle Englishes, particularly American and British, were overwhelmingly perceived as the most appropriate varieties for teaching, while expanding- and outer-circle Englishes received lower or more ambivalent ratings (EVPS).



Source: authors' elaboration

Participants frequently framed teaching suitability in terms of authority, trust, and students' expectations rather than communicative effectiveness. PET11 explained:

“For teaching, I think American English is better because students trust it more and see it as the correct model” (PET11, SSI).

Similarly, PET18 explicitly linked pedagogical legitimacy to nativeness:

“If the teacher speaks like a native speaker, students feel they are learning real English” (PET18, EQ).

These statements exemplify the continued influence of native-speakerism, understood as the ideology that constructs proximity to inner-circle norms as a prerequisite for pedagogical authority and professional legitimacy. In this logic, teaching suitability becomes less about what teachers can *do* pedagogically and more about how closely their English aligns with idealized native models.

Even participants who recognized the intelligibility of expanding-circle Englishes often restricted their pedagogical role. PET6's comment illustrates this conditional acceptance:

"Colombian English could be useful at beginner levels, but later students should be exposed to native varieties" (PET6, SSI).

Such views reveal a hierarchical and deficit-oriented model of English in which local and non-dominant varieties are tolerated temporarily but not fully legitimized as instructional models. This positioning reflects the enduring operation of prestige ideology, whereby American and British English continue to symbolize correctness, authority, and educational value regardless of their contextual relevance.

At the same time, participants' responses also pointed to moments of ideological tension and emerging reconfiguration. Some participants questioned the equation between prestige and pedagogical value, emphasizing clarity and effectiveness over nativeness. PET17, for instance, noted:

"Although it is not necessary to have a native-like accent to teach English, a very thick accent can hinder communication" (PET17, SSI).

Others more explicitly reframed legitimacy around intelligibility, pedagogy, and identity. PET13 argued:

"The primary goal in teaching English should not be to eliminate local accents, but to ensure that students are able to communicate effectively in diverse contexts" (PET13, EQ).

Similarly, PET19 stated:

"We must find a middle ground, making it understandable for foreigners but without taking away what makes it our own" (PET19, SSI).

These reflections underscore that pre-service teachers' ideological orientations are not static. While prestige ideology and native-speakerism continue to shape dominant perceptions of teaching suitability, exposure to diverse English varieties and opportunities for critical reflection appear to open spaces for rethinking legitimacy in ELT. In this sense, teaching authority begins to be tentatively reimagined not as proximity to native norms but as intelligibility, pedagogical competence, and cultural ownership.

These orientations can also be interpreted in relation to broader ideological traditions within ELT that naturalize particular English varieties as legitimate pedagogical models. As scholars have argued (Holliday, 2006) Pennycook, 2012) standard language ideology often frames English as a homogeneous and universally valid system while associating particular varieties with prestige and authority not because of inherent linguistic properties but because of the social and historical power of their speakers.

Within this ideological configuration, Inner Circle varieties become idealized reference points and are frequently equated with legitimate English use and teaching competence (Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024). This tendency also resonates with critiques of linguistic imperialism, which situate the global dominance of English within longer histories of political and economic power (Phillipson, 1992).

In this context, the responses of the participants indicate that their attitudes towards English varieties are not fixed but rather reflect a gradual and often non-linear ideological recalibration. While some comments reproduce deficit-oriented perspectives that frame divergence from dominant norms as problematic (León, 2018), others reveal an increasing recognition of intelligibility as context-dependent and interactionally negotiated, echoing insights from English as a Lingua Franca scholarship (Seidlhofer, 2004; Jenkins, 2007). Similarly, participants' associations of certain non-native varieties with identity and cultural expression resonate with World Englishes perspectives that emphasize the localization and nativization of English in diverse sociolinguistic settings (Kachru, 1992; Matsuda, 2012). Consistent with previous research in teacher education, these patterns point to complex attitudinal trajectories in which emerging acceptance of linguistic diversity coexists with enduring attachments to standardized norms (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015).

From a pedagogical perspective, these tensions suggest that awareness of English variation alone does not automatically translate into immediate changes in beliefs about instructional models. Rather, as documented in Global Englishes-informed teacher education research, increased exposure to diverse English varieties may initially function as an awareness-raising process that encourages teachers to reconsider questions of ownership, legitimacy, and identity without necessarily abandoning established reference norms (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020). In this sense, the simultaneous recognition of linguistic diversity by participants, alongside their continued reliance on Inner Circle models can be interpreted not as contradiction but as a transitional stage within broader processes of ideological change in ELT.

4. Discussion

The strong orientation toward American and British English identified in the findings reflects an ideological outcome rather than a neutral linguistic preference. Participants' repeated references to familiarity, exposure, and correctness indicate that inner-circle Englishes continue to operate as default norms within pre-service teacher education. This pattern supports Global Englishes scholarship showing that sustained institutional and media exposure naturalizes certain varieties as legitimate, unmarked, and professionally desirable (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024). In this sense, exposure functions as an ideological mechanism through which what is most frequently encountered becomes what is perceived as most legitimate.

