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## **EFL teachers' journey from ELF-aware perceptions to ELF-aware teaching**

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EFL classrooms have traditionally promoted a native-speaker perspective associated with standard British and/or American English, along with these nationalistic views of culture. This viewpoint has been perpetuated by (inter)national textbook publishers, often limiting learners' exposure to other varieties and cultures where English is used to communicate across different scenarios. Although EFL teachers widely recognize the use of ELF in many domains, the difficulty remains in how to implement ELF-aware lessons in their contexts. Consequently, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses can play a key role in promoting greater awareness of ELF and how ELF awareness may be implemented to equip learners for real-life communication. This article focuses on the initial modules of the CPD course developed by the ENRICH Erasmus+ project, and explores ELF, identity and use, ownership, Standard vs. Non-standard English, intercultural communication, among other relevant concepts. Subsequently, some practical examples of ELF-aware tasks are presented. Ranging across different educational levels, these samples illustrate ELF-aware tasks where issues of linguistic and cultural diversity are promoted. Additionally, this article examines Portuguese teachers' feedback from the CPD course, with the purpose of gauging their overall understanding of ELF and ELF-awareness in ELT.

**Key words:** ELF(-awareness); EFL teachers; CPD course; ELF-aware activities

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### **1. Introduction**

In today's knowledge-based society, teachers are expected to provide learners with a diverse set of skills necessary for adapting to a rapidly changing globalized world. However, while high-quality initial teacher education is important, it alone cannot equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they need. In order to prepare teachers for their evolving roles, it is crucial to provide initial teacher education as well as establish a cohesive system of ongoing Professional Development (PD).

Teachers must constantly acquire and develop new information and competences throughout their careers. Therefore, it is essential to view professional development as a lifelong process

and provide appropriate resources to support it. Moreover, to ensure that students achieve positive results, it is essential for educational policymakers and school administrators to promote Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, thus enabling them to effectively adapt to changes in the curricula and enhance the standard of education.

According to the TALIS report (Hendriks et al., 2010, p. 19), professional development implies the collection of structured actions that teachers take to get ready for their jobs, such as initial training, induction programs, in-service training, and ongoing professional development in classroom environments. More specifically, Guskey (2000, p. 16) defines CPD as “those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might in turn improve the learning of students”. In the same way, Villegas-Reimers (2002, p. 19) suggests that the process of professional growth significantly improves students’ learning, teachers’ attitudes and behaviors, and the execution of educational changes.

The professional development of teachers’ skills and knowledge is a continuous journey that commences during their initial training phase, be it pre-service or in-service, and persists throughout their careers. In consequence, several recent studies on CPD have aimed at investigating teachers’ needs, as well as analyzing CPD policies, activities and some of the challenges posed in diverse international contexts (Abakah et al., 2022; Ozer and Popp, 2022; Srinivasacharlu, 2019; Tyagi and Misra, 2021).

### ***1.1. CPD courses for English as a Foreign Language teachers***

The English Language Teaching (ELT) community has been driven to introduce significant changes in the programs, policies, teaching methods, materials for teaching and teacher professional development, in response to the linguistic and cultural perspectives that have arisen due to globalization (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Sadeghi and Richards (2021, p. 2) reinforced the role of PD in ELT to prepare teachers for changes in the nature of language and language learning, the roles of learners and teachers, “how teaching is understood and theorised and the knowledge and skills that teachers need in order to function as effective English language teachers in today’s world”.

Moreover, the advancement of students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is greatly dependent on the professional growth of their teachers. The swift changes in the educational systems require teachers to continuously learn and improve, which can only be achieved through CPD. In other words, while important across various domains, CPD is deemed a crucial aspect for facilitating professional growth specifically in the field of English language teaching (Vadivel et al., 2021). Recent research on the professional development of English language teachers have mainly focused on: a) the impact and effectiveness of PD programs (Al Balushi, 2021; Chaves and Guapacha, 2016; Qindah, 2019); b) teachers’ views and motivations towards PD programs (Al Asmari, 2016; Başar et al., 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Sadeghi and Richards, 2021; Vadivel et al., 2021) and c) teachers’ needs (Anderson, 2018; Buendía and Macías, 2019; Rouf and Mohamed, 2017).

