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STUDY

From language awareness to critical multilingual language awareness: Chilean pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge for diverse contexts

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Abstract
It has become imperative for English language teacher education (ELTE) programmes to prepare pre-service teachers (PSTs) for the pedagogical and sociopolitical complexities of multilingual classrooms in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts such as Chile. This study explores critical multilingual language awareness (CMLA) as a framework for addressing language ideologies, power dynamics, and the sociopolitical dimensions of English language teaching. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews, data were collected from eight PSTs at different Chilean universities. The study examined their perceptions of the role and status of English in Chile, the knowledge they consider necessary for teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts, and the changes to ELTE curricula they envisage. Analysis revealed that while all eight participants valued language awareness and knowledge about language, some also questioned the strong 'linguistics' orientation of their preparation and called for greater attention to Anglocentric ideologies of power and to cultural and linguistic diversity, views partly consistent with principles of CMLA. These findings suggest considerations for ELTE and directions for further research on how programmes might support PSTs' CMLA.

Keywords: Chilean higher education system; critical multilingual language awareness; language awareness; pre-service English language teachers

1. Introduction

English language teacher education (ELTE) across the globe has undergone substantial changes due to not only constant policy and curriculum reforms but also, and most importantly, unprecedented cross-border, transnational mobility (Kelly, 2009). Social, cultural, and linguistic changes because of migration flows influence all aspects and facets of life, including education. In turn, classrooms become sites where diverse languages, cultures, and perspectives intersect, creating rich, multifaceted learning environments (Veliz et al., 2023; Veliz & Chen, 2025). In these diverse and transformed learning environments, teachers are required to be equipped with the knowledge to address the challenges around diversity in ways that are relevant and responsive to the needs of their learners with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds.

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However, despite the transformative potential of such learning environments, many teacher education programmes fall short in providing sufficient training that prepares English language pre-service teachers (PSTs) to navigate and respond to these complexities (Merryfield, 2000; Rowan et al., 2017). In Chile, ELTE, along with wider English language policy and curricula, has been at the centre of bitter criticism for maintaining a traditional focus on narrow and rigid methodologies and theoretical knowledge, leaving teachers ill-prepared to foster inclusive, culturally relevant pedagogy. As Gómez and Walker (2020) note, there is a persistent 'divorce between English and pedagogy' (p. 112), hindering efforts to create meaningful connections between linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical knowledge. By 'divorce', we refer to a widespread gap in teacher education programmes between deep linguistic knowledge and practical teaching skills. In the Chilean ELTE context, PSTs often develop strong grammatical, phonological, and syntactic expertise but receive limited training on how to teach English effectively in CaLD classrooms. More recently, despite meaningful attempts to democratise the teaching and learning of English in Chile (Barger et al., 2024), several scholars (e.g., Arancibia & Asenjo, 2024; Gómez, 2024; Veliz et al., 2024a) have echoed prevalent concerns about a traditional, grammar-based orientation to teaching and learning English that is entrenched in curriculum and practice. This unfortunate reality stands in stark contrast to the overarching goal of the English National Curriculum in Chile that emphasises that learning English is an avenue for future citizens to be prepared to join the global economy, access information, and have better life opportunities (Ministerio de Educación [Mineduc], 2015).

The current state of English language education in Chile, as portrayed by Veliz et al. (2024a), reflects a system deeply embedded in inequities and exclusionary practices. These conditions continue to foster and perpetuate dominant power asymmetries and ideologies (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2024; Veliz et al., 2024b; Veliz & Toledo-Sandoval, 2026), prioritising English as a marker of social and economic mobility while marginalising linguistic and cultural diversity. This English language teaching landscape portrays what De Costa and Van Gorp (2023) call a 'field … fraught with precarity' (p. 553) and in dire need of criticality (Veliz & Veliz-Campos, 2019). Such criticality is vital for addressing these entrenched issues and reimagining a more contextually relevant and inclusive form of English language education that better serves marginalised learners.

