Can Portuguese language policy keep up? Balancing the sociolinguistic tightrope and the rise of ELF

Rúben Constantino Correia (iD)

Adjunct teacher / Researcher, University of the Algarve / CETAPS, Portugal, rubentmc@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the intricate interplay between (Portuguese) language policy and the sociolinguistic challenges encountered in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to learners who are future English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) users. The core focus of ELF use being on intelligibility within situational speaking communities amongst speakers with different lingua-cultural backgrounds. This study reveals that the existing policies are partially outdated and hence ineffective for the learner-users present-day needs, as they are governed by the original Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Not enough attention is paid to making the dynamic and changing nature of English used globally more visible, highlighting an apparent divide between the sociolinguistic reality of multilingual English and policies still oriented towards English as a native language. Therefore, practical advice is also given to both prospective and in-service teachers on how they may embed ELF pedagogies within their practices despite the limitations of top-down policy changes. In this way, teachers will be empowered as agents of change in their local contexts to bring about more inclusive and effective ways of teaching the language. Considering the qualitative content analysis nature of the study, the focus of data collection was entirely document-based.

Introduction

Language policy may significantly shape sociolinguistic adaptation in English Language Teaching (ELT) syllabi by influencing various aspects of language use, language learning goals, instruction, and cultural dynamics (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Policies that prioritize inclusivity, cultural relevance, and linguistic diversity contribute to a more effective and responsive language learning environment. Understanding the dynamic relationship between language policy and sociolinguistic adaptation is crucial for designing ELT programs that meet the diverse linguistic needs of learners in a globalized world (Rose et al., 2020; Shiroza, 2020).

In this setting, the spread of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) globally, with intelligibility at its core, has led to the emergence of new varieties and challenges for language teaching pedagogy and policy, highlighting an apparent divide between the sociolinguistic

reality of multilingual English and policies still oriented towards English as a native language. Indeed, the numbers provided by Ethnologue for 2023 (Eberhard et al., 2023) estimate that only 4% of English language interactions in the world today contain solely L1 speakers. Thus, outside native-speakerism ideology (Holliday, 2005; 2006), it does not seem very useful to think of traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogies as the path to equipping learners with the necessary tools to communicate proficiently with other L2 users from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Instead, an ELF-oriented pedagogy anchored in the role of English as a global language, the importance of communication strategies (Sato et al., 2019) and intelligible pronunciation (Correia, 2024a) should progressively supplement the former, as they are by no means mutually exclusive.

In view of the rationale presented, this paper delves into the intricate interplay between Portuguese language policy and the sociolinguistic challenges inherent in the teaching of EFL to learners who are future ELF users in situational speaking communities. In response to these challenges, the paper discusses adaptive strategies in EFL teaching, considering the importance of incorporating sociolinguistic awareness into curriculum design and classroom practices. Drawing on the question in the title of the paper, one central research question governed the study:

1. Does Portuguese language policy reflect the global spread of English and, thus, facilitate sociolinguistic adaptation for teachers in the context of ELF?

By addressing the nexus between Portuguese language policy, sociolinguistic dynamics, and teaching strategies in an ELF framework, this paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of the evolving landscape of foreign language (FL) education in a world whose English is a real and authentic lingua franca. Taking into account the qualitative content analysis nature of the study, to chart and describe the potential impact of national language policies on pedagogical approaches and linguistic diversity the focus of data collection was entirely document-based. Current ELT laws and guidelines in Portugal were analysed on their own to identify the relative frequency and importance given to issues around the global scope of English. These were, then, matched against the CEFR (2001) and its Companion Volume (CEFR – CV; 2020) to pinpoint a possible mismatch between what is stated locally and in Strasbourg. Findings suggest partially outdated aims which do not serve the learner-users present-day needs, as they are governed by the original CEFR. Recognizing the limitations of top-down policy changes, the paper concludes by offering practical guidance for teachers of all experience levels, allowing them to become agents of change within their classrooms. These recommendations detail how to integrate ELF teaching methodologies into current classroom practices, to encourage a more effective and inclusive approach to mainstream language learning. Breaking new ground in the Portuguese context, this study serves as a trailblazer in addressing the research gap in this area.

Literature Review

Context

In line with the rest of the European Union (EU) member-states, English's prominent current status in Portugal is undeniable, inside and outside the school premises. In an upward trajectory

since the late 1970s and early 1980s, English has become the number one foreign language being taught across schools.

Portugal's young learners are much like their European peers in terms of exposure to English, being mostly exposed to Received Pronunciation (RP) English at school and General American (GA) English elsewhere, along with similar communication desires. They aspire to engage in the global youth culture (integrative oriented motivation), which often expresses itself through English. Thus, the significance of ELT to the learners' daily sociolinguistic, often spoken, interaction. The enduring question, both then and now, is how we can anticipate or mandate that learners enhance their spoken language proficiency and pronunciation to fittingly interact with their foreign counterparts without: a) providing them with the chance to practice the language, and b) constraining them to alleged norm-providing models under the umbrella of communicative competence (Correia, 2024a).

The social turmoil that followed the military coup of 1974, which marked the end of the dictatorship Portugal was under, led to intense ideological debates around the role of education for the country's overall development. The foremost outcome of such debates was the approval of the Comprehensive Law on the Education System (CLES) in 1986, establishing the framework for the Portuguese schooling system as it still is today (see table 1). The fundamental principles and national policies for education that followed are all based on this milestone document.

Table 1. *Portuguese Educational System Structure (CLES – 1986)*

| Level	Stages	Span	Year
Basic Education	1st Cycle	4 years	1st to 4th
	2nd Cycle	2 years	5th to 6th
	3rd Cycle	3 years	7th to 9th
Secondary Education	-	3 years	10th to 12th

Basic education was meant to be universal, compulsory[1] and free of charge, comprising three consecutive cycles in a total of nine years, whilst secondary education lasted for three years. Within the set of objectives listed for basic education, the aim for foreign language learning was "to provide the learning of a first foreign language and the start of a second" (Law No. 46/86, 1986, p. 3070, my translation). Additionally, the 1986 legislation consolidated the structure of the Portuguese educational system, reinforcing foreign language instruction with a focus on communication and social interaction.

From this point onwards, bearing in mind the gradual decline of French as an international language, more and more students chose English in the 5th grade. In truth, towards the end of the twentieth century (1998) English had an impressive 239,465 students enrolled against 15,771 for French, corresponding to more than 90% of the total number of students starting a foreign language. Shortly after the turn of the century (2005) the percentage gap only

---

[1] In 2009, Law No. 85/2009 redefined this aspect of CLES, extending compulsory education from 15 to 18 years old.

widened. By then students studying English were 237,505, whilst studying French were 1539[2]. With some slight fluctuations, the distance between English and French as the students' preferred first foreign language has remained steady since 2005. For instance, in 2014 the figures were 216,351 students starting English in the 5th grade and 1045[3] starting French.

Indeed, English has increasingly become a widespread second language in Portugal, advancing to be the most spoken language among many Portuguese following their native language (figure 1). Portuguese learners-users do not abandon their national linguistic identity; rather, they enhance it by acquiring an additional language to assist in their pursuit of material and personal achievement.
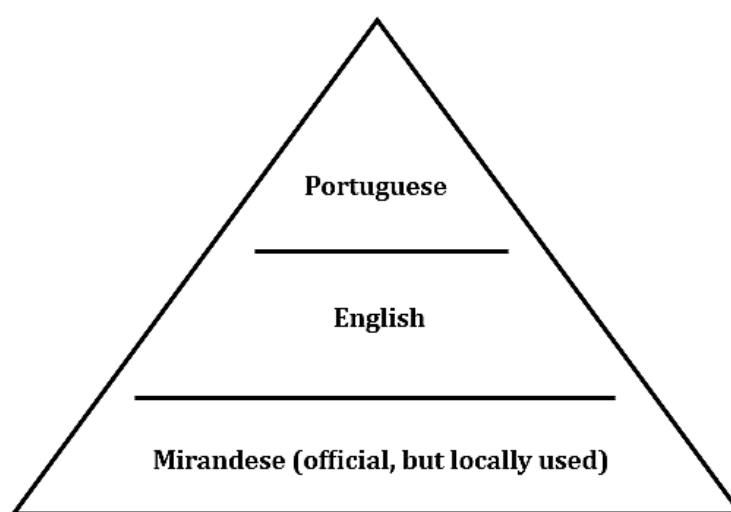
Figure 1. Language hierarchy in Portugal[4]

Leslie (2012) provides an illustrative case of the adoption and integration of English into Portuguese culture through her research, which examined the prevalence of English loanwords in Portuguese newspapers over two decades from 1989 to 2009. Her study yielded two key insights: firstly, there was a twofold or threefold increase in the usage of these loanwords during that period; secondly, while in 1989, over half of the loanwords were mainly found in the economic sections, by 2009, they were more uniformly distributed throughout various sections of the papers, including economic, domestic and international news, and sports.