Considering the role of English as a lingua franca (ELF), the global importance of English language teaching cannot be denied, and as such, EFL teachers must remain up to date with the advancements in their field on an ongoing basis. The following definition of ELF provided by Mauranen (2018) suggests that:

The significance of ELF transcends the contact of any particular individual or group with English. ELF is not just a contact language where English is a domestic language or otherwise especially salient in a given community, but a non-local lingua franca, the means of communicating between people from anywhere in the world. Neither is its global weight restricted to elite usages in politics, international business or academia, but it is also employed by tourists, migrant workers, asylum seekers and just anyone in their daily lives over digital media. (p. 7)

This comprehensive view of ELF implies the urgency of a critical reflection which will enable EFL teachers to evaluate and re-evaluate their teaching methodologies and adapt them to align with contemporary teaching standards (Vadivel et al., 2021) thus avoiding stereotypical perceptions that may occur in their traditional teaching practices. More specifically, CPD courses can have a significant impact in increasing understanding of what ELF is and how it can be applied in educational settings, thereby enhancing learners' communicative skills for real-life situations.

In these circumstances, this article is centered around some of the initial modules of the ENRICH Project's CPD course, which aimed to develop EFL teachers' knowledge of various concepts such as ELF, identity and use, ownership, Standard vs. Non-standard English, mutual intelligibility, communication strategies, and intercultural communication. The article delves into the journey of the participant Portuguese EFL teachers throughout the course, from theory to practice, and provides practical examples of ELF-aware tasks they designed and implemented in their teaching contexts. These samples, which cover different educational levels, demonstrate how teachers were able to create lessons that promote linguistic and cultural diversity and better prepare learners for real-life communication outside the classroom. Finally, the chapter evaluates the teachers' feedback on their understanding of ELF and ELF awareness in ELT at the end of the CPD course.

### ***1.2. The ENRICH CPD course: general description***

Given the pressing demand to support educators in tackling linguistic diversity in European classrooms, the role of CPD in enabling educators to incorporate international communication languages in multilingual schoolrooms is critical. This is especially important for helping learners, including learners with a history of migration, to develop skills that are vital for employment and social integration in our increasingly globalized and competitive world. In consequence, the 'English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms' (ENRICH) Project (2018-1-EL01-KA201-047894) focuses on promoting teacher competences necessary to deal with and foster diversity in the current European multilingual schoolrooms (Sifakis and Kordia, 2021).

The ENRICH Project seeks to promote the concept of "ELF awareness", as defined in recent literature (Sifakis, 2019; Sifakis and Bayyurt, 2018). This concept is rooted in the understanding of English as a "multi-lingua franca" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 73), and involves incorporating insights from research on ELF into all aspects of language teaching and learning, including creating syllabuses and lesson plans, creating teaching resources, evaluating language competency, and training educators in ELF-aware pedagogy.

The ENRICH Project is a collaboration among researchers from Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and Turkey, who have expertise in teacher education, online education, and ELF. They have created an innovative online CPD course (<http://enrichproject.eu/the-cpd-course>)

that is free-of-charge and designed to enable teachers to modify their teaching practices to account for the role of ELF in today's multilingual contexts. Specifically, the ENRICH CPD course is the result of a comprehensive, cross-country investigation into the needs of teachers and learners in multilingual classrooms at various levels, and it combines tasks utilising ICT and in-person instruction using a blended learning model, competency- and mentorship-based activities that promote critical thinking and practical learning, tasks that foster networking-based cooperative professional inquiry and learning among peers, as well as connections to Induction and Initial Teacher Education that are content-specific (Sifakis and Kordia, 2021, p. 23).

The ENRICH CPD's reach extends to various audiences at different levels, both past and future. Its impact is expected to be significant for: a) English language teachers who have taken part in the CPD course thus far and those who will participate in the future; b) learners, including those from migrant backgrounds like refugees, whose teachers have completed the CPD Course; and c) English language teachers, teacher educators, decision- and policy-makers, and researchers working in the fields related to the ENRICH Project's focus (Bayyurt et al., 2021).