Within this context, critical multilingual language awareness (CMLA) offers potential for reshaping English language teaching and learning in Chile. CMLA asks teachers not only to recognise the linguistic diversity of learners and communities but also to question how language is legitimised in schools (García, 2017). By valuing the linguistic and cultural diversity of all learners, it challenges exclusionary practices and hegemonic ideologies and calls for heightened awareness of how language and power intersect. Less is known, however, about how Chilean PSTs themselves view the place of English in society and education, what knowledge they consider necessary for diverse classrooms, and what kind of ELTE curriculum they imagine. Drawing on interviews with eight PSTs, this study addressed the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do Chilean PSTs perceive the role and status of English in Chile?

RQ2: What knowledge do Chilean PSTs consider necessary for teaching English in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts?

RQ3: What changes to ELTE curricula do PSTs envisage, and to what extent do their perceptions reflect principles of CMLA?

2. English language teaching in Chile

ELTE in Chile has been shaped by the neoliberal restructuring of education that began under the military dictatorship established in 1973, including the rapid expansion of private higher education

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(Cruz-Coke, 2004; Inzunza et al., 2011), and by the aspiration, promoted by the democratic governments of the 1990s and 2000s, to become a bilingual country (Barahona, 2016; Glas, 2008). Policies such as the Programa Inglés Abre Puertas (English Opens Doors) and standards-based accreditation requirements have prioritised English proficiency, linguistic accuracy, and alignment with international benchmarks, encouraging universities to foreground measurable linguistic outcomes while pedagogical, sociocultural, and multilingual preparation remains marginal.

With an impetus for the fulfilment of such aspirations, ELTE programmes in Chile have made continued efforts to prepare PSTs for such global contexts. However, as widely critiqued by several scholars (e.g., Barahona et al., 2021; Barger et al., 2024; Veliz et al., 2024a), much of the curriculum orientation across ELTE programmes has tended to be on the development of PSTs' language proficiency over pedagogical or methodological aspects of language instruction, in other words, to develop competent language users rather than competent language teachers. In a critique of the ineffective national curriculum guidelines, Abrahams and Silva-Ríos (2017) claimed that ELTE programmes do not 'provide realistic preparation for the difficult task of teaching foreign languages to a rather diverse population' (p. 111). This perpetuates a long-standing, and rather conflicting, English language teaching and learning approach that favours a 'transmission-style pedagogy, focus on forms, memorization of vocabulary and teaching mostly in the first language' (Abrahams & Silva-Ríos, 2017, p. 111).

These attributes of ELT pedagogy across the country fall within what has been traditionally labelled as a strong 'applied linguistics' orientation, where greater emphasis is placed on linguistic expertise than on the pedagogical competencies necessary for teaching English effectively in diverse contexts (Barahona, 2016). This traditional approach to language practice reflects a prevailing emphasis on learners' and teachers' language awareness (LA), often overshadowing the importance of deeper engagement with the broader sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of language education. It prioritises surface-level understanding of language properties, formalities, and 'peculiarities' rather than fostering the critical skills necessary for unpacking, challenging, and disrupting the status quo (Veliz & Veliz-Campos, 2019). In addition to policy and institutional constraints, the persistence of linguistics-driven and Anglocentric orientations in Chilean ELTE programmes must also be understood in relation to teacher educators' own academic socialisation. Many ELTE academics were themselves trained within applied linguistics traditions that prioritise language structure, proficiency, and native-speaker norms, often shaped by Global North epistemologies (Veliz et al., 2024a). As a result, these orientations become normalised and reproduced in curriculum design, assessment practices, and pedagogical priorities, frequently at the expense of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies. This ideological continuity helps explain why critical, multilingual, and socially just perspectives remain marginal within ELTE programmes, despite increasing classroom diversity.

3. Linguistic and cultural diversity in Chile: why CMLA matters

Chile's linguistic and cultural landscape is more diverse than the monolingual, Spanish-dominant image often projected in national discourse, including the 'bilingual country' aspiration discussed above. In the 2024 Census, 11.5% of the population (around 2.1 million people) identified as belonging to an Indigenous people, 77.2% of them Mapuche (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas [INE], 2025). Indigenous languages such as Mapuzugun (Mapudungun), Aymara, Quechua, and Rapa Nui have been historically marginalised in schooling and are formally present in the national curriculum only through the Indigenous Language subject, which schools are required to offer where Indigenous students exceed 20% of enrolment (Mineduc, n.d.). Chile has also become a country of immigration: the 2024 Census counted 1.6 million foreign-born residents (8.8% of the population), mostly from Venezuela, Peru, and Colombia (INE, 2025), and foreign students made up around 7.4% of total enrolment in 2023 (Limpe, 2024). Migrant learners bring varieties of Spanish and, in some cases, other languages (e.g., Haitian Creole, or Quechua and Aymara among migrants from the Andean region),

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as well as different cultural and educational experiences, into classrooms that have traditionally been imagined as linguistically homogeneous.