English has, thus, emerged as an indispensable tool across various sectors of Portuguese society, including diplomacy, business, travel and tourism, (higher) education, science, and technology. The growing number of functional domains in which English is used in Portugal indicates both the pervasiveness of the language across the country and the relationship between instrumentally oriented motivation and language spread. For Portuguese younger learners, being able to use English proficiently and intelligibly means pragmatic gains in interconnected

---

[2] Office for Information and Evaluation of the Educational System – Yearly School Census.
[3] Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science.
[4] Mirandese is a minority official language since 1999 just used in and around the Miranda do Douro area. However, given its linguistic similarity to Portuguese it is often mistakenly perceived as a dialect. It has roughly 10.000 speakers and despite being encouraged by local authorities there is a lack of interest in learning it, particularly younger generations, who appraise Mirandese as a language of little worth that fails to accommodate their global needs (Martins & Ferreira, 2019).

areas around academic success, gaming, making friends abroad, and social media, to name but a few.

This state of affairs was not just a consequence of exposure to English, but also a repercussion of the increasing emphasis given to the language in national education. Embedded in CLES's goal for learning foreign languages in basic education, in January 2001, Legal Decree No. 6/2001 from the Ministry of Education stated that it was necessary to reorganise the basic education curriculum[5] and that modern languages should play a significant role in this reorganisation. If resources permit, the curriculum at 1st Cycle level should include a foreign language stressing oral skills; foreign language learning becomes compulsory during the 2nd Cycle and extends into the 3rd Cycle in order to attain fluency and proficiency. In addition, a second foreign language is compulsory in the 3rd Cycle.

In 2005, English was introduced at 1st Cycle schools (Legal Decree No. 14 753/2005, 2005) as an afterschool optional activity. In the ensuing academic year, all schools were required to offer English as an afterschool activity (three weekly lessons, 45 minutes each). Consistent with the European trend for earlier foreign language learning, which in virtually all of Europe is English, two years after launching the programme for English teaching/learning in the 1st Cycle, 3rd and 4th grades, the Portuguese government decided to extend it to the 1st and 2nd grades (two weekly lessons, 45 minutes each) (Legal Decree No. 14460/2008, 2008). Despite notable advancements for ELT in the Portuguese educational system, persistent challenges remained for years to come. Weak articulation between educational cycles, insufficient qualification of teachers, uneven English schooling years, and unsuited teaching methodologies that wrongly de-emphasise the oral skills, thereby impacting the efficacy of English instruction.

To solve most of these problems, in 2014 the Ministry of Education and Science issued an extensive law (Legal Decree No. 176/2014). Amongst other things, English was made a compulsory subject of the 1st Cycle's curriculum, 3rd and 4th grades, a new teaching recruitment group – 120 (English teaching in the 1st Cycle) is created, and accredited teacher training is determined. Yet, a year later, Martins and Cardoso (2015) show in their study that Portuguese EFL teachers continued to struggle with practical ways of having learners speaking in English. More recently (Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science, 2023), the latest statistics for 9th grade per subject show that English is the subject: a) with the fourth lowest average; b) with the third highest percentage of fails; c) with the second lowest percentage of improvement after failing; d) with the fourth highest percentage of fails which impacted directly on failing the school year.

ELT has had a long life in the Portuguese educational system, steadily making its way into the curriculum to occupy, alongside with Portuguese and Maths, a very prominent role. At present, English is, not only mandatory for seven consecutive years to ensure progression but

---

[5] A reaction to the identified shortcomings in the existing curriculum, unsuccessful promotion of compulsory education, feeble articulation between schooling cycles and poor effective learning, did not take long. Before year's end the Ministry of Education, through its Department of Basic education, issued the National Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences (2001). In accordance with the principles formulated in the Legal Decree No. 6/2001, it determined the achievement competences expected for each student in the different subjects, in the different cycles and at the end of basic education.

also the main language of choice for 2nd and 3rd Cycles with an average provision of time of three weekly lessons, 50 minutes each. Notwithstanding, while it can be argued that ELT became a governmental priority within the Portuguese curricula, the way that policies have fostered instructional efficacy to respond to present-day sociolinguistic challenges deserves careful attention.

The power of language policy for ELT programs and sociolinguistic adaptation

Language policy plays a pivotal role in shaping ELT programs and sociolinguistic adaptation. In a nutshell, sociolinguistic adaptation may simply be considered the process by which the learner-user adjusts his language proficiency to accord to the communicative demands of the interaction he engages in, either in face-to-face or in technology-mediated (un)planned interactions. For teachers, sociolinguistic adaptation involves understanding and addressing the diverse linguistic backgrounds and communicative needs of their learners. This requires a flexible and inclusive approach to language teaching, where practitioners are not only proficient in English but also culturally aware and sensitive to the sociolinguistic dynamics of ELF. The intricate relationship between policy, practice, and the sociolinguistic environment is evident in the way language policies are interpreted and implemented at various levels, from state to classroom. So, key contemporary considerations for language policy in ELT should encompass L1 integration, target language variety, and the focus on speaking proficiency hand in hand with intelligibility, all of which are intimately connected to ELF.

Many learners come from multilingual backgrounds. A policy that respects and integrates first languages can empower learners by leveraging their existing linguistic resources. For instance, policies that encourage code-switching and/or code-mixing for specific learning objectives can facilitate effective communication and knowledge construction. Recent research (Yüzlü & Atay, 2020; Hanif, 2020) confirms that strategically integrating L1 can promote a deeper understanding of the language and improve L2 speaking skills. Following the opposite path but towards the same assumption, much earlier, Goldstein and her colleagues (Goldstein et al., 2003) found evidence of significant negative impacts in settings where students were restricted to L2 if not prohibited entirely, referring to feelings of embarrassment and shame. In a similar fashion, Jenkins (2010) also speaks of growing frustration amidst her students when she insisted on an English-only teaching approach, which eventually led to a major withdrawal from oral classroom participation. The takeaway is a diligent use of L1 can support language proficiency development, as it is but a reflection of the learners' contextual shaping of the language in their co-constructed social relationships. However, practitioners can only feel secure if such teaching behaviour is avowed in both local and international policies.

While traditional monolingual policies advocating for the exclusive use of English in the classroom may hinder learners by neglecting their existing linguistic resources so can policies emphasizing a single "correct" form of English. Indeed, there seems to be divide between the sociolinguistic reality of multilingual English and policies still oriented towards English as a native language. It is Jenkins, in an interview given to Enrico Grazzi (2018), who exposes both the NS idealisation the dominance of a standard English language ideology. This positively correlates with the present study as it highlights the potential bias in language policies, including the Portuguese, that may favour native English speakers and, thus, offer a

version of English that learners will hardly, if ever, encounter in real-life situations. As advocated here, Jenkins underscores the need for a shift in language policy and EFL teaching practices to better prepare learners for real-life communication in ELF contexts. Although proficiency in a standard variety, namely British, may be valuable for some learners, acknowledging regional and social variations within English can be crucial for most.

In line with Jenkins' rationale, a policy that acknowledges the emergence of ELF can better prepare learners for real-world scenarios. However, how this is put into practice is not as straightforward. Cogo and Jenkins (2010) refer to the discrepancy between the current use of English as a lingua franca in Europe and the EU's language policy. The authors argue that while English has become the *de facto* lingua franca in the EU over the past couple of decades, the EU has not fully acknowledged or integrated this reality into its language policy. On his part, discussing EU language policy and the rise of English across Europe, Modiano (2022) calls for clarity and guidance from Brussels on the languages standards promoted at schools. Such call resonates with the claims made throughout this chapter for the need of a well-defined approach to EFL teaching and learning. Just as there is a need for a better understanding of what language standards should be promoted in schools across Europe, there is a similar need in Portugal to determine the standards for teaching English to future ELF users. Uncertainty can only make it difficult for teachers to implement ELF-based approaches in line with the learners' sociolinguistic realities.

