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# From English as a Lingua Franca to *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae*: A Critical Framework for Ethical and Relational Language Education

## *De Inglês como Língua Franca a* Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae: *um marco crítico para uma educação linguística ética e relacional*

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**Abstract:** This article introduces *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae* (ESLH), a new theoretical and pedagogical framework that reimagines English language education through the lenses of relational ethics, emotional resonance, and decolonial care. Building on and moving beyond English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), World Englishes (WEs), and Global Englishes (GEs), ESLH foregrounds harmony not as sameness, but as co-resonance across difference. Rooted in pluriversal and postcolonial thought, ESLH emphasizes attunement, dignity, and healing in response to the postcolonial, emotional, and epistemic harms of English. Drawing on metaphors of music and restorative practice, the article proposes a praxiology of English teaching centered on relational presence, dialogical listening, and ethical co-creation. ESLH invites educators to imagine classrooms not as standardized spaces, but as soundscapes of belonging. In reframing Englishes as sites of justice, mutuality, and shared humanity, this framework contributes to a future of language education grounded in critical love and deeper understanding.

**Keywords:** Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae; relational English language education; ethical language pedagogy; harmony in language learning.

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**Resumo:** Este artigo apresenta *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae* (ESLH), um novo marco teórico e pedagógico que reimagina a educação em língua inglesa a partir das lentes da ética relacional, da ressonância emocional e do cuidado decolonial. Dialogando com e indo além de Inglês como Língua Franca (ILF), World Englishes (WEs) e Global Englishes (GEs), o ESLH realça a harmonia não como uniformidade, mas como corressonância na diferença. Ancorado em perspectivas pluriversais e pós-coloniais, o ESLH enfatiza a sintonia, a dignidade e a cura em resposta aos danos pós-coloniais, emocionais e epistêmicos associados ao inglês. A partir de metáforas da música e de práticas restaurativas, o artigo propõe uma praxiologia do ensino de inglês centrada na presença relacional, na escuta dialógica e na coconstrução ética. O ESLH convida educadoras e educadores a imaginar as salas de aula não como espaços padronizados, mas como paisagens sonoras de pertencimento. Ao ressignificar os *Englishes* como espaços de justiça, mutualidade e humanidade compartilhada, este marco contribui para um futuro da educação linguística fundamentado no amor crítico e em uma compreensão mais profunda.

**Palavras-chave:** Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae; educação linguística relacional em inglês; pedagogia linguística ética; harmonia na aprendizagem de línguas.

## 1 Introduction

The role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has significantly changed how languages are used in educational, professional, and other social contexts worldwide. As a medium of communication between speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, English has become the most commonly used language in international communication, often – but not always – ascending geographical, social, and cultural barriers (Becker, 2023). Historically, the prominence of English has been tied to colonial practices and thinking, and, arguably, the language has maintained its global influence through political, economic, and cultural hegemony (Phillipson, 1992).

While ELF has been praised as a powerful tool for cross-cultural communication, it also raises important questions about power, identity, and linguistic justice (Pennycook, 2017). Despite its widespread use, ELF has been criticized substantially. In an era of increasing globalization, scholars have pointed out the persistent linguistic inequalities and unbalanced

power dynamics that continue to shape ELF practices, often reflecting the same historical colonial structures that brought about its global dominance (Fiedler, 2022; Piller; Cho, 2013; Ricento, 2015). Creating an inclusive linguistic space in ELF settings remains a challenge, especially since American and British English varieties are often still considered the norm and given priority (Becker, 2023). Even as ELF has helped de-hierarchize the idea of a 'standard' English, it has also inadvertently reproduced new forms of inequality, where speakers from the Global South or from other historically marginalized communities appear to face (more) difficulties in having their Englishes recognized and respected (Park; Wee, 2012).

In response to these and similar issues (as explained more below), this paper proposes a new conceptual framework – *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae* (ESLH) – to reconceptualize English language education not only through functional or pluralistic lenses, but through ethical, affective, and relational commitments to harmony and justice. ESLH builds upon the foundational ideas of ELF but seeks to expand the focus to encompass a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable approach to English language education. While ELF emphasizes the functional use of English in communication, ESLH highlights the importance of harmonious interactions that value cultural and linguistic diversity in a polarized and conflict-laden global society. Instead of centering on the technical aspects of language skills and communicative behavior, ESLH calls for the recognition of metalinguistic features, intercultural respect, empathy, and understanding as essential components of linguistically inclusive and socially just English language education and practice in the modern world.

More specifically, as the world faces an increasingly hyper-/inter-connected but fragmented, polarized future, ESLH offers an alternative vision of English language education – one that moves away from narrow, standardized definitions of proficiency and, instead, embraces the richness of diverse linguistic and cultural resources that are part of everyday communication. The implications of this shift are far-reaching, impacting not only the way English is taught but also how we think about communication, identity, and belonging (Pentón Herrera; Becker; Uysal, 2025). The increasing political, social, and environmental challenges of the 21st century highlight the importance of promoting cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding through education. By focusing on harmonious ways of being and interacting with each other, ESLH encourages learners to engage in a form of education that prepares them to navigate and contribute to a world defined by its complexity and diversity. Given the changing dynamics of global communication, the increasing role of English in educational systems worldwide, and the growing awareness of linguistic inequality, this topic is more relevant than ever (Salomone, 2022).