Such normalization reflects the enduring influence of native-speakerism, whereby proximity to native norms becomes implicitly associated with linguistic authority and pedagogical competence. Importantly, participants did not necessarily frame inner-circle Englishes as superior due to intrinsic linguistic qualities, but because these varieties have been consistently presented as “standard” throughout their educational trajectories. This finding resonates with critiques suggesting that English teacher education, particularly in Latin America, continues to reproduce epistemic and pedagogical dependencies on Anglo-centric models of language and professionalism (Pennycook, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

Participants' evaluations of intelligibility also revealed a more flexible and experience-based approach to English variation. Their recognition of Colombian and other expanding-circle Englishes as intelligible challenges assumptions that clarity is an exclusive property of standardized inner-circle varieties. These perceptions align with Global Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca research emphasizing intelligibility as a context-dependent and interactional construct rather than a fixed linguistic attribute (Jenkins, 2015; McKay, 2018). Participants frequently drew on lived communicative experiences, familiarity, and pedagogical clarity when evaluating intelligibility, suggesting an emerging awareness that effective communication does not necessarily depend on native-like pronunciation.

However, this ideological shift remains partial. Although participants recognized communicative effectiveness across multiple English varieties, this recognition did not always translate into broader reconfigurations of pedagogical legitimacy. Inner-circle varieties continued to be perceived as the most appropriate instructional models, revealing the persistence of deeper evaluative hierarchies. Similar tensions have been documented in Global Englishes-informed research, where openness to linguistic diversity coexists with enduring attachments to standardized norms (Dhami, 2022; Karakaş & Boonsuk, 2024).

These findings position teacher education as a site of both ideological reproduction and transformation. On the one hand, curricula, instructional materials, and assessment practices often continue to center inner-circle Englishes as default pedagogical models (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 2006; Flores & Rosa, 2015). On the other hand, participants' engagement with Global Englishes-informed tasks opened spaces for reflection and partial ideological reorientation, echoing research highlighting the awareness-raising potential of critical exposure to English variation (Jenkins, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2018).

From a Latin American perspective, this tension reflects broader structural dynamics within ELT. Teacher education programs operate within globalized systems that privilege Anglo-centric norms through textbooks, proficiency frameworks, and assessment regimes (Kachru, 1992; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Siqueira, 2018). At the same time, they increasingly face the challenge of responding to sociolinguistic realities characterized by multilingualism, unequal access to English, and expanding-circle uses of the language. The ideological ambivalence observed in this study thus reflects a broader regional

negotiation between inherited ELT traditions grounded in standard language ideology and emerging efforts to conceptualize English as a pluricentric global resource (Jenkins, 2015; Boonsuk, 2025).

Overall, the findings suggest that exposure alone is insufficient to disrupt entrenched ideological hierarchies. While contact with diverse English varieties can foster openness and challenge deficit views, meaningful ideological change requires sustained and critically oriented pedagogical engagement (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kubota, 2019). Without such engagement, intelligibility-based reasoning may remain peripheral while prestige and native-speaker norms continue to anchor professional legitimacy within teacher cognition.

4. Conclusions

This study examined Colombian pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of English varieties through the lens of Global Englishes, with particular attention to intelligibility, teaching suitability, and the language ideologies underpinning these evaluations. The findings reveal a complex and sometimes contradictory ideological landscape in which emerging openness toward linguistic diversity coexists with the persistent authority of inner-circle norms.

A first conclusion is that, although participants demonstrated increasing flexibility when evaluating intelligibility across English varieties, American and British English continued to function as dominant reference points in their overall preferences. This orientation appears to be shaped less by communicative considerations and more by sustained exposure to standard language models through formal education, assessment practices, and media discourses that systematically privilege inner-circle Englishes (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 2006). As a result, intelligibility was frequently recognized as achievable across diverse varieties, yet symbolic value and legitimacy remained unevenly distributed.

A second conclusion concerns the clear ideological divide between perceptions of intelligibility and evaluations of teaching suitability. While expanding and outer-circle Englishes were often acknowledged as understandable and contextually relevant, they were rarely granted full pedagogical legitimacy. Teaching authority, professionalism, and trustworthiness continued to be closely associated with inner-circle varieties, reflecting the enduring influence of native-speakerism and prestige ideology (Holliday, 2006; Flores & Rosa, 2015). This finding underscores how deeply embedded standard language ideologies remain within teacher cognition, even among participants who express positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity.

Notably, the study also reveals signs of ideological tension and incipient reconfiguration. Through engagement with Global Englishes-informed tasks and opportunities for reflection, several participants began to question the equation between nativeness, prestige, and pedagogical value. Their reflections increasingly foregrounded

intelligibility, contextual relevance, and cultural ownership as meaningful criteria for evaluating English use and teaching, resonating with core Global Englishes principles (Galloway & Rose, 2018). Although these shifts were partial and occasionally ambivalent, they suggest that pre-service teachers' language ideologies are dynamic rather than fixed.

Taken together, these conclusions highlight the coexistence of continuity and change in pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of English. While inner-circle norms continue to structure evaluations of legitimacy and authority, exposure to pluralistic representations of English creates spaces for ideological questioning and reorientation. By foregrounding these tensions, the study contributes to ongoing Global Englishes debates and offers empirically grounded insights from the Colombian context, reinforcing the need to understand English not as a monolithic entity, but as a pluricentric and socially embedded resource shaped by power, history, and local realities.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

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.

Ethical Implications

This research guaranteed the informed consent of all participants, protecting their privacy and confidentiality through anonymous data handling.

Data Disclosure

This article has no open data associated with the research.

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