Bearing in mind Portugal's European positioning, the link between Lisbon and Brussels is no trivial matter. Thus, one of the aims of the study was to match local against European guidelines. A final issue concerns the veiled focus on native speaker (NS) norms under the umbrella of communicative competence. Many national policies in Europe, Portugal included, and I dare to say around the world, still convey native-like proficiency as the goal in EFL environments by focusing on communicative competence as the cornerstone for the productive skills. While apparently beneficial, this can disadvantage learners who use English primarily for communication in situational speaking communities, not cultural assimilation. As advocated elsewhere (Correia, forthcoming), communicative competence is a NS-based construct hardly achievable for most learners, which dates to Chomsky's linguistic theory of an ideal speaker-listener who had its abstract realization in the NS. (Un)surprisingly, this reified conception of communicative competence is endorsed by the European Commission in the words of Jeremy Gardner (2016), a senior translator at the European Court of Auditors, who, in his "*Misused English Words and Expressions in EU Publications*", claims to intend to provide guidance "for those who, for reasons of character or personal taste, would like their English to be as correct (in terms of UK and Irish native-speaker norms) as possible […]" (p. 2), which clearly contradicts the Commission's earlier words on the importance of ELF as a means to "dethrone" the native speaker (NS) and define the goal of English learning as the ability to communicate successfully with other non-native speakers (NNS)" (2011, p. 28). The discrepancy pointed out by Cogo and Jenkins (2010) is here reiterated.

Language policies should clearly emphasise spoken proficiency and intelligibility as primary goals for communication amongst users of the language, regardless of whether it is their mother tongue or not, instead of assuming a minority ownership of who is entitled to set norms and/or pass judgements against an alleged norm-providing standard. As it happens, the

detachment from British (and American) standards resonates across the literature plenty (Byram, 2014; Guerra, 2016; Kiczkowiak, 2019; Sifakis & Tsantila, 2019; Bayyurt & Dewey, 2020). Acknowledging the legitimacy of ELF and incorporating it into language policy fosters an appreciation for language variation, promotes inclusivity and sociolinguistic awareness, which translates into a better ability to use language effectively in real-world situations by encouraging learners to adapt their English to diverse contexts while exploring the nuances of the language and how it functions in various social situations. Ultimately, it may function as a catalyst for enhanced communication and mutual understanding.

Language policy and the rise of ELF

The dominance of English in global communication has led to it being taught as a foreign language in educational systems worldwide. However, traditional approaches often emphasize a standardized, NS model, neglecting the dynamic and diverse nature of English used in real-world contexts as a lingua franca by speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In the contemporary globalized world, ELF has gained significant prominence as a means of boundaryless dispossessed international communication, whose standards often fall under the scope of intelligible speech. ELF communication, characterized by its dynamic, negotiated nature among diverse speakers, presents a stark contrast to the standardized, native-speaker-centric models often enshrined in language policies, as alluded to above. This shift in perspective is not merely academic but has profound implications for language policy, within the EU and beyond. In a world where most speakers are NNS and spoken interactions occur predominantly without the presence of NS (Eberhard et al., 2023), the dominance of ELF in global communication calls for a reappraisal of traditional EFL pedagogy.

The teaching of ELF encompasses a multifaceted landscape. Language policies, however, often lag behind these sociolinguistic realities, creating tensions between desired outcomes and classroom practices. Başok (2020) highlights the gap between Turkish ELT policies and teachers' reported classroom practices. Despite the official shift from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the curriculum, teachers still found it challenging to fully implement CLT in their classrooms due to various factors such as student expectations and exam requirements. The study emphasises the importance of aligning assessment practices with the communicative goals of the curriculum. It suggests replacing grammar-based tests with assessments that evaluate students' communicative competence to bridge the gap between policy and practice. For his share, Sugiharto (2020), much in Phillipson's (1992) vein, criticises the imperialistic nature of English language policy often imposed on teachers in a top-down fashion. Sugiharto's stresses the need for a more flexible and context-specific approach to English language policy, highlighting the importance of considering the unique sociolinguistic challenges of mainstream language teaching and learning in countries such as Portugal, rather than simply imposing a one-size-fits-all policy. This insight adds a valuable perspective to this study on the interplay between Portuguese language policy and the sociolinguistic realities of teaching EFL in Portugal, as it mirrors the situation in Portugal where standards and practices for teaching English are imposed on teachers without comprehensively considering the specific needs and challenges of Portuguese learners.

The misalignment of policy and pedagogy presents several practical challenges for teachers, particularly in terms of teacher training and assessment discrepancies. Whilst teacher training programs may not adequately equip educators with the knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of ELF communication and integrate its principles into their classrooms; standardized assessments impose a focus on idealized forms of English, potentially hindering the development of genuine ELF communication skills by denying assessment frameworks that value the communicative effectiveness and intelligibility of ELF interactions. What is needed then are language policies which empower English language teachers to become ELF-aware practitioners, able to take agency over their teaching in the best interests of their students' learning trajectory. Such a process entails engaging with ELF research, developing an understanding of how it can be integrated into the classroom, and continuously reflecting on, designing, implementing, and evaluating instructional activities (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018) embedded in an ELF paradigm. In line with the contentions made in this chapter, Sifakis & Bayyurt (2018) provide a valuable perspective on the importance of local teacher agency in addressing the sociolinguistic challenges of teaching EFL to future ELF users in Portugal. Teachers should not merely be recipients of top-down policies but active participants who adapt these policies to their specific classroom contexts, as these seem to unduly favour the Modern Foreign Languages paradigm and, thus, fail to meet the diverse linguistic requirements of learners in a globalized world.

The status of English as a lingua franca has been bolstered by various political and cultural factors, leading to its recognition as the primary language of international communication in fields such as science, politics, and business. This status, however, often remains implicit in language policies, particularly in EFL environments (Rahimi & Bagheri, 2011) such as the Portuguese, perpetuating linguistic hierarchies and disenfranchising the Englishes spoken today across the globe, or even explicitly as argued by Riegler (2021) in her discussion on the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). The author vehemently criticises EPOSTL's prescriptive tendencies and alignment with the CEFR which may impede the development of a reflective approach necessary for implementing an ELF pedagogy and, thus, restricts teachers to a predefined theoretical scope.

Fortunately, positive echoes from research on ELF's relevance for ELT which have led to a rethinking of English in the language classroom and the configuration of language knowledge in teacher education can also be found in the literature. Dewey and Pineda's (2020) study in the UK and Spain report a higher number of ELT practitioners that prioritize successful communication, experimentation with linguistic forms, and promotion of learners' L1 sociocultural identity, aligning with ELF orientation in their teaching practice. Further evidence on the developing acceptance of ELF reverberates in Irham et al. (2021), who found a positive ELF-awareness amongst the study's participants, despite their struggle to negotiate a forward-looking attitude towards ELF and a far from supportive educational system.

All in all, "a more systematic institutional policy needs to be undertaken to reinforce the teachers' existing positive perspective towards ELF" (Irham et al., 2021, p. 263), as this may pave the way for others to follow. To realize the full potential of ELF as a global medium of communication, policymakers must enact inclusive and flexible language policies that embrace

linguistic diversity and foster an authentic use of the language as learners will experience it, free from the strictures they find themselves bound to in the classroom.

Methodology

Design of the Study

Under the umbrella of the constructivist research paradigm, the researcher aimed to make sense of the Portuguese national guidelines for ELT, how they aligned (or otherwise) with the leading documents across Europe – the CEFR / CEFR – CV, and most importantly whether they reflected the global spread and current status of English as a lingua franca and thus negatively or positively impinge upon the teachers' pedagogical behaviour. The research process was both deductive and inductive with meaning being generated by the researcher from the evidence collected. Notwithstanding, as the subjective interpreter of the data with a vested interest on the topic, all efforts were made by the researcher to safeguard rigour and avoid bias ("bracketing").