This article argues that language education needs to adapt to reflect the realities of a multilingual world while also addressing the social justice concerns that are intertwined with using English. At a time when issues of linguistic imperialism, cultural homogenization, and postcolonial power dynamics remain unresolved (Zeng; Ponce; Li, 2023), ESLH offers a pathway forward that seeks to make language education more equitable, ethical, and globally responsible. This study thus explores the potential of ESLH as a framework for reimagining English language education. ESLH builds upon the foundations laid by ELF but extends these ideas by incorporating post- and decolonial theory and pluriversal educational approaches. More specifically, while ELF has often focused on the pragmatic use of English in real-world settings, ESLH emphasizes the ethical dimensions of language use, advocating for practices that challenge linguistic imperialism and promote linguistic

justice. ESLH further encourages the development of educational practices that value cultural and linguistic diversity in the form of language assemblages, using Englishes as a bridge to foster collaborative, harmonious exchange (Becker; Salajan, 2026; Pennycook, 2024). The following research question guides this conceptual inquiry: *How can Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae (ESLH) reimagine English language education through decolonial, pluriversal, and relational approaches to linguistic diversity and communication?*

This article draws on multiple theoretical perspectives from postcolonial studies, linguistic justice, and pluriversal education to outline the potential of ESLH as a transformative model in English language education. By shifting the focus from linguistic standardization to harmonious and equitable interactions, ESLH offers a vision for English language education that aligns with the values of social justice, global solidarity, and intercultural understanding. Through a conceptual analysis of current ELF paradigms, postcolonial critiques, and pluriversal educational approaches, this study highlights the potential for ESLH to challenge dominant ideologies in language education and promote a more just and harmonious world through language and understanding.

# 2 From ELF to ESLH

## 2.1 English as a Lingua Franca: Theoretical Foundations

The concept of ELF has evolved significantly over the past few decades, challenging traditional models of English as a language of 'native' speakers and shifting the focus to the diverse, dynamic uses of English in global communication (Galloway, 2017b). This section explores the theoretical foundations of ELF, highlighting its development as a concept, its implications for language education, and its limitations in addressing issues of power, inequality, and linguistic diversity in global contexts.

### 2.1.1 Defining English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The term English as a Lingua Franca describes the way English is used as a common medium for communication among speakers of various languages, especially in global contexts where English is not the first or local language. Seidlhofer (2011, p. 7, emphasis in original) defines ELF as "*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*." The emphasis in ELF is on effective communication in real-life situations, not classroom settings or speakers' adherence to standardized English norms. Unlike traditional language teaching models, which have typically idealized the 'native speaker' as the target objective of language learning, ELF prioritizes pragmatic communication over linguistic accuracy. Seidlhofer (2011) further argues that ELF speakers often use English for international business, academic exchanges, and diplomatic communication, not as a static entity but as a fluid, adaptive tool for cross-cultural communication. Importantly, ELF is always spontaneously produced, and as Meierkord (2004) put it, it may as such never be a codified or standardized English variety.

## 2.1.2 ELF in Practice: Fluidity and Flexibility in Communication

One of the most important features of ELF is its linguistic flexibility. In ELF contexts, communication is not prescribed by rigid norms of grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary. Instead, (ideally) the linguistic resources of all participants are considered valid, and communication strategies are adjusted to suit the specific needs and goals of the interaction (Matsumoto, 2011). ELF speakers often engage in translanguaging, where they fluidly switch between languages, dialects, or varieties of English to ensure mutual understanding (García; Wei, 2014). This approach reflects a broader conceptualization of language as dynamic, wherein speakers navigate their linguistic repertoires to make meaning, rather than striving to conform to a prescribed linguistic standard (Becker, 2021). Canagarajah (2005) suggests that ELF can serve as a space for linguistic innovation and spontaneity, where speakers adapt English to align with their communicative and cultural needs. More specifically, ELF speakers might use simplified English grammatical features or words from their first languages. While this flexibility is considered a strength of ELF, it also raises important questions about the power dynamics that shape which linguistic forms are recognized as legitimate (Park; Wee, 2015). For instance, 'non-native' speakers often face implicit biases in institutional settings that continue to privilege certain accents or varieties of English over others, leading to discrimination and silencing (Holliday, 2015).