The ENRICH CPD initiative was completed over a 40-month period, during which a needs analysis research study was conducted to determine: "a) the professional development needs of in-service ELTs with respect to multilingualism, ELF and teaching young and adolescent learners in multilingual classrooms, including migrants, and b) the needs and wants of these learners, as regards learning and using English" (Sifakis and Kordia, 2021, p. 16). Taking into account the results of the needs analysis and a thorough review of pertinent literature, the CPD course was created, tested, and launched in the partner countries.

The course, which was provisionally available on a specially designed MOODLE platform, comprises 30 distinct online sections that can be navigated in several manners to meet the unique objectives and needs of diverse contexts. Beginning with an 'Introduction' and followed by 26 interconnected sections, these sections are categorized into 'Using English', 'Teaching English', and 'Learning English'. Each segment features a video lecture specifically prepared for the course, covering an ELF-related topic, as well as a variety of activities and other resources in different modes. Finally, participants design, teach, and evaluate lesson plans for their classrooms as part of the section 'Final Assignment'. The CPD course also includes a section with links to helpful online videos and a section dedicated to evaluating the entire course. The ENRICH Project implemented the course from February to June 2020, with 249 teachers from 18 countries participating.

## 2. The ENRICH CPD course: Insights from ELF-related modules

This section briefly identifies the main content of three modules in the 'Using English' category (ELF, Defining ELF and Key issues in using ELF) which aim at introducing relevant ELF-related concepts to the participants of the CPD course.

### 2.1. ELF

In this part of the ENRICH CPD course (Guerra, Cavalheiro and Pereira, 2021), different models of the World Englishes as well as International English concepts are presented, along with the global and lingua franca roles of English. The discussion includes Kachru's three-circle model of Englishes (1985), which explains the spread, acquirement, and fields of English use in various countries worldwide. The section explores the historical and social events that led to

the widespread use of English in international relations and organizations, academia, commerce, advertisements, store names, show business, the Internet, travel abroad, and more. Additionally, Modiano's centripetal circles model (1999a) is introduced, describing the spread of English centered on the speaker's linguistic competence instead of on historical and geographical perspectives. Modiano's (1999b) EIL model, which identifies features shared by most varieties of English, is also discussed. The section distinguishes between ELF and EFL and highlights the key characteristics of each of the notions, like the learner/user's communicative intentions, the importance of Standard English, native speaker objective, language contact, and language transfer. Finally, the section defines ELF as a new phenomenon that helps understand the current role of English and briefly introduces the implications of considering ELF in a foreign language educational context.

## 2.2. Defining ELF

In this section (Pereira, Cavalheiro and Guerra, 2021), various definitions of ELF are examined, with a particular emphasis on how the concept has evolved over time. The discussion covers important aspects of ELF research, as well as the roles of native and non-native speakers of English and who uses ELF, where and why. The first definition discussed is provided by Firth (1996), who suggests that ELF is not only a language used for contact but also a language of choice for communication. This definition requires a detailed explanation of the term 'contact language,' which is subsequently provided. The second definition, proposed by House (1999), argues that ELF is used by individuals who do not have English as their mother tongue and introduces the concept of 'linguaculture,' emphasizing the importance of considering linguistic and cultural backgrounds when communicating in ELF. Jenkins' (2013) definition describes ELF as a language of contact and highlights its widespread use in contemporary times. Finally, Mauranen's (2018) definition characterizes ELF as a 'non-local lingua franca' that can be used by anyone, anywhere, and for any purpose, including virtual communication, a more inclusive definition as it emphasizes not only face-to-face communication but also the use of ELF in online contexts.

## 2.3. Key issues in using ELF

This section (Cavalheiro, Guerra and Pereira, 2021) identifies some fundamental characteristics of ELF. The first important aspect is the concept of identity, which is constantly changing depending on an individual's social, cultural, and political context. This is closely linked to the issue of ownership, particularly regarding the English language. According to Widdowson (1994), Standard English is now an international language and no longer solely owned by England or other Inner Circle countries. Non-standard English is also a concept related to Standard English, but it is important to note that deviations from Standard English norms do not necessarily affect intelligibility. In ELF interactions, conformity to standard language norms is not necessary for intelligibility. Another important aspect of ELF is the use of communicative strategies that promote situational, social, and cultural awareness and foster collaborative behavior. To achieve successful ELF communication, participants should use their varied linguistic background knowledge to attain common ground and a mutual repertoire. ELF users are therefore seen as multicompetent because they employ their varied linguistic backgrounds to use language in novel and creative ways. Lastly, ELF is intercultural in nature since there is no distinguishable native, English-speaking culture in most ELF interactions that participants may relate or belong to, given the fluid and dynamic nature of such interactions.