Bearing in mind the scope of the study, the method of choice was document analysis, described by Bowen (2009) as "[…] a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic […] document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (p. 27). The rationale for document analysis was threefold: first, for its usefulness as a stand-alone method within an interpretive research paradigm; second, for the possibility of tracking change over time; third, for its lack of reflexivity. Figure 2 illustrates the study's design.

Document selection — Skimming — Reading — Content analysis — Interpretation

Figure 2. Conceptual design of the study

To serve the purposes of the analysis: a) to identify the relative frequency and importance given to issues regarding the global scope of English, b) to monitor development, if any, in the guidelines, and c) to locate a possible divergence between Portuguese and European directives, the documental sampling was set within a specific time frame, 2001-2020, in connection to significant publication timings. The original CEFR and its companion volume served as landmarks. Accordingly, the following documents published by the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Council of Europe were analysed:

A. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, 2001
B. Legal Decree No. 6/2001, 2001
C. National Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences, 2001
D. Legal Decree No. 14 753/2005, 2005
E. Legal Decree No. 12 591/2006, 2006
F. Legal Decree No. 14460/2008, 2008
G. Legal Decree No. 139/2012, 2012
H. Legal Decree No. 11838-A/2013, 2013

İ. Metas curriculares de Inglês ensino básico: 2º e 3º Ciclos (curriculum targets), 2013
J. Legal Decree No. 176/2014, 2014
K. Metas curriculares de Inglês ensino básico: 1º, 2º e 3º Ciclos (curriculum targets – update), 2015
L. Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling, 2017
M. Aprendizagens Essenciais - Inglês 3º, 4º, 5, 6º, 7º, 8º, 9º Ano (English core curriculum), 2018
N. Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume with New Descriptors, 2018 (preliminary version)
O. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment - Companion Volume, 2020

The broad nature of the research question and the aim of the study impinged directly on the choice for content analysis to accompany document analysis, as it allows quantitative (frequency of certain words/phrases) and qualitative (understand the content's effects) thinking. To make things straightforward and foster consistency and appropriateness, a conceptual manifest analysis at the word/phrase unit of meaning under two key categories, ELF paradigm and EFL paradigm, was conducted (e.g. intelligibility; communicative competence). In addition, considering the small amount of text to be analysed, a simple set of coding rules was developed. It concerned practical coding issues to be taken into account: a) the level of analysis; b) number of concepts to code for; c) type of coding (existence or frequency); d) levels of implication (provided two indications: 1 – the exact word/phrase is to be coded; 2 – words/phrases are coded under the same category when they appear in different forms, e.g. accent and accentedness); and e) mutual exclusivity (each unit of meaning should be assigned to only one category to avoid overlap). Finally, a sample of text (National Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences) was analysed to further ensure consistency and appropriateness. After, a fellow researcher, working independently, was asked to analyse the same sample, following the same coding rules to the same categories and units of meaning. Besides revealing consistency between researchers, it allowed investigator triangulation. This is not merely a matter of reproducibility or validation through triangulation, but rather about establishing an overall level of trustworthiness for the researcher.

Results

The statutory trajectory of ELT in Portugal

Portugal echoes the broader European trend of English's rising prominence. This influence extends beyond the classroom, permeating various aspects of life within the country. Since the start of the 21st century, English has witnessed a remarkable upward trajectory, becoming the undisputed leader among foreign languages taught in Portuguese sate schools (see Table 2).

Table 2 shows the rising domination of English across the policies issued by Portuguese governments. It started out in 2001 on equal grounds with other FLs, as "*a*" possibility, to become "*the*" FL in 2012. In the same vein, it moves from being an optional activity in 2005, at primary school and an optional subject at the start of 5th grade, and eventually 7th, to become a mandatory activity for 1st and 2nd years in 2008 and a compulsory subject for seven consecutive years, from 3rd to 9th, in 2014 with a national assessment on its own right as of 2013

(Key for Schools Portugal) in partnership with Cambridge English (later dismissed by the ensuing government).

Table 2. *Statutory trajectory of ELT in Portugal*

Legal document	Year	Decision
Legal Decree No. 6	2001	Reorganises the school curriculum. Demands to develop the teaching of modern languages. Opens the possibility to start a FL at primary school.
Legal Decree No. 14 753	2005	Launches English at primary school (optional activity).
Legal Decree No. 12 591	2006	Launches English at primary school as compulsory activity for 3rd and 4th years.
Legal Decree No. 14460	2008	Extends English at primary school as a compulsory activity for 1st and 2nd years.
Legal Decree No. 139	2012	Reorganises the school curriculum. Demands to expand English teaching. Establishes the start of English as the FL at primary school. English becomes compulsory for five years – from 5th to 9th.
Legal Decree No. 11838-A	2013	Calls for the valorisation of English as a tool for personal and professional gain. Establishes a nationwide assessment of English at the end of 9th grade.
Legal Decree No. 176	2014	English becomes compulsory for seven years – from 3rd to 9th. Creates a new teaching recruitment group – 120 (English teaching in the 1st Cycle).

The crux of the issue is, then, how much of this body of laws encourages and/or facilitates sociolinguistic adaptation of teaching practices to reflect the ELF communicative environments encountered by the learners. Surprisingly, just one of the legal decrees (No. 14 753, 2005) envisages a broader pluricultural view of the language as a vehicle to develop active citizenship. Notwithstanding, it falls in the native-speakerism trap we want teachers to avoid. The pluricultural awareness it speaks of is anchored in its 2001 predecessor (Legal Decree No. 6) and the CEFR, both of which deeply entrenched in the Modern Foreign Languages paradigm. The sociolinguistic adaption expected from teachers seems to be unidirectional towards mainly British and American norm-providing standards of language and culture.

Development of the Portuguese guidelines

Five leading documents (see Table 3) have governed mainstream English language teaching and learning in Portugal since 2001 up until now.

Table 3. *Portuguese educational guidelines for the 21st century*

Guideline	Year	Aim
National Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences	2001	Setting out the achievement competences expected for each student in the different subjects, in the different cycles and at the end of basic education.
Curriculum Targets: 2nd and 3rd cycles	2013	Becoming the reference document for the teaching, learning and assessment of English.
Curriculum Targets (update): 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles	2015	Establishing the link between the three cycles of basic education for English. Updating the expected learning outcomes.
Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling	2017	Providing a desirable, but flexible, learner profile. Assuring the coherence of the whole education system and give meaning to compulsory schooling. Contributing to the definition of strategies, methodologies, and pedagogical-didactic procedures to be used in teaching practice.
English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade	2018	Identifying core competences and skills to be developed in a seven-year span. Providing descriptors aligned with the Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling. Suggesting methodological approaches for teachers.

In their general aims, all the guidelines analysed show a genuine intention to ensure educational quality and attempt to accommodate to the social and political backdrop of their time. Thus, a development in terminology and vision can be traced. A straightforward comparison between the *National Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences* and the *Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling*, which set the expected outcomes at the end of basic education and compulsory schooling, highlights this result:

By the end of basic education, the student should be able to

(1) Mobilize cultural, scientific and technological knowledge to understand reality and to address everyday situations and problems;

(2) Appropriately use linguistic codes from different areas (cultural, scientific and technological) to express him/herself;

(3) Correctly use the Portuguese language to communicate appropriately and to structure his own thoughts;

(4) Use foreign languages to communicate appropriately in everyday situations and for appropriation of information;

(5) Adopt personalized work and learning methodologies suited to the desired goals;

(6) Search for, select and organize information to transform it into knowledge;

(7) Adopt appropriate strategies for problem solving and decision making;

(8) Carry out activities autonomously, responsibly, and creatively;

(9) Cooperate with others on common tasks and projects;

(10) Harmoniously relate the body with space, from a personal and interpersonal relationship that promotes health and quality of life. (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 15, my translation)

> By the end of compulsory schooling the young learner is expected to be a citizen who
> • develops multiple literacies so that he can critically analyse and question reality, evaluate and select information, formulate hypotheses and make informed decisions in their daily life;
> • is free, autonomous and responsible, self-aware and aware of the world around them;
> • is able to cope with the transformation and uncertainty of a fast-changing world;
> • acknowledges the importance and the challenges offered by Arts, Humanities, Science and Technology for the social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of Portugal and the world;
> • is autonomous and able to make use of several developed skills: critical thinking, creativity, collaborative working skills and communication skills;
> • is able to continue lifelong learning as a decisive factor in their personal development and social intervention;
> • knows and respects the fundamental principles of democratic society and the rights, guarantees and freedoms on which it is based;
> • values respect for human dignity, the exercise of full citizenship, solidarity with others, cultural diversity and democratic debate;
> • rejects all forms of discrimination and social exclusion; (Martins et al., 2017, p. 13)

Right at the beginning, there is a change from student to learner and citizen, reflecting a contemporary view of the learner as a whole and not just the sum of their parts. Indeed, whilst the former is more directed at individual qualities/qualifications (numbers 1 to 8), the latter embraces individual qualities/qualifications (bullets 1 and 6) and democratic citizenship (bullets 2 to 5 and 7 to 9).