## 2.1.3 ELF and the Challenge to 'Native-Speaker' Norms

A major theoretical challenge posed by ELF is its rejection of traditional 'native-speaker' norms as the sole measure of linguistic competence. Historically, English language education has revolved around the idea that 'native' speakers of 'Inner Circle' (Kachru, 1985) varieties[1] represent the ideal standard of the language (Selvi, 2014). This perspective is – to this day – deeply embedded in the structure of language teaching programs, textbooks, and assessment systems, which often evaluate learners based on their proficiency in 'standard' English (Delpit, 2006). ELF, however, offers a direct challenge to this view. By focusing on linguistic diversity and the pragmatics of communication, ELF emphasizes that there is no single, 'correct' form of English to which all speakers must adhere. Rather, ELF materializes through linguistic approximation, which users employ to successfully interact with others and their environment (Mauranen, 2017). As Jenkins (2007) has argued, ELF should be understood as a global language with a variety of forms and uses, shaped by the specific cultural and communicative contexts in which it is used as well as the users' attitudes and identities. This challenges not only traditional teaching practices but also broader assumptions about the superiority of 'native-speaker' varieties of English (Kubota, 2009). Despite its inclusive intentions, however, ELF still reflects power dynamics that often favor 'native-speaker' English in global settings. That is, 'non-native' speakers of English are still judged by their proximity to 'native-speaker' norms (Seidlhofer, 2011). Phillipson (1992) contends that these attitudes toward 'non-native' English varieties continue to reflect deeper issues of linguistic imperialism, where 'native'

[1] These are English varieties used as first/local language in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, and USA as compared to 'Outer Circle' varieties, which refer to postcolonial contexts such as Ghana or India, and 'Expanding Circle' varieties used as an additional/'foreign' language, such as in Germany or Japan.

English speakers, primarily from the Global North, continue to have control over the definition of what constitutes 'correct' English. Thus, while ELF challenges the hegemony of 'native-speaker' norms, it also reveals the persistence of linguistic inequality in global contexts. In fact, this is even true for communication between 'native' speakers of English, since power and dominance are also expressed through metalinguistic features and merely decoded in linguistic interactions (Becker, 2023).

### 2.1.4 The Role of English as a Lingua Franca in Education

The rise of ELF has significantly reshaped thinking about how English is taught and learned in educational settings (Dewey, 2012). Traditional models of English language teaching have historically incorporated a certain codified, universal grammar and a standardized variety of English, emphasizing the acquisition of an 'authentic' accent, vocabulary, and grammar aligned with 'native-speaker' norms (Holliday, 2005; McKay, 2002).

However, the concept of ELF redefines 'proficiency,' shifting the focus from strict linguistic accuracy to effective and mutually intelligible communication across diverse linguistic backgrounds. As Seidlhofer (2011) argues, teaching practices drawing on the concept of ELF prioritize intelligibility and effective communication over 'native'-like accuracy. This reconceptualization has led to important pedagogical shifts. In ELF-aware classrooms, greater emphasis is placed on the development of communication strategies, intercultural competence, and the ability to negotiate meaning in multilingual settings. Reflecting these changes, language learning is increasingly approached as multimodal, multisensory, multilateral, and multidimensional (Canagarajah, 2007).

More specifically, one prominent impact on pedagogy concerns pronunciation teaching. Jenkins (2007) proposes a 'Lingua Franca Core,' advocating that pronunciation instruction should focus on features crucial for international intelligibility rather than conforming to 'native-speaker' accents. This shift allows learners to maintain and develop their own linguistic identities while engaging in effective communication with speakers of other languages. Furthermore, ELF-oriented materials and curricula encourage students to engage with English as a flexible and adaptive resource, showcasing linguistic diversity rather than teaching toward a fixed native standard (Galloway, 2017a).

Recently, teacher education has begun to adapt to these changes. Galloway and Rose (2015) highlight the need for training that prepares teachers to challenge 'native-speaker' ideologies and to recognize the legitimacy and appropriateness of different Englishes in global contexts. Dewey (2012) similarly advocates for a 'post-normative approach' in teacher development, suggesting the need for reflective practices that help teachers acknowledge the dynamic and context-dependent nature of English use individually and globally. These perspectives reflect an understanding that teaching English today involves providing learners with the skills necessary to navigate dynamic, intercultural communicative situations.

While English language teaching is at the forefront of these transformations, language assessment practices have also adapted to diverse Englishes. McNamara (2012), for instance, critiques traditional language testing frameworks for prioritizing 'native-speaker' norms and argues for more inclusive models that evaluate pragmatic and intercultural competencies that are at the core of ELF communication. He advocates for a shift in assessment practices toward mutual intelligibility and functional effectiveness rather than strict adherence to standardized norms.

Yet, despite these advances, significant challenges remain. As noted by Grin (2018), ELF does not necessarily align with the intentions and objectives of many learners, who often continue to favor 'native-speaker' models of high proficiency. Problematically, this preference reflects the continued prestige and symbolic capital attached to standard varieties such as British or American English (Becker, 2023; Clark; Paran, 2007; Mahboob; Golden, 2013; Moussu; Llurda, 2008). Consequently, while ELF represents a practical communicative model, more must be done to promote its integration into education and critically engage with pernicious ideologies (e.g., monolingual bias, 'native-speakerism,' English-only policies, etc.) around linguistic legitimacy. Finally, the role of ELF in education is multifaceted: it reshapes pedagogical practices and objectives, influences assessment approaches, and challenges entrenched language ideologies, requiring careful negotiation within increasingly diverse educational contexts.