### 3. Some practical examples of ELF-aware tasks

At the end of the ENRICH CPD course (June 2020), participants had a final assignment where they were required to: 1) design an ELF-aware lesson plan, 2) teach that ELF-aware lesson plan, and 3) evaluate the ELF-aware lesson based on the principles discussed in the sections of the course. As previously mentioned, the CPD course was implemented right at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, so participants had to rethink and readapt how they could implement ELF-aware lessons in their own contexts, as these were all taught virtually. Despite this situation, many interesting and thought-provoking assignments were submitted, however, in this particular case, only four practical examples of ELF-aware tasks are presented, based on the work developed by the Portuguese participants. The examples provided are therefore from EFL teachers in Portugal who had multilingual and multicultural classes, and who taught a range of levels, spanning from elementary to secondary students as well as students from higher education contexts.

Considering the development of ELF-aware lessons at an elementary level, one of the teachers had a class of 8–9-year-olds where there were students from diverse cultural backgrounds (e.g., Brazilian; Russian; Iraqi; Cape Verdean). Given the learners' age and level (A1 according to the CEFR), the aim of this lesson was to raise awareness of how English allows them to communicate worldwide and how it may be used to connect with different people and in diverse ways across various situations, helping them realize that English is used more and more as a lingua franca. To do so, learners read/watched the story "The monster on the hill", a story from Japan, available in their coursebooks. The story was used to explore how everyone is different and how good friends can come in all shapes, sizes, colors and languages, emphasizing how many of the times in intercultural/international contexts it is easier to make friends and communicate when you share a common language, which is often the case of English. This teacher also wanted to go beyond the general reading interpretation questions (e.g., Who are the characters? What are they doing?) and delve into other issues generally overlooked. One instance that was explored was the moral of the story - how appearances can be deceptive -, in this case, just because someone is big, not very good-looking or speaks another language (e.g., the monster on the hill), it does not mean they are not kind or friendly. Additionally, other types of questions were also put forth, such as metalinguistic and metacognitive ones. Regarding the former, the types of questions formulated were: Where are the characters of the story from? What language is spoken there? Which language(s) can be used to communicate if you travel to Japan? As for the latter, questions that were put forth include: Would you like to meet the monster on the hill? Why? Would you like to go to Japan? Can we be friends with people who are "different" from us? By exploring these issues with young learners, they were able to focus on other cultural realities (Japan) and how English may be used in a variety of circumstances with diverse speakers.

With regard to another EFL group in Portugal, this time of 11 to 12 year-olds with a multilingual background (e.g., Chinese, Russian, Spanish), the teacher took advantage of the class's multifariousness to explore not only students' use of English, but also their linguistic and cultural diversity, so as to contribute to a better sense of unity within the group, as many of the times there was a tendency to ignore or reject classmates who may be different. In this sense, students responded to a questionnaire on their use of English and had the opportunity to analyze their results. Some issues that were delved into included where and when they use English, what they deem is more important to consider when they speak English (e.g., accent, errors, getting the message across), examples of places where English words/expressions can



be found, or words/expression in English that they use. Based on the results obtained, a group discussion was promoted to further question them on these issues, which included, for instance: *Why is it important to learn English?; Are errors or mistakes important when you are using English? Why / Why not?; What do you think about the places where your classmates use English? Did their answers surprise you?* By doing so, they could critically reflect upon their English language use as well as encounter issues they had in common. Afterwards, for them to engage in authentic and meaningful interactions with their multilingual classmates, a Padlet assignment was given for them to work collaboratively in groups and publish posts related to, for instance, places they enjoyed visiting in their countries, dishes they liked eating/cooking, local myths or legends, places where English may be found and why, among other matters. This not only allowed them to post but also comment on (both written or orally) each other's contributions, hence fomenting ELF interactions at several levels as well as a stronger sense of community as they got to know each other better.