In the light of the changing international situation, the value of citizenship education, social and civic competences have been confirmed. However, narrowing down the scope to the core of the study, a development in the guidelines that reflect the ever-increasing use of English as a lingua franca is not as straightforward. In four out of five guidelines, the CEFR, along with its broad proficiency levels – A1 to B1+, is the common denominator. The *Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling* does not refer to the CEFR explicitly but relates to the English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade, which does. It must be said that as of 2021 (Ministry of Education, Legal Decree No. 6605-A) these two guidelines are the curriculum reference point for ELT in Portugal.

Consistently, the CEFR is described as the landmark document. Other references are made, for instance to older syllabi, but these play a subsidiary role. In contrast, no mention to English as a lingua franca nor intelligibility is made. In a similar fashion, no references were found on global aspects of language in use, such as strategies used to keep a conversation going (e.g. use of fillers) or ways to follow up the interlocutor's statements (e.g. requests – repetition, clarification, confirmation).

The lack of truly 'plurilithically'-oriented language policies correlates positively with the guidelines offered to teachers, turning sociolinguistic adaptation in the context of ELF into a potential whimsical sightseer who pays the occasional visit. Clearly, this top-down approach constitutes a promotion of English by a perceived hegemonic culture moored in the CEFR's implied normativity, which does not facilitate sociolinguistic adaptation. Indeed, the words of a Portuguese EFL teacher interviewed by the researcher for a different, but related, study (Correia, 2021) are quite informative:

I: So, do you think the syllabus does not reflect the learners' sociolinguistic reality?

T: Er .., no and I think the syllabus does not meet the speaker's needs.

Teachers find themselves shackled to strictures assigned in policies and guidelines that require respect for the 'superior' authority of NS. The result is a dichotomy between the way learners learn the language (EFL paradigm) and the way learners use the language (ELF paradigm).

Importance given to issues around the global scope of English

The advent of global citizenship in the 21st century is traceable in all the five documents analysed with a natural increase in emphasis at every new publication. While the *National Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences* stresses the intercultural function of the English language the *Curriculum Targets* explicitly integrates intercultural awareness into the national curriculum under the heading *Intercultural Domain* and the *Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling* identifies intercultural awareness as one of the issues "at the heart of current debate" (Martins et al., 2017, p. 6), putting citizenship and participation as a core value to be expressed through attitudes and behaviours.

Table 4. *References to ELF / EFL-related common terminology*

Terminology	Number of hits	Guideline
Lingua Franca	0	-
Foreign Language	34	All
Englishes	0	-
Non-native culture	0	-
Anglo-Saxon culture	19	N. Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences Curriculum Targets: 2nd and 3rd cycles Curriculum Targets (update): 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade
Accent	0	-
Mother tongue	4	N. Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences Curriculum Targets: 2nd and 3rd cycles Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade
Target Language	3	N. Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences Curriculum Targets: 2nd and 3rd cycles Curriculum Targets (update): 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles
Intelligibility	0	-
Fluency	1	N. Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences
Correction	19	Curriculum Targets: 2nd and 3rd cycles Curriculum Targets (update): 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade
Communicative competence	23	N. Curriculum of Basic Education: Essential Competences Curriculum Targets: 2nd and 3rd cycles English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade

As can be expected, English as the world's *lingua franca*, can play a very important role as a shared medium of communication to enhance mutual understanding and work against erroneous stereotypes and prejudiced views of the other. But again, parallel to the development of the guidelines, the global scope of English is not reflected throughout. References to ELF and intelligibility are completely absent from the documents and so are references to different Englishes and non-English speaking cultures (see Table 4). The apparent divide, highlighted in

the introduction section, between the sociolinguistic reality of multilingual English and policies still oriented towards English as a native language seems to be further entrenched**.**

Table 4 showcases the discrepancy between ELF and EFL-related terminology considered relevant for the scope of this study. References to ELF features that envision English as a tool to support learners to become intelligible speakers and thus act as intercultural mediators in multilingual settings are close to none. This absence may (un)wittingly hinder the learner-user's ability to **"**grapple with the complexities of intercultural communication by establishing relationships, dispelling biases, managing dysfunctions, and acting as a mediator" (Correia, 2020, p. 44)**.**

Portuguese guidelines, despite their good intentions, do not fully address the dynamic and changing nature of English used globally. It is evident that there is a significant gap between the evolving role of English and existing policies and syllabi. In the present context, to bridge this gap, sociolinguistic adaptation is pedagogically challenging and heavily dependent on the teachers' attitudes. Ultimately, these will rule teaching practices. Whether they are favourably disposed towards the integration of ELF is yet to be determined.

Glocal guidelines – convergence or divergence?

In the growing context of multilingualism, the Council of Europe has updated the original CEFR for its companion volume to accommodate today's ELF phenomenon and, thus, the learners' ever-increasing sociolinguistic shuttling between different speech communities. As stated in the preliminary version of the CEFR – CV:

> Phonology had been the least successful scale developed in the research behind the original descriptors. The phonology scale was the only CEFR illustrative descriptor scale for which a native speaker norm, albeit implicit, had been adopted. In an update, it appeared more appropriate to focus on intelligibility as the primary construct in phonological control, in line with current research, especially in the context of providing descriptors for building on plurilingual/pluricultural repertoires. (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 47)

In a similar fashion, Piccardo (2016), the author of the *Phonological Scale Revision Process Report* which resulted in the CEFR – CV's Phonological Control scale claims that "a new sensibility has been emerging in the applied linguists' scholarly community when it comes to reevaluating the traditional idea of the 'native speaker' as a model or perception of the norm in pronunciation. This is especially visible in English considering the movement towards 'global Englishes' or 'English as a Lingua Franca' […] (p. 6).

Conspicuously, both the need to embrace the calls for acceptance of new Englishes worldwide and to contradict the native-speakerism fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) are significantly captured. Notwithstanding, the Portuguese guidelines seem to be displaced, converging with the implied normativity of the CEFR whilst diverging from the sociolinguistic reality of the learners as ELF users of the language hinted by the CEFR – CV. Unfortunately, Portuguese policymakers "who are assessing the merits of claims about English or ELT [do not] see through them when they are manifestly false" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 17). Either explicitly, by clearly referring to the original CEFR, or implicitly, by favouring an idealised NS norm of correction and communicative competence, all the guidelines still convey a monolithic view of English as the single authority, prestige, and norm-providing standard, thus foisting outdated aims on Portuguese EFL learners which do not serve their present-day needs.

The current ELT conditions in Portugal do not facilitate teachers' sociolinguistic adaption. The predicament is twofold. On the one hand, teachers are caught in a bind between their conviction of what is best for their students and outdated educational guidelines imposed by government policies. On the other hand, the outcome is a gap between contemporary ELF research on intelligibility as a benchmark for successful spoken interaction and prevailing English teaching policies that overlook intelligibility and maintain the implicit normativity of traditional EFL pedagogical practices.

Discussion

RQ: Does Portuguese language policy reflect the global spread of English and, thus, facilitate sociolinguistic adaptation for teachers in the context of ELF?

In general terms, Portuguese policymakers have, since the turn of the millennium, reflected the rise of English worldwide in national curriculum guidelines, mirroring broader socio-cultural shifts and responding to the imperatives of globalization. English has steadily moved from *de facto* to *de jure* FL in the Portuguese schooling system. It has become a mandatory subject across all public schools in the country, with dedicated instruction hours starting from 3rd to 9th grade in a total of seven consecutive years. Indeed, a growing number of schools has even started to offer bilingual education programs, incorporating English alongside Portuguese in core subjects (e.g. math and science).