## 2.1.5 ELF in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts

The use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is deeply embedded in today's multilingual and multicultural landscapes, where communication frequently occurs across diverse linguistic and cultural boundaries. In those interactions, speakers often draw on multiple linguistic resources, thereby challenging fixed notions of language boundaries and entities (Makoni; Pennycook, 2007). In today's interconnected, globalized societies where ELF is omnipresent, multilingualism is not an exception but the norm. This leads to a shift in how languages are conceptualized and understood: not as autonomous entities (e.g., 'English' vs. 'Spanish') but as flexible, fluid, overlapping resources that speakers access dynamically depending on their interlocutor, topic, and setting, or when migrating internally/cognitively among their different linguistic resources (Becker; Magno, 2022). This individually unique, repertoire-based understanding of language reflects a more ecological and socially grounded approach to communication in globalized settings (Blommaert, 2010; Busch, 2017).

Moreover, as ELF users bring with them a wide range of cultural backgrounds, communication becomes a process not just of exchanging information, but of negotiating identities, values, and perspectives. These culturally diverse exchanges demand high levels of adaptability and intercultural awareness, which are often more crucial to communicative success than language accuracy (Baker, 2015). This is particularly relevant since ELF communication often takes place in contexts shaped by global mobility, migration, and digital connectivity. In international workplaces, academic networks, and online platforms, English serves as a flexible medium that adapts to changing interlocutors and communicative objectives (Oliveira, 2024).

Critically, these environments highlight the asymmetries and power relations inherent in ELF (and its use), such as varying levels of access to English and the persistence of 'native-speaker' ideologies. Put differently, while ELF can offer opportunities for more democratic and inclusive communication, it also reflects broader socio-political dynamics, including linguistic hierarchies and the politics of standardization (Becker, 2023). Understanding ELF in multilingual and multicultural contexts thus requires an analytical lens that captures its situated, emergent, and interactive nature. It is not simply about using English differently or more equally but about recognizing how different speakers actively recontextualize and adapt the language to serve their specific communicative and social needs. ELF therefore

inherently challenges an essentialist conceptualization of language and highlights the complex nature of global communication in a multilingual world.

### 2.1.6 ELF's Implications for Language Education

In conclusion, the theoretical foundations of ELF highlight the dynamic and inclusive nature of global communication in English. ELF challenges traditional models of language teaching, which have long focused on 'native'-speaker norms, and offers an alternative vision of English as a flexible, adaptive tool for communication in multilingual contexts. While ELF promotes linguistic diversity and communicative effectiveness, it also unravels the linguistic inequalities that continue to persist in global contexts, especially regarding 'native'-speaker standards. The implications of ELF for language education are profound, suggesting the need for innovative pedagogical frameworks that prioritize multilingualism, linguistic creativity, and cultural understanding as essential components of language education in the 21st century. Yet, while ELF reorients language education toward pragmatic flexibility, it does not fully address the affective and ethical dimensions of English use. This is a gap ESLH, as introduced in this article, seeks to fill.

## 2.2 Postcolonial Critiques of English in Global Contexts

The global spread of English has long been entangled with the colonial history and political and cultural dominance of the English-speaking world, particularly the British Empire. As English became a central tool for governance, trade, and cultural exchange during colonial expansion, its role in shaping global power dynamics has persisted even after the formal end of colonialism (Phillipson, 1992). Postcolonial critiques of English examine the lingering effects of colonialism on language, identity, and power structures, focusing on the ways in which English continues to function as an instrument of cultural imperialism in postcolonial societies (Ashcroft; Griffiths; Tiffin, 2002; Hickey, 2020). ESLH builds on this postcolonial legacy while advancing language education through emotional healing and ethical co-resonance, helping learners address personal and historical wounds and engage empathetically and responsibly with others.

### 2.2.1 English and Linguistic Imperialism

A key aspect of postcolonial critiques is the concept of *linguistic imperialism*, a term first coined by Robert Phillipson (1992) to describe the ways in which the global spread of English leads to the hegemonization and marginalization of non-English languages and their speakers. English, once officially the language of colonial control, has maintained its privileged status as the dominant international language, perpetuating colonial hierarchies through its widespread use in academic, economic, and political spheres. Phillipson (2008) and other scholars argue that the promotion of English, often under the guise of linguistic neutrality or international communication, serves to reinforce global inequalities, positioning English as a tool for cultural hegemony or neo-imperialism (Guo; Beckett, 2008; Pennycook, 2017). In many postcolonial societies, English has become the language of social prestige, economic opportunity, and political power. Local languages, in contrast, are often devalued

or stigmatized, viewed as inferior or inadequate for formal discourse. This phenomenon manifests in many educational systems around the world where English proficiency is prioritized over local languages (Pennycook, 2017). The dominance of English, then, creates a linguistic hierarchy where native English speakers hold disproportionate power, and non-native speakers are often judged according to their proximity to an idealized native-speaker norm (Becker, 2023).