In another context with a group of 13 to 14 year-olds where, in addition to the Portuguese students, there were also Romanian, Spanish, Chinese, Venezuelan and Filipino students, the teacher designed a lesson centered on environmental issues from an intercultural perspective where students also came across different varieties of English as well as cross-cultural encounters. In a video discussing environmental problems and solutions, students listened to testimonies from three different contexts: Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado explored the issues in the Amazon Forest, Indian activist Arun Krishnamurthy talked about water pollution, and Australian teenager Ivy Moore highlighted the impact of bushfires. This video not only explored the issues at hand, but also exposed the students to different accents from native and non-native speakers. Overall, students reacted well to it and the discussion was fruitful. Unsurprisingly, the Indian speaker was the most difficult to understand, but they were curious about his country. They also easily related to the Australian adolescent since she lived in the countryside and had a deep connection with the land, which was very similar to their own context. It was curious how the Filipino student from the class also willingly shared some information from her home country, hence broadening the class's awareness to different environmental issues across several countries. Because of the group's previous knowledge of the environmental problems in their community, it was also easier for them to talk about them and engage in the speaking activity. A variety of metalinguistic and cultural questions were put forth, such as: a) *Which of the speakers was the most difficult to understand? Did you expect that? Why?* b) *Which was the easiest to understand? What makes you say that?* c) *Are they native speakers of English? Why do they use English here?* d) *What do they say or do that helps us identify where they come from?* e) *Were you familiar with these environmental issues? Do they happen in your own country too?* Bridging the topic with the local context, students were likewise asked to read an excerpt from a Portuguese newspaper about an environmental issue in their own town, so to identify the problem and afterwards exchange any information they may have about it as well propose possible solutions in small groups. Overall, this lesson allowed learners to encounter a wider range of Englishes than they are accustomed to, as well as reflect upon a common issue that affects our population worldwide. The opportunity for them to also share experiences from their various backgrounds as well as the local context, allowed for cross-cultural encounters while enhancing their awareness of ELF interactions.

At another level, one of the Portuguese participants taught an online course to staff at an international university in Africa where the aim was for them to develop their English oral skills for professional and personal reasons. Despite it being a small group (5-6), students

came from a multilingual background, namely of African languages, and were at a B2 level of English according to the CEFR. This group had an overall positive attitude towards using English; however, these professionals felt the need to improve in terms of accuracy and pronunciation, which essentially meant accommodating to native speaker models, something important to them and/or their professional environment. In view of this, to try and break away from these established conventions, the teacher dedicated this course to explicitly covering topics related to ELF, so as to help develop their ELF awareness. Furthermore, since students might have difficulties understanding the use and importance of applying a variety of communication strategies in their communicative interactions, the concept was introduced through a discussion, and students had the opportunity to analyze the use of such strategies in corpora and videos with authentic ELF interactions. Additionally, since some students might still want the class to focus on accuracy and have their use of English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation corrected often, in this specific lesson, if this issue were to be raised, the teacher was prepared to talk to them about the aim of communication and point out that they would see examples of effective interactions where some grammatical mistakes do not impede the successfulness of communicative exchanges.

To set the scene for the lesson undertaken, the teacher had previously carried out a survey on issues related to ELF awareness, namely accents, mother tongue, native speakerism, errors, communication strategies, among other issues, which they had the opportunity to discuss in this lesson. Although there were some responses that displayed a certain awareness (e.g., “I feel confident using English in a way that is comprehensible to people who are not native speakers of English.”, “My main ambition is to make sense in English, to communicate well enough.”), there were others where students’ confidence and idealization of English was very far from an ELF-aware perspective (e.g., “I’m embarrassed about my ‘foreign’ accent when I speak English”, “I’m embarrassed that my intonation is coloured by my mother tongue [L1]”, “Not sounding like a native speaker makes me feel incompetent”). In light of this, the teacher brought a number of authentic written and oral texts, drawing from a variety of different contexts so as to expose students to different native and non-native English accents from around the world and prompt them to not only think about understanding and intelligibility, but also to work with extracts from a corpus to observe effective ELF interactions, notice the several elements and communication strategies used as well as accommodation skills and negotiation of meaning. Given their specific context, students also analyzed African Englishes and reflected on the characteristics of these and their own East African and Tanzanian English, aiming at improving their confidence in their own way of speaking English. Although it is difficult to overcome preconceived ideas that have been carried for a long time, in the end, participants were able to critically reflect upon their own English and feel more motivated, hence contributing to an overall greater self-confidence, essential for becoming effective users of the language.