Hand in hand with the overall prominence of English is the development of the guidelines. The current curriculum reference for ELT in Portugal, *Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling* (2017), envisions the learner as a citizen of the world and English as one of the keys to a promising future. It is a potential asset for increased international mobility, employability in a competitive global marketplace, access to (digital) information, and cross-cultural communication. This trend can be attributed to a confluence of factors, echoing Portugal's strategic adaptation to a globalised world. Policymakers have steered these currents of globalisation by putting communicative competence in English as a pivotal educational endeavour.

Above the water line, it seems that Portuguese policymakers have strategically prioritized the incorporation of English language instruction across curricular frameworks to better equip learners with the necessary linguistic competencies towards a bright future. However, the sociolinguist profile of the learners is not completely taken into account. The focus on communication skills and cultural endorsement are aligned with a NS standard, thus being the source of the language to be taught.

The number of references to communicative competence, correction, and Anglo-Saxon culture are but a reflection of this partially skewed view of the learner-user's chiefly oral interactions in real-world situations. As hinted above, the very much in vogue communicative competence linguistic marker is not neutral, it is a NS-based framework that is far-reaching both at the theoretical (Taş & Khan, 2020) and the practical level (Bakar et al., 2019). The privilege of NS norms (the focus here is given to pronunciation) and cultural values translates, albeit implicitly in the words of the Council of Europe, into disconnected curriculum guidelines

from the learners' reality across many EFL environments, such as the Portuguese. As pointed out by Riegler (2021), thinking of the European context, mainstream language teaching and learning remains restricted to a predetermined, usually British, theoretical construct. But if we travel to farther latitudes, we can also find insights on the mismatch of ELT policies and the practical use of the language. For instance, Suzuki (2020) contends that ELT policies and classroom practices in Japan are not fully aligned with the theoretical shift towards teaching ELF, resulting in a continued emphasis on native English speakers and potentially limiting learners' development of a global mindset and proficiency in international communication.

The convergence of Portuguese ELT guidelines with the original CEFR is certainly no stranger to this divide. A closer examination of certain descriptors within the CEFR reveals the overt bias towards NS communication and linguistic behaviour as the standard for successful language use:

> Conversation (Level B2) – Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker. […] (p. 76)

> Sociolinguistic Appropriateness (Level C2) – Appreciates fully the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by native speakers and can react accordingly (p. 122).

The speaker, expectedly NNS, must not irritate his interlocutor whilst admiring his mastery of the language. Correction and appropriateness are achievable only and if you are a NS or able to emulate one. The linkage between these exemplars and those offered by the Portuguese guidelines can be found in the English core curriculum – 3rd to 9th grade, under the communicative competence umbrella. Using the last year of basic education as paradigm, learners are expected to "interact with correction on familiar topics" (for interculturality it means knowing characters and literature from English speaking countries) and produce "oral texts, prepared in advance, with proper pronunciation and intonation" (Ministry of Education and Science, 2018, p. 6, my translation). As it happens, proper pronunciation and intonation is yet another similarity to the CEFR's B2 descriptor of phonological control – "Has acquired a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation" (p. 117).

The intrinsic NNS nature of Portuguese learners is consistently downplayed, neglecting intelligibility as "the yardstick against which the learner-user's mastery is to be measured either in real-life or classroom settings" (Correia, 2024a, p. 14). It seems, then, that Portuguese language policy does not reflect the global spread of English comprehensively, nor does it facilitate sociolinguistic adaptation for teachers in the context of ELF, with intelligibility as one of its most important traits, as it favours one-sided allegiance to the CEFR.

On top of that, although textbook analysis goes beyond the scope of this study, given the importance played by textbooks on Portuguese teachers' daily practice (Hurst, 2014; Correia, 2020; 2024b), notions of NS standards are further reinforced. Research conducted in the Portuguese context (Guerra & Cavalheiro, 2019), vis-à-vis EFL textbooks' linguistic and cultural representations, highlights the overemphasis allocated to British and American references. For the most part, they are presented as the suitable examples, leaving little or no room for alternatives. In a similar fashion, Vettorel (2018) claims that current ELT textbooks, with a focus on Italy, lack a consistent inclusion of communication strategies and awareness of different Englishes to prepare learners for interactions in ELF environments, therefore

disregarding its sociolinguistic complexity. Admittedly, the figment of native-speakerism continues to impinge directly upon Portuguese language policy as well as on the practical teaching-learning process, perpetuating outmoded expectations for Portuguese EFL learners which fail to address their real-world needs. As Holliday (2006) puts it:

> Although some regard the terms 'native-' and 'non-native speaker' as unviable on linguistic grounds and constructed for the preservation of a privileged in-group, they have a very real currency within the popular discourse of ELT (p. 385).

The answer to the study's research question is, unfortunately, no. For now, despite the shift towards steadily incorporating EFL into the curriculum, assigning it more and more importance at the turn of each law issued, Portuguese policymakers have failed to chime both policies and educational guidelines with the global spread of the language and, thus, not facilitating sociolinguistic adaptation for teachers. Yet, this does not mean that Portuguese EFL teachers do not do it, or at least attempt to. What it means is that they may choose not to do it or are left to their own imagination and rely on their common sense.

Sociolinguistic adaptation in the context of ELF can be pedagogically challenging for most Portuguese EFL teachers. It seems, then, that first and foremost the NS vs. NNS model of teaching the language comes into play. To forge sociolinguistic adaptation, traditional reliance on NS norms must be sidestepped and learners exposed to different Englishes. Not only does this process empower learners as speakers but also equips them with enhanced phonological familiarity, which in turn translates in more intelligibility. A second recurring challenge develops naturally from the junction of culture and language use, that of developing intercultural awareness. Again, sociolinguistic adaptation requires a move from an overreliance on, mainly, British and American portrayals of culture offered by the textbook. To work against erroneous stereotypes and prejudiced views of the other, teachers need to go beyond cultural trivia and ask learners to reflect on concepts such as attitudes toward elders, notions of politeness, or formality across cultures. Throughout this ongoing process of discovering differences and commonalities, learners develop their intercultural awareness and build upon their ability to dispel bigotry by acting as sociolinguistic mediators. Finally, a third pressing issue for sociolinguistic adaptation of teachers in the context of ELF concerns linguistic flexibility. If learners are not allowed to make use of their linguistic repertoire, i.e. their mother tongue and paralinguistics, and trained on communication strategies, learners may fall short of establishing relationships, managing dysfunctions, and acting as sociolinguistic mediators. Accordingly, sociolinguistic adaptation asks teachers to adopt freer collaborative learning tasks (e.g. pair and/or groupwork) that promote spoken interaction amongst learners with different levels of proficiency and/or different linguacultural backgrounds (multilingual classes). By doing so, learners may practice a myriad of strategies and, thus, expanding their linguistic repertoire: self-repair/repetition; requests; use of fillers; paraphrasing; use of extralinguistic cues; code-switching; code-mixing; and even translanguaging.

In the (Portuguese) context of teaching EFL, sociolinguistic adaptation is crucial for teachers if they are to effectively assist their learners grapple with the multilingual and multicultural landscape of ELF globally. In view of this rationale and its role in supporting sociolinguistic adaptation, the issue of teacher professional development is assigned a separate subheading (below).

Practical considerations

While systemic language policy reform might take time, individual teachers can still create positive change in their classrooms, by gradually supplementing their existing EFL curriculum with an ELF perspective. Equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes is arguably the first step towards diving below the water line provided by the Portuguese guidelines. As a seamless kick-starter, some practical attitudinal suggestions can be set out:

- Move from the implied normativity of communicative competence to spoken language proficiency and intelligibility;
- Encourage learners to speak freely by emphasizing intelligibility and communication strategies whilst deemphasizing the importance of perfect grammar and accent to create a safe and supportive learning environment;
- Draw teaching materials from all Englishes and do not rely solely on the textbook to do justice to the sociolinguistic reality learners are going to encounter as ELF users;
- Allow learners to use the language as a means to establish relationships, dispel biases, and act as mediators, thus fostering the acceptance of linguistic and cultural difference.