### 2.2.2 Postcolonial Language Hierarchies and Identity

The postcolonial critique of English also explores the intersection of language and identity. The imposition of English in colonial contexts often resulted in the marginalization of indigenous languages and the reconstruction of local identities in relation to English. In many cases, colonized peoples were compelled to learn and speak English to gain access to formal education, participate in colonial economic systems, and engage with global power structures (Higgins, 2009; Pennycook, 1998). This imposition of English, and the marginalization of native languages, led to a profound loss of cultural identity for many communities, as language is intimately tied to cultural heritage and community belonging (Thiong'o, 1986). In postcolonial contexts, English continues to have a complicated relationship with identity. Scholars like Pennycook (2007) and Holliday (2015) argue that while English serves as a tool for global communication, it often remains entrenched in colonial legacies and reinforces the dominance of the West. Many speakers of English in postcolonial contexts find themselves in a dilemma, caught between their local identities and the pressures to assimilate to global English norms (Bhatt, 2010). As Canagarajah (2005) points out, this situation often leads to hybridity in language use, where individuals negotiate multiple identities and linguistic practices depending on the context. However, the privileging of English in education and media still creates significant power imbalances, where those who can speak English fluently are often positioned as more legitimate or credible, regardless of their other cultural or linguistic backgrounds (Skutnabb-Kangas; Phillipson, 2010).

### 2.2.3 English in Educational and Professional Contexts

In many postcolonial settings, using English in formal education and professional settings remains a marker of prestige, authority, and competence. English-medium instruction (EMI) programs, particularly in higher education, have expanded globally, with universities and schools in the Global South adopting English as the primary language of instruction (Dearden, 2014; Phillipson, 1992). While these policies may be seen as tools for economic development or global integration, they often come at the expense of local languages and cultural diversity. Students from marginalized linguistic backgrounds may struggle to perform well in English-dominated curricula, leading to academic failure or alienation (Pennycook, 2017). The dominance of English in professional contexts further exacerbates these inequalities. (Standard) English proficiency is often a (perceived) prerequisite for well-paying jobs or participating in international discourse, thus perpetuating the global linguistic hierarchy (Tupas, 2015). Rubdy, in Tupas's 2015 seminal book on 'unequal Englishes,' argues that

> The supremacy of standard English and the dominant discourse of native speaker authority, which places non-native speakers in a position of deficit competence, are at the root of unequal Englishes, and have much to do with historical, economic, political, and ideological processes associated with colonization and globalization… Given that English has been the language of a small but powerful elite since British imperialism and colonization, with class, gender, ethnicity, and access to education operating as gatekeeping devices, the challenge for many Outer Circle communities is to democratize the acquisition and use of English (Rubdy, 2015, p. 43).

However, as Rubdy (2015) further argues, the colonial legacy incorporated in the English language continues to exert (ideological) power and reproduces the unequal dynamic in favor of Inner Circle standards. Phillipson (1992) argues that this pattern reflects the neocolonial structures of the global economy, where Western cultural and economic practices continue to predominate. This situation results in the perpetuation of social inequality, as those who are proficient in English gain access to better opportunities, while those who are not are excluded. Canagarajah (2013) advocates for a critical examination of these practices, arguing that language education should acknowledge the complexities of multilingualism and empower students to use a range of linguistic resources. Rather than positioning English as the ultimate marker of academic and professional success, education systems should adopt a more inclusive approach that recognizes the value of local languages and linguistic diversity in their own right (Becker, 2023).

### 2.2.4 Reimagining the Role of English in Postcolonial Contexts

Postcolonial critiques of English do not necessarily advocate for the complete rejection of the language. Instead, they call for a reimagining of the role of English in postcolonial contexts, one that moves away from its historical function as an instrument of dominance and assimilation and instead embraces its potential as a tool of empowerment for diverse linguistic communities. In this context, linguistic justice becomes a key theme. The goal is to create a more equitable linguistic landscape, where all varieties of English are valued, and the diversity of global Englishes is recognized (Tupas; Rubdy, 2015; Tupas; Renandya, 2020). Translanguaging and multilingual education practices are central to this vision, as they allow speakers to navigate between different languages and dialects without being judged against a standardized English norm (García; Wei, 2014). By reimagining English as a living, flexible, and adaptable language assemblage (Pennycook, 2024), educators and policymakers may be able to dismantle the colonial legacy of English and make space for the rich linguistic diversity. This humanizing reorientation echoes the principles of Peace Linguistics, articulated by Matos (2006), who advocates for all languages, especially those with global reach, such as English, to be used as instruments of human dignity, empathy, and communicative peace. Rather than treating English as a neutral medium, his work calls for ethical responsibility in language use, a call that ESLH takes further by emphasizing relational harmony and emotional repair.

## 2.3 Pluriversal Approaches in Language Education

The paradigm of *pluriversality* has emerged as a significant epistemological and pedagogical response to the limitations of universalist frameworks that dominate both global knowledge systems and language education. Rooted in decolonial thought, pluriversality foregrounds the coexistence of multiple worldviews, languages, and epistemologies, resisting the homogenizing tendencies of Western modernity (Mignolo, 2011). As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue, a pluriversal world is not merely a world of diversity but a world in which multiple modes of being and knowing are positioned in dialogue rather than in hierarchical relation. This shift is especially significant in language education, where English is not only dominant but also typically taught and evaluated by 'native'-speaker standards, which both reflects and reinforces epistemic and linguistic imperialism.