Taking into account the examples provided by some of the Portuguese participants in the ENRICH CPD course, it becomes evident how an ELF-aware approach may be applied in a variety of different ways across a wide range of educational levels, varying from primary education to staff at a university level. In essence, what all have in common was the effort to raise students’ ELF awareness, sometimes more directly, other times more indirectly, so that they may become not only more confident and effective users of the language, but also develop a greater appreciation for the linguistic and cultural diversity associated with the use of the language.



#### 4. Feedback on EFL teachers' journey from ELF-aware perceptions to ELF-aware teaching

Upon successful completion of the program, every participant was invited to reflect on the CPD course, and the knowledge gained throughout it, namely the extent to which the course may have contributed to their professional development, as well as to the development of their learners. However, for the sake of this study, only the results regarding the 23 Portuguese teachers will be considered. Participants accessed an online evaluation questionnaire (Kordia, 2021) and were asked to either rate several statements about their views on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale or to share comments that briefly supported their choices. This quantitative and qualitative data was then collected and analyzed to gauge these teachers' satisfaction levels.

To begin with, only one participant (4.3%) claimed to have ever attended another course or seminar focusing on the topics of the ENRICH course, which markedly underscores the relevance of this specific CPD course as it would then enable the remaining 21 (95.6%) teachers to acquire and develop new information and competences.

A particular section of this questionnaire set out to understand how participants would evaluate the effectiveness of the course in terms of their professional development when asked if the CPD course had lived up to their expectations (e.g., regarding content, mentors' help, etc.), 91.3% (N=21) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed. This indicator illustrates an overall satisfaction regarding the activities carried out throughout the program. Moreover, participants were in complete agreement that the course had contributed to their growth as a teacher (e.g., encouraging students to communicate more) as they all agreed/strongly agreed with this claim. Similarly, participants unanimously agreed/strongly agreed that the course allowed them to learn more about several matters (e.g., ELF, linguistic diversity, among others). The CPD course played an effective part in facilitating professional growth seeing as all participants agreed/strongly agreed that it had helped them improve their teaching skills (e.g., incorporating ELF in multilingual teaching contexts). The ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking was one of the concerns of the course, so the fact that all respondents agreed/strongly agreed the activities they developed throughout the program had helped them consider and increase their critical thinking skills (e.g., concerning EFL teaching courseware) is a reasonably anticipated result. An additional benefit participants profited from was a boost in confidence as the vast majority either agreed or strongly agreed that the ENRICH CPD course had helped them become increasingly self-confident as educators (e.g., considering learners' needs or leading to make changes in ELT) and only one teacher held a neutral position, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this view. Interestingly, and on the strength of these results, it is evident that this process of professional development had a positive influence on teachers' attitudes and skills, potentially enhancing the knowledge and learning of their learners.

As mentioned earlier, this professional development course was composed of numerous and diverse ELF-related topics in conjunction with specific activities and resources. Despite the wide selection, 22 teachers agreed/strongly agreed that the content of the activities was useful whereas only one teacher disagreed on this question. A distinctive particularity of the activities was that participants were encouraged to share their thoughts with other teachers and mentors, both national and international. The fact that they could explore this collaborative feature enabled them to make use of ELF in a real-life context as participants

ranging from several different non-English speaking countries would involve themselves in constructive interactions. These optional interactions would take place over the Moodle platform in a specially designed forum and while some participants found it engaging, others felt that sharing their reflections with peers was a challenging task. When asked if they had found the interactions with the rest of the participants of the course at the forum and/or at meetings useful (e.g., in terms of sharing views and insights), there were, understandably, perceptible differences of opinion. 47.8% (N=11) of the teachers stated it had been useful, supported by 26% (N=6) who strongly agreed. One participant (4.3%) disagreed with this idea whereas 21.7% (N=5) neither agreed nor disagreed, possibly because they did not make use of this tool.