Of course, the question may naturally arise – how do I implement change if I do not have the knowledge and skills to do so? For a deeper understanding of ELF and intelligibility, the English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms (ENRICH) project (available at http://enrichproject.eu/pt/) is perhaps the go-to source to empower (Portuguese) EFL teachers. It tackles the growing need for teachers to effectively manage multilingual classrooms in Europe, by offering an open-access, free-of-charge continuous professional development (CPD) course, plus a downloadable handbook with guidelines, suggestions, and practical examples. The CPD course covers the rationale for ELF-aware pedagogy and the key issues in using ELF, namely that of intelligibility and its linkage to multilingual contexts, whilst promoting skills for using code-mixing, code-switching, translanguaging, Task-based Learning (TBL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Furthermore, for Portuguese-specific research on intelligibility see Correia (2024a). It offers a working definition of intelligibility as well as a listing of the features deemed as idiosyncratic of the Portuguese learners' intelligibility patterns, pinpointing potential miscommunication problems that can be pre-empted.

Indicating possible ways for fellow teachers to be better prepared to support their learners in the classroom seems rather straightforward. But transforming these theoretical frameworks into tangible classroom experiences is no easy feat, especially if we consider that they are contingent both on the practitioner's interpretation and context. Notwithstanding, the backdrop should be attempting to explore the language as a linguistic system in itself but also as a social practice that implies variation across different sociolinguistic ecologies.

In practice this means integrating meaningful real-world tasks with realistic communicational goals and (even) asking learners to reflect on their own convictions about what works in communication in English, i.e. integrating metalinguistic and metacognitive

tasks. For instance, thinking of the error-like stance of many EFL environments like the Portuguese, one could move from an EFL deficit perspective to an ELF difference perspective by simply asking learners, after watching a given video or talk, if they noticed any "errors" in the English spoken by the interlocutors or what role did those "errors" play in their speaking (metalinguistic). Subsequently, the question could be what do the learners think about "errors" or if they think they should be avoided whilst sharing the whys (metacognitive).

Another possibility, besides boosting the learners' willingness to interact in English by taking advantage of their integrative and instrumental motivation, would be going beyond narrow range topics offered by the textbook, like gaming. Asking learners to think about what they chat with other players, if they use English as a means to build common ground, and what do they do to understand and/or be understood by players from different parts of the world. Indeed, "ELF is by definition intercultural in nature since ELF communication is typically defined as involving speakers from different linguacultures" (Baker, 2015, p. 43). This is but a small example of how to integrate, not replace, an ELF approach with the existing EFL curriculum and thus trigger ELF-awareness for language use, teaching practice and learning. Ultimately, it is the teacher who must determine the balance between traditional and ELF-aware pedagogy and the best way to affect change in his glocal context.

Limitations

First and foremost, the biggest limitation of this work was the impossibility of interviewing anyone responsible either from the Directorate-General of Education, or from the Ministry of Education, or both. Despite the attempts made, via email, asking for the opportunity to interview the Director of Curriculum Development and the Secretary of State for Education, no answer was given.

The knock-on effect was the impossibility of triangulating the two methods. Drawing from different sources of evidence would not only enhance the study's validity and quality of the analysis but also cast light on the reasoning behind the tardy response of policymakers to updating the Portuguese guidelines for ELT and therefore, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Future research on this topic should attempt to include interviews to seek corroboration for the findings across different data sets and thus generate a higher level of trustworthiness whilst safeguarding potential reductionist accusations. Another avenue would be reaching out to in-service teachers to try to understand what their take on ELF is and if they incorporate or not ELF strategies into their teaching.

Conclusions

The significance of language policy in mainstream English language teaching and learning is unquestionable but whether ELT policy plays a positive role in instructional practice is open to question. As it happens, in Portugal the curriculum reference educational guidelines still reflect a Modern Foreign Languages paradigm as opposed to an ELF[6] paradigm and fail to adjust to the increasing range of identities that learners assume in situational speaking communities from different linguacultures. Unsurprisingly, the conceptual and practical shift towards ELF is not adequately covered in classroom practices and teaching materials. This may result in a continued focus on NS norms and insufficient preparation for learners to use English proficiently and intelligibly in diverse international contexts. If an effort to align English teaching and learning with its role as a global lingua franca can easily be traced in Brussels, the same cannot be said locally.

To bridge this gap, traditional EFL teaching methodology should integrate a 'plurilithic' perspective that encompasses speaking proficiency, intelligibility, and communication strategies that are essential for ELF communication. Speakers in ELF settings use communication strategies for effective interaction, these strategies have a highly relevant function in processes of negotiation and co-construction of meaning (Vettorel, 2018). Understanding is achieved by building a common ground through the signalling and negotiation of non-understanding to resolve instances of miscommunication. The goal is to equip learners with the necessary skills to succeed, i.e. to be proficient and intelligible, in diverse speech situations involving both native and non-native English speakers.

ELF-aware pedagogy can be implemented in EFL contexts without contradicting the curriculum, by using authentic materials, learner-centred methods (encouraging interactions in pair/group work), and metalinguistic and metacognitive activities to boost learners' confidence as ELF speakers. "If English is really to be taught for international communication, then it would seem to make sense to find out how it is actually used for international communication, that is to say how it functions as a lingua franca" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 194).

The sociolinguistic complexity of ELF challenges the traditional EFL model still entrenched in native-speakerism. ELF-awareness among teachers is then crucial for addressing the changing roles and approaches in mainstream ELT to meet current learners' needs and reflect English's role as a global means of communication. However, without the prompt of language policy, the full realization of ELF-oriented teaching is, although possible, difficult. It is hoped that a wide readership from the teaching (Portuguese) EFL community, but also educational policy makers will find food for thought in this paper.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

---

[6] ELF, as well as World Englishes (WE) and English as an International Language (EIL), has become a sub-field of Global Englishes, an umbrella term introduced by Galloway and Rose in 2015 (*Introducing global Englishes*) to aggregate different, yet ideologically overlapping sub-fields of Applied Linguistics (see Galloway, 2024 for a detailed account). As it happens, given the changing sociolinguistic landscape of English, GE adds more useful suggestions to the introduction of a 'plurilithically'-oriented approach to conventional English language education both in and outside the Portuguese context.

References

Bakar, N. I., Noordin, N., & Razali, A. B. (2019). Improving oral communicative competence in English using project-based learning activities. *English Language Teaching, 12*(4), 73-84. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n4p73

Baker, W. (2015). *Culture and identity through English as a Lingua Franca: rethinking concepts and goals in intercultural communication.* De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501502149

Başok, E. (2020). The gap between language teaching policies and classroom practices in the Turkish EFL context: The effects on teacher motivation. *MEXTESOL Journal, 44*(2), 1-14. https://www.mextesol.net/journal/index.php?page=journal&id_article=20048

Bayyurt, Y., & Dewey, M. (2020). Locating ELF in ELT. *ELT Journal, 74*(4), 369–376. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa048

Bowen, G. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Bravo, C., Duarte, E., & Cravo, A. (2013, maio 13). Metas curriculares de Inglês ensino básico: 2º e 3º Ciclos. http://dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/ficheiros/metas_curriculares_de_ingles_homologadas_13_de_maio_2013.pdf

Bravo, C., Duarte, E., & Cravo, A. (2015, julho 31). Metas curriculares de Inglês ensino básico: 1º, 2º e 3º Ciclos. http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Basico/Metas/ING/eb_metas_curriculares_ingles.pdf

Byram, M. (2014). Twenty-five years on – from cultural studies to intercultural citizenship. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 27*(3), 209-225. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2014.974329

Cogo, A., & Jenkins, J. (2010). English as a lingua franca in Europe: A mismatch between policy and practice. *European Journal of Language Policy, 2*(2), 271-294. https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2010.16

Correia, R. C. (2020). Locating intercultural awareness in the Portuguese English as a Foreign Language classroom. *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies, 11-12*, 27-50. https://revistas.fcsh.unl.pt/e-teals/article/view/58

Correia, R. C. (2021). Can we speak? Approaching oral proficiency in the EFL classroom. [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation], NOVA FCSH - Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Languages, Cultures and Modern Literatures. http://hdl.handle.net/10362/125772

Correia, R. C. (2024a). Rethinking speaking in ELT: Where does intelligibility stand in the EFL classroom? *Revista Portuguesa de Educação, 37*(2), 1-33. https://doi.org/10.21814/rpe.32003

Correia, R. C. (2024b). The art and science of assessment – Connecting classroom-based speaking sssessments to teachers' practice. In M. Carmo, *Education Applications & Developments IX* (pp. 49-66). inScience Press. https://doi.org/10.36315/2024eadIX04

Correia, R. C. (forthcoming). Shuttling communicative competence to the 21st Century. MEXTESOL Journal.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.* Cambridge University Press.