Within English language teaching, pluriversal approaches question the ideological foundations of the field as a whole. Standardized varieties of English, particularly British and American, are often considered as the only legitimate forms, while other Englishes, for instance those varieties spoken in the Outer or Expanding Circle, are treated as deviations, 'sub-standard,' or worse (Kachru, 1992). This view aligns with a broader politics of language that constructs the speakers of these Englishes as linguistically deficient or in need of correction. Against this background, pluriversal approaches in English language education emphasize the need to validate the linguistic practices of all users of English not merely as tolerable variations but as legitimate and creative manifestations of language in context (Ortega, 2025).

Scholars such as Canagarajah (2013) and Pennycook (2017) have been at the forefront of conceptualizing language as a dynamic, situated, and plural practice. Canagarajah's notion of 'translingual practice,' for example, rejects fixed language boundaries and instead emphasizes how multilingual speakers draw on diverse linguistic resources to make meaning and construct their identities. This approach is not simply a pedagogical technique but a political stance: it affirms the agency of language users and challenges the norms that have historically marginalized them. For his proposed paradigm shift, Canagarajah (2013, p. 6) makes two assertions: "Firstly, communication transcends individual languages. Secondly, communication transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances." Thus, languages are best understood not as isolated systems but as dynamic, interrelated resources that people draw on flexibly and integratively in context-specific, multimodal communication. Traditional distinctions between labeled, separate languages often overlook how meaning emerges through the negotiation of diverse semiotic resources embedded in social and physical environments.

Pennycook (2017) advances a pluriversal understanding of language by foregrounding the relational, contingent, and situated nature of linguistic practices. He conceptualizes language as a *local practice*, always emergent from specific social, spatial, and material contexts, and rejects universalist assumptions about language as a bounded, standardized system. His notion of 'language as assemblage' (Pennycook, 2024) emphasizes how meaning arises through the interplay of human and non-human actors, bodies, artifacts, and environments. Becker and Salajan (2026) have built on this conceptualization and included non-human, digital, AI-powered actors and environment. They argue that AI-powered multilingual assemblages shape and will increasingly shape language practices, power

relations, and global knowledge production in academic and professional spaces. These assemblages, while intended to promote inclusion and diversity, can often be seen to reinforce the dominance of English and linguistic hierarchies. In order to do away with bias built into these assemblages, ethical guidelines and data from non-Western countries and speakers are needed to de-hierarchize language practices and redemocratize Englishes. This perspective aligns with pluriversal thinking by valuing diverse epistemologies and ontologies that resist the dominance of Eurocentric linguistic norms. Rather than privileging abstract, decontextualized views of language, Pennycook and other critical thinkers invite educators and researchers to address the multiplicity of ways in which language is lived, embodied, and co-constructed across cultures and spaces. In doing so, they contribute to a decolonial shift in language education that legitimizes alternative knowledges and modes of communication rooted in lived experience.

Pluriversal approaches also resonate with Freirean pedagogies of liberation, which foreground the dialogic and transformative potential of education. Freire (1970) emphasizes that education should be a practice of freedom, in which learners are not passive recipients of knowledge but active co-constructors of meaning. This can be applied to the context of English language education. Viewing different Englishes as a liberating force, learners can also learn to critically reflect on their linguistic identities and the sociopolitical forces that shape their access to specific languages. Language learning becomes not merely a technical skill (as often suggested in the ELF setting) but a site of ideological negotiation and empowerment (De Costa, 2016). In parallel, Oxford's (2013) work on peace-oriented language education underscores that language classrooms can cultivate inner peace, intercultural empathy, and global responsibility. Rather than centering solely on linguistic accuracy, she advocates for pedagogies that nurture emotional and spiritual well-being, anticipating ESLH's call for resonance, care, and ethical co-presence in English language education.

In practical terms, embracing pluriversality in the (English) language classroom involves a number of interrelated shifts. First, it requires teachers to move away from monolingual ideologies and to create spaces where students' full linguistic repertoires are recognized and valued. This includes not only allowing but encouraging the use of home languages and local varieties of English in the (translanguaging) classroom. Second, curriculum design must become more inclusive of global and local knowledges, including texts and media produced in diverse Englishes and from diverse cultural perspectives. Such inclusion not only validates students' identities but also challenges the implicit hierarchies of language and knowledge that persist in traditional curricula (García; Johnson; Seltzer, 2017).

Central to all of these pedagogical shifts toward pluriversality and decoloniality is the repositioning of teachers as facilitators of dialogue and intercultural negotiation. This shift is linked to epistemic disobedience/delinking (Mignolo, 2011), that is, the willingness to question 'Western,' dominant norms and to align themselves with alternative, local, indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and living. Importantly, according to Mignolo (2011), by delinking themselves from colonial frameworks of understanding, individuals adopt a pluriversal mindset and engage in pluriversal dialogues, replacing the former. Put differently, it is not merely about adding voices and highlighting plurality, but changing the entire conversation, enunciation, and content of disciplines to advance different ways of reasoning, sensing, and interpreting the world (or multiple worlds).