A further section of the CPD evaluation questionnaire focused on the impact the course had had on learners' development and as a result, teachers were encouraged to give evidence on these pivotal agents in the teaching-learning process. However, given that most of the work teachers initially intended to carry out with learners in a classroom transitioned to an unfamiliar online environment, the responses collected from the questionnaire were lacking. For instance, when asked if their participation in the course had led to the progress of their students' language skills (e.g., their speaking and listening skills as ELF users), 65.2% (N=15) of these teachers agreed or strongly agreed, but 34.7% (N=8) neither agreed nor disagreed. This midpoint in satisfaction shows respondents found it difficult to provide an accurate answer possibly because they were unable to carry out the lesson plan specifically designed for this course. In a similar vein, 30.4% (N=7) participants neither agreed nor disagreed when enquired whether their involvement in the course had aided in the growth of their students' abilities to build successful communication in multilingual contexts (e.g., their intercultural awareness), even though 69.5% (N=16) stated that this outcome had in fact been successfully achieved. The assessment of this competency indeed focuses on a more practical nature of the classroom activities which explains why one-third of the teachers hold a neutral position.

By contrast, the question that followed revolves around a more tangible concept seeing it did not forcefully require social interaction: did the teachers' involvement in the programme help their students better comprehend who they are as users of English (e.g., as users of a language which they feel also 'belongs' to them)? The answers are encouraging, as 78.2% (N=18) of the participating teachers agreed/strongly agreed with this idea. Understandably, the remaining 21.7% (N=5) neither agree nor disagree with this proposal. Finally, did teachers' involvement in the course help students better grasp an understanding of themselves as learners of English (e.g., by actively engaging in the educational process)? The majority agreed/strongly agreed (69.5%, N=16) whereas an undecided 30.4% (N=7) neither agreed nor disagreed. In light of the results obtained from these close-ended questions, it is overall fair to state that teachers were confident they had accomplished what was possible in best preparing their learners for real use outside the classroom.

In addition to the quantitative data obtained from the evaluation questionnaire, Portuguese participants shared critical and comprehensive insights into their CPD experience by means of responses to open-ended questions. One such insight concerned providing a description of the impact of the course on learners, and besides the foreseeable disappointment due to COVID-19 restrictions, several observations deserve a mention. Two participants, for instance, identified immediate effects that benefited both learners and teachers:

*It diminished their anxieties as NNS as well as my own. (Participant 13)*

*My students are more aware that it is acceptable to be a non-native speaker of the language and not have the standard English accent/pronunciation. They feel more comfortable in making mistakes and recognise that intelligibility is more relevant when communicating. (Participant 22)*

This unequivocal sense of liberation is a recurring observation shared by the Portuguese CPD participants as they understand that the ELF ideology encourages the multiplicity of Englishes and downplays the importance of native-speaker standards in ELF communication (Sung, 2023). As an example, when asked to briefly describe any aspects of the course that they had found most helpful (e.g., a specific section, a specific activity, an issue they had found most intriguing, a particular exchange at the forum, etc.), teachers reiterate this awareness.

*Translanguaging was a very interesting approach, as well as the non-native speaker pronunciation being as valuable as a British one, for example. (Participant 4)*

*I don't feel the pressure on my shoulders to insist on teaching British or American pronunciation in English anymore. (Participant 7)*

The same item in the evaluation questionnaire made it possible to understand that participants' ELF-aware perceptions had materialized into their now ELF-aware teaching. The comments below acknowledge that achieving mutual intelligibility is a key component in ELF interactions, and that understanding is achieved by means of diverse strategies which were conveniently addressed in the CPD course. These acquisitions enabled teachers to gradually adapt the curricula and enhance the standard of education.