Council of Europe. (2016). *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education.* Council of Europe. https://rm.coe.int/16806ae621

Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume with New Descriptors.* Council of Europe Publishing. http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment - Companion Volume.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

Dewey, M., & Pineda, I. (2020). ELF and teacher education: attitudes and beliefs. *ELT Journal, 74*(4), 428–441. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa047

Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science. (2023, October). Resultados escolares por disciplina – 3.º ciclo do ensino público geral - Portugal Continental - 2011/12 - 2021/22. http://www.dgeec.mec.pt

Eberhard, D., Simons, G., & Fennig, C. (2023). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Twenty-sixth edition.* SIL International.

European Commission. (2011). *Lingua Franca: Chimera or reality?* Directorate-General for Translation. https://translationjournal.net/images/e-Books/PDF_Files/Lingua%20Franca%20Chimera%20or%20Reality.pdf

Galloway, N. (2024). What's in a name? Global Englishes—An umbrella term to address silo mentality or a misunderstood paradigm reinforcing silos? *TESOL Quarterly*, 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3337

Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing global Englishes.* Routledge.

Gardner, J. (2016). *Misused English words and expressions in EU publications.* European Court of Auditors.

Goldstein, G., Pon, G., Chiu, T., & Ngan, J. (2003). *Teaching and learning in a multilingual school: Choices, risks, and dilemmas.* Routledge.

Grazzi, E. (2018). *Trajectories of change in English language teaching. An ELF-aware approach.* Tangram Edizioni Scientifiche.

Guerra, L. (2016). Some common fallacies about learning and teaching English as a Lingua Franca. *Fólio – Revista de Letras*, 367-382. https://dspace.uevora.pt/rdpc/handle/10174/20230

Guerra, L., & Cavalheiro, L. (2019). When the textbook is not enough: How to shape an ELF classroom? In N. Sifakis, & N. Tsantila, *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL contexts* (pp. 117-131). Multilingual Matters.

Hanif, H. (2020). The role of L1 in an EFL classroom. *The Language Scholar* (8), 54-61. https://languagescholar.leeds.ac.uk/the-role-of-l1-in-an-efl-classroom/

Holliday, A. (2005). *The struggle to teach English as an International Language.* Oxford University Press.

Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal, 60*(4), 385-387. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030

Hurst, N. R. (2014). *The representation of culture in Portuguese-produced English language teaching coursebooks (1981-2006)* [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. University of Porto. https://hdl.handle.net/10216/73214

Irham, Huda, M., Sari, R., & Rofiq, Z. (2021). ELF and multilingual justice in English language teaching practices: Voices from Indonesian English lecturers. *Asian Englishes, 24*(3), 263-278. https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2021.1949779

Jenkins, S. (2010). *ELT Journal, 64*(4), 459-461. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq014

Kiczkowiak, M. (2019). Seven principles for writing materials for English as a Lingua Franca. *ELT Journal, 74*(1). https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccz042

Kirkpatrick, A. (2012). English as an Asian Lingua Franca: the 'Lingua Franca Approach' and implications for language education policy. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca, 1*(1), 121-139. https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2012-0006

Leslie, C. E. (2012). The spread of English in Portugal: A contribution to an understanding of the phenomenon. *artciencia.Com, Revista De Arte, Ciência E Comunicação* (15). https://doi.org/10.25770/artc.11607

Martins, C., & Cardoso, M. N. (2015). Let´s talk, shall we? - A oralidade no ensino do Inglês em Portugal. *Saber & Educar*, *20*, 138-158. http://dx.doi.org/10.17346/se.vol20.185

Martins, C., & Ferreira, S. (2019). Lost in migration – Mirandese at a crossroads. *Open Linguistics*, *5*(1), 488–495. https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2019-0026

Martins, G. d., Gomes, C. A., Brocardo, J., Pedroso, J. V., Carrillo, J. L., Silva, L., . . . Rodrigues, S. (2017). Students' profile by the end of compulsory schooling. (P. E. Directorate-General, Ed.). https://www.dge.mec.pt/perfil-dos-alunos

Ministry of Education. (2001). *Currículo nacional do ensino básico – Competências essenciais.* Departamento de Educação Básica.

Ministry of Education. (2001, January 18). Legal Decree No. 6/2001.

Ministry of Education. (2005, July 5). Legal Decree No. 14 753/2005.

Ministry of Education. (2005, October 12). Legal Decree No. 21 440/2005.

Ministry of Education. (2006, June 16). Legal Decree No. 12 591/2006.

Ministry of Education. (2008, May 26). Legal Decree No. 14460/2008.

Ministry of Education. (2021, July 6). Legal Decree No. 6605-A/2021.

Ministry of Education and Science. (2012, July 5). Legal Decree No. 139/2012.

Ministry of Education and Science. (2013, September 11). Legal Decree No. 11838-A/2013.

Ministry of Education and Science. (2014, December 12). Legal Decree No. 176/2014.

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 3º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 4º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 5º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 6º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 7º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 8º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Ministry of Education and Science. (2018, July). Aprendizagens essenciais - Inglês 9º Ano. https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais-ensino-basico

Modiano, M. (2022). EU language policy under review. *European Journal of Language Policy, 14*(2), 249-267. https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2022.14

Phillipson, R. (1992). ELT: The native speaker's burden? *ELT Journal, 46*(1), 12-18. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/46.1.12

Piccardo, E. (2016). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment - Phonological Scale Revision Process Report.* Education Department. Council of Europe – Language Policy. www.coe.int/lang-cefr

Rahimi, F., & Bagheri, M. S. (2011). On the status of English as a "Lingua Franca": An EFL academic context. *Studies in Literature and Language, 3*(2), 118-122. http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.sll.1923156320110302.308

Riegler, S. (2021). Normativity in language teacher learning: ELF and the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). *10*(1), 89-112. https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2021-2048

Rose, H., McKinley, J., & Nicola, G. (2020). Global Englishes and language teaching: A review of pedagogical research. *Language Teaching, 54*(2), 157-189. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000518

Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca.* Oxford University Press.

Sifakis, N., & Bayyurt, Y. (2018). ELF-aware teaching, learning and teacher development. In J. Jenkins, W. Baker, & M. Dewey, *The routledge handbook of English as a Lingua Franca* (pp. 456-467). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315717173

Sifakis, N., & Tsantila, N. (2019). *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL contexts.* Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/SIFAKI1763

Sato, T., Yujobo, Y. J., Okada, T., & Ogane, E. (2019). Communication strategies employed by low-proficiency users: Possibilities for ELF-informed pedagogy. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca, 8*(1), 9-35. https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2019-2003

Shiroza, S. (2020). Changing language, continuing discourse: A shift toward ELF and persistent native-speakerism in Japan's ELT policy. In R. A. Giri, A. Sharma, & J. D'Angelo (Eds.), *Functional variations in English: Theoretical considerations and practical challenges* (Vol. 37, pp. 277–293). Springer Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52225-4_18

Sugiharto, S. (2020). From policies as entities to policies as engagements: Transforming English language teachers into ELF-aware practitioners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 30*(3), 413-428. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12293

Suzuki, A. (2020). ELF for global mindsets? Theory and practice of ELT in formal education in Japan. In M. Konakahara, & K. Tsuchiya, *English as a Lingua Franca in Japan* (pp. 71-89). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33288-4_4

Taş, T., & Khan, Ö. (2020). On the models of communicative competence. *GLOBETSonline: International Conference on Education, Technology and Science*, (pp. 86-96). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344476391_On_the_Models_of_Communicative_Competence

Vettorel, P. (2018). ELF and communication strategies: Are they taken into account in ELT materials? *RELC Journal, 49*(1), 58 - 73. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217746204

Yüzlü, M. Y., & Atay, D. (2020). The effectiveness of L1 use in promoting oral production in L2 across different proficiency levels. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 16*(2), 864 - 882. https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.759330

Copyrights