Ultimately, pluriversal approaches in language education do more than diversify the content and voices of the classroom; they challenge its epistemic foundations (jules *et al*., in press). Pluriversal approaches call for a fundamental rethinking of what it means to teach, learn, and use English in a world that is inherently and increasingly plural. It is in this context that the concept of *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae (ESLH)* emerges; not only as a pedagogical model, but as a pluriversal epistemology of language, care, humility, and co-responsibility.

## 3 Introducing *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae*

In today's fractured, polarized, and vulnerable world, language plays a profound role in shaping the way we live with and among others. Therefore, language education must move beyond mere functionality toward a more relational and affective understanding of Englishes as organic assemblages of emotion, ideology, resistance, and connection. While the concepts of English as a Lingua Franca, World Englishes, and Global Englishes have importantly emphasized diversity and legitimacy of 'non-standard' English varieties, their focus has remained on intelligibility and communication. Further, this study argues that they have insufficiently engaged with the emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of language. They often stop short of addressing the deeper harm and healing needed in postcolonial, conflict-laden, and linguistically marginalized contexts. In this light, *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae* (ESLH) arises as a theoretical and pedagogical framework rooted in the belief that different varieties of English, or *Englishes*, when taught and learned as a site of harmony and togetherness, can move us toward more ethical, loving, and inclusive ways of being with one another.

ESLH is both a critique and an opportunity. It responds to longstanding approaches that have foregrounded the plurality of English in global contexts by shifting attention beyond questions of form and intelligibility. Instead, ESLH emphasizes care, justice, and human dignity, advancing a vision of Englishes not only as multiple, but as relationally harmonious, grounded in belonging, voice, and meaning. Drawing on the metaphor of harmony, ESLH rejects linguistic homogeneity or standardization and celebrates a dynamic interplay of linguistic variation and cultural diversity. The term *linguae harmonicae*, Latin for 'harmonious languages,' is proposed in analogy to the established concept of English as a *lingua franca*. It emphasizes coexistence over standardization, resonance over hierarchy, and harmony over conflict. Like a polyphonic composition, Englishes are seen not as 'correct' or 'incorrect,' 'standard' or 'non-standard,' but as differently tuned instruments, each carrying the histories, emotions, and knowledges of their speakers. In this vision, harmony is not only equilibrium; it is the ethical transformation of dissonance into creative coexistence through common ways of speaking and understanding.

ESLH thus reframes English language education as a space of healing, empathy, and care. It draws on McNair and Pentón Herrera's (2022, p. 195) proposed understanding of "teaching (English) is a moral act" and the concept of peacemaking circles. According to McNair and Pentón Herrera (2022, p. 196), peacemaking circles visualize "a specific process of conflict transformation to create classrooms of peace, […] to provide a safe space where students can heal, learn positive steps to grow emotionally, build relationships, and practice mindfulness." ESLH, thus, also intersects with pedagogies that place well-being, emotional intelligence, and collective healing at the heart of teaching and learning (Pentón Herrera; Becker, 2025; Trinh; Martínez-Alba; Pentón Herrera, 2022).

ESLH approaches Englishes as more than systems of language and communication. It envisions them as lived, affective, and ethical practices shaped by and shaping how we relate to others and to ourselves in an increasingly conflict-laden and polarized global society. Language, in this view, is not merely about making ourselves understood; it expresses our need to be seen and heard, to connect and be connected, and to heal and repair what has been fractured by histories of inequality and exclusion. ESLH zooms in on the emotional and ethical dimensions of English use and teaching, recognizing that how we speak and how we are heard can help affirm dignity, foster belonging, and open space for more just and humane ways of being together.

Pedagogically, ESLH invites a radical, bottom-up reimagining of the classroom. The following questions can guide a reconceptualization of an ESLH-based classroom for a more peaceful and harmonious future of English education:

- What would it mean to teach English not as a fixed code, but as a relational practice of attunement and care?
- How can classrooms become soundscapes of belonging, where students' voices – no matter how accented or non-normative – are not only heard but valued as contributors to a larger collective harmony?
- How do we create curricula that cultivate not just communicative competence, but resonance, emotional intelligence, and ethical interdependence?

In practice, ESLH would shift teaching goals from linguistic accuracy and communication to meaningful (inter)connectedness, from knowledge transmission to co-creation of peace, harmony, and spiritual knowledge. A lesson rooted in ESLH might prioritize collaborative storytelling, translanguaging poetry, restorative dialogue circles, or sonic explorations of local and global Englishes – creating experiences where students reflect on how language shapes their worldviews, relationships, and linguistic repertoires. It would also center critical reflection on whose Englishes are heard, whose are erased, and how we can move toward more equitable resonances. This is not only pedagogical work, but emotional and political investment toward co-liberation, understanding, and peace. ESLH is, therefore, a decolonial project. Building on the work of Mignolo (2011), Meighan (2021), Saraceni and Jacob (2021), among others, ESLH addresses the colonial residue in dominant ELT practices as English continues to be implicated in histories of (physical and spiritual) dispossession, epistemicide, and assimilation (Santos, 2015). Recognizing Quijano's (2000) colonial matrix of power,[2] ESLH seeks not to obfuscate or ignore this complexity but to address it and turn toward possibilities of healing. In framing Englishes as linguae harmonicae, this reconceptualization serves to humanize English language education and use among all users and to reclaim language (education/use) as a space of mutuality, emotional restoration, and shared humanity (Pentón Herrera; Martinez-Alba, 2021). In this sense, ESLH is not only a pedagogical model but a political act of critical love and listening.