*This course has changed my view concerning the language teaching. As a result, I am much more aware of my ELF intentions. Raising and developing my students' cultural awareness of the different languages spoken in the world, using the English language in this consciousness, is definitely one of my future goals in the near future. I want my students to use strategies not used before, such as translanguaging; using their mother tongue if needed to help them understand and clarify meanings in context. I want them to take risks, using the language to communicate, in spite of making pronunciation or grammar mistakes, after all mistakes are part of the learning process. The focus is to communicate using clues to be understood or asking for clarification when they do not understand. (Participant 3)*

*This course helped the school where I am currently teaching validating what we have been defending for some years now since the international studies became part of our school: the most important in language interactions is that others understand messages, regardless the mistakes or accents. (Participant 10)*

*Also, the concern with the learners' needs and realities in 3.1.2 brought to my attention the fact that most coursebooks are outdated and are not fun, so I have since tried to adapt what's on the book to a TedTalk or a YouTube video, so that students are more willingly engaged. (Participant 12)*

*As English teachers, if we explore the reality of English in the contexts we teach and in the experiences our learners have, where they are asked to carry out 'authentic' tasks, the outcome will be more accurate and the learning more effective for students. When they are transformed from the real world to the classroom, tasks become pedagogical in nature because the use of a variety of different tasks in language teaching makes language teaching more communicative. Learners doing tasks don't just speak to practise a new structure e.g. doing a drill or practising a dialogue or asking and answering questions using 'new' language items studied; learners doing tasks (i.e. focusing on meanings) will use the English they can recall to express the things that they really want to say or write in the process of achieving the task goal is a more inclusive approach.* (Participant 15)

The development of teachers' skills and knowledge was successfully accomplished throughout the duration of the course, as respondents' feedback leads us to believe, on account of the wide-ranging topics and activities covered, which ultimately facilitated professional growth in the field of ELT.

*I found the following sections very helpful for my teaching practice: 2.2.2. Large and small cultures in TBL and 2.4 Language Assessment.* (Participant 01)

*Employing TBL, CLIL and ICT in an ELF approach were the sections I found most helpful. They show practical examples.* (Participant 02)

*As a PhD student I found the bibliographical references very useful, and the way they were used and explained in the beginning of the sections. The sections on the conceptualisation of ELF were of particular interest to me, as well as those on ELF aware teaching and Translanguaging. As a teacher, I was particularly interested in the ways ELF perspectives are integrated when teaching skills, and employing the approaches and methods such as TBL, ICT and corpora. However, the course content was all useful and felt like reviewing all my teaching knowledge and practice in light of the current and modern ELT approaches, with the focus of adding the new ELF perspectives and how to integrate ELF awareness in the teaching and learning process.* (Participant 17)

## 5. Conclusion

The world around us is changing faster than ever before as technological, environmental, and demographic shifts redefine the global order. Much of the contemporary education system is designed for a world that no longer exists and as a result schools are becoming increasingly more challenging environments for teachers. Therefore, CPD is more critical now than ever seeing that without acquiring and developing new information and competences, teachers are more likely to lag behind their peers and display shortfalls in knowledge.

EFL teachers, in particular, are faced with ever-growing multilingual and multicultural classrooms, and adequate teacher training is required so they may fully embrace this linguistic diversity. The use of ELF is fundamental in helping to effectively establish communication in such contexts, so CPD guarantees that educators stay up to date with the benchmarks of other professionals in the field. Essentially, it maintains their knowledge and competence current

so teachers can provide up to standard instruction and have a positive influence on student progress.

This study highlights a set of constructive modules included in the ENRICH CPD course, an online tool specifically designed to empower teachers and encourage them to adapt their teaching practices in light of the role of ELF in today's multilingual environments. A number of creative ELF-aware lessons are provided as an example of how teachers successfully applied their perceptions of ELF, which consequently demonstrates the importance of CPD in helping professionals acquire or renew their competencies. These lessons objectively promote learners' autonomy and allow teachers to go beyond traditional ELT standards and normative prescriptions, while simultaneously becoming more confident and effective users of the language. This evidence is validated by the teachers' feedback obtained from a course evaluation questionnaire. The main findings indicate that the ELF construct was unfamiliar to the majority and that the course strongly contributed to their professional growth by expanding their knowledge and challenging their attitudes and beliefs towards the English language. Teachers also revealed that the learnings provided by this CPD course helped to relieve teacher and student anxiety while fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural and linguistic differences.

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