Further, ESLH embodies a distinct epistemology and praxiology that diverges from dominant models of English language education. Epistemologically, it rests on an ethics of resonance, which, as defined here, is a way of knowing rooted in embodied, relational, and

[2] Control of economy, authority, gender/sexuality, and subjectivity/knowledge (Quijano, 2000).

affective attunement to others instead of standardization and hierarchization. Language, in this view, is not a neutral tool for transferring information but a co-created space of meaning, shaped by histories, silences, emotions, and power. This epistemic stance calls for a corresponding praxiology of dialogical presence and understanding, where teaching becomes an act of ethical listening, co-learning, and transformative care. Rather than delivering fixed content or assessing proximity to standardized norms, educators working within an ESLH framework co-construct knowledge through shared storytelling, translanguaging, restorative dialogue, and other participatory practices. In this way, ESLH offers both a model for what English education can become and a framework for how to know, relate, and act differently in a plural, vulnerable, and interconnected world.

Finally, ESLH is thus a move toward a better future. A future where English language classrooms are not sites of anxiety or silence, but spaces where students feel seen, heard, and valued. A future where harmony is not enforced sameness, but an ongoing commitment to a continuum of similarities and differences (Dervin, 2016). A future where English language education helps learners become committed global citizens, able to communicate ethically and to respond to uncertainty and injustice with compassion. By embracing ESLH, we choose stories, struggles and dreams and the languages of healing, resistance, and hope.

## 4 Conclusion: Toward *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae*

This article has traced the historical, theoretical, and pedagogical trajectories that have shaped the field of English language education from the pragmatics of English as a Lingua Franca, to the plurality emphasized by World Englishes and Global Englishes, to the critical calls for decolonization and pluriversality. While each of these frameworks has expanded the ways we understand and engage with English(es), they remain limited in their capacity to address the deeper emotional, ethical, and relational demands of teaching and learning in a world marked by inequity, displacement, and polarization.

In response, this article has introduced the framework of *Englishes as Linguae Harmonicae* (ESLH). Moving beyond pedagogical intention, ESLH proposes a shift in epistemology and praxiology: from language as a tool of communication to language as a space of attunement, co-resonance, and ethical presence. It reframes Englishes as not merely a continuum of different varieties, but as relational forms of being and becoming, shaped by histories of colonialism and offering potential futures of solidarity and healing.

ESLH thus presents a critical alternative to the dominant focus on intelligibility, fluency, and correctness by emphasizing resonance, care, and profound understanding as core values in English education. Drawing on decolonial and pluriversal traditions, as well as restorative and affective pedagogies, ESLH seeks classrooms where language learners are not positioned as deficient or belonging to certain circles of varieties (e.g., Inner, Outer, or Expanding (Kachru, 1985)), but as co-constructors of knowledge and harmony. This means fostering spaces where difference is not tolerated or analyzed, but celebrated; where emotional intelligence and ethical reflection are as central as grammatical competence; and where English is reclaimed as a language of humanization instead of its status as commodity.

The implications of ESLH are far-reaching. For educators, it means reimagining curricula, assessment, and classroom practices that center emotional and ethical dimensions

of language use. For researchers, it opens new avenues for exploring resonance, voice, silence, and healing in multilingual classrooms. For policymakers, it challenges the adherence to standardization and demands greater responsiveness to linguistic and cultural complexity.

Ultimately, ESLH is a call to reorient English language education toward a more linguistically just future, rooted in relationality, care, and co-agency. This future will embrace classrooms that can become soundscapes of belonging, in which English is taught as a language of dignity, peace, and collective possibility. In choosing ESLH, we commit to listening more deeply, teaching more ethically, and understanding each other more profoundly. We choose to respond to the polarization of the world with harmony and care, united by the use of Englishes.

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## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

This study is theoretical in nature and did not involve the generation or analysis of empirical data.

## Use of AI

The author declares that no AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing or preparation of this manuscript.

## Reviews

As part of the commitment made by the *Brazilian Journal of Applied Linguistics* to Open Science, the journal publishes the reviews issued regarding its published works, when authorized by all parties involved.

### Review 1

The paper is strong, thought provoking, and has been clearly written and organized. The paper offers a synthesis of the existing literature, presents the argument clearly, and proposes an innovative framework for ethical and relational language education, making it a valuable contribution to the field. As a humble suggestion, I would consider shortening Section Two.

Condensing this section by trying to summarize overlapping ideas would help foreground the core argument and conceptual contribution (ESLH) and allow more space to develop how ESLH reimagines English language education.

Thank you for such a valuable contribution to the field!

**Reviewed on:** 10/10/2025.
**Recommendation:** Accept Submission.