This diversity is directly relevant to ELTE. English classes are among the school spaces where hierarchies between languages become most visible: national policy frames the 'bilingual' ideal as Spanish–English bilingualism (Barahona, 2016; Glas, 2008; Veliz & Toledo-Sandoval, 2026), and ELTE programmes, as discussed above, prepare teachers primarily as proficient users and analysts of English. Under these conditions, learners' Indigenous, migrant, and heritage languages and cultural knowledge are seldom recognised as resources for learning English and may be rendered invisible or framed as deficits. A language-awareness orientation, centred on knowledge about English as a system, offers PSTs few tools to notice this diversity, or to question why English is ideologically positioned above the other languages in their students' lives. CMLA is therefore particularly pertinent to the Chilean context for three reasons. First, it directs teachers' attention to the multilingual repertoires actually present in classrooms and communities, including minoritised and Indigenous languages (García, 2017). Second, it makes visible how colonial and neoliberal histories, which continue to shape both the position of Indigenous peoples and the promotion of English in Chile, sustain unequal language hierarchies (De Costa & Van Gorp, 2023; Prasad & Lory, 2020). Third, it positions teachers as agents who can question rather than simply transmit dominant language norms, and who can value plurilingualism in the pursuit of more equitable and democratic schooling (García, 2017; Manan & David, 2021).

4. The practicum in Chilean ELTE: power, hierarchy, and PSTs' agency

Because the participants were in the final stages of their programmes, the practicum is an important context for understanding how they make sense of language, diversity, and CMLA. In Chilean ELTE, practicum experiences are typically organised progressively across the degree and culminate in a final professional practicum in a school, where PSTs teach under the guidance of a school-based mentor teacher and the oversight of the university (Tabali & Monasterio, 2024). As elsewhere, this arrangement places PSTs at the intersection of institutions with different expectations: the university, which assesses them against programme requirements and professional standards; the school, which expects them to fit existing curricular, assessment, and behavioural routines; and the mentor teacher, who is at once a model, a gatekeeper, and an evaluator (Zeichner, 2010). Research in Chile indicates that these relationships are not always well aligned, with mentor teachers reporting a wish for clearer guidance from universities and tensions between institutional expectations and their own autonomy (Tabali & Monasterio, 2024), and the theory–practice divide remaining a persistent concern in ELTE (Barger et al., 2024).

These hierarchical and relational conditions are likely to shape what PSTs feel able to say, question, or try out during the practicum, and therefore how they understand and engage with CMLA. PSTs are assessed by the very people whose practices they may wish to question and may be reluctant to depart from mentor teachers' grammar-focused routines, prescribed textbooks or test-oriented expectations, particularly when doing so would draw on languages and knowledge that the school does not treat as legitimate in English lessons (cf. Anderson & Stillman, 2013). In such conditions, critical and multilingual orientations may be more readily voiced in reflection, as in the interviews reported here, than enacted in classrooms. We therefore read participants' accounts as situated within, and partly constrained by, these practicum relationships rather than as free-standing statements of belief.

5. From LA to CMLA

There has been wide consensus amongst the ELT and Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) community that LA plays a fundamental role in ELT practice. LA has been deemed a vital dimension of English language teachers' professional knowledge (Ellis, 2012) and

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a critical aspect of the foundational knowledge that language teachers need for effective pedagogical practice. Traditionally defined as teachers' 'explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use' (Association for Language Awareness [ALA], n.d.), LA also refers more broadly to language teachers' cognition – knowledge and beliefs – about language and about the language they teach (Andrews, 2006; Breidbach et al., 2011). In the context of language teacher education, LA established itself in the 1960s under the auspices of the 'International House', which aimed to deliver rather short, highly intensive and practical training for teachers of English as a foreign language (TEFL). These courses were specifically targeted at native speakers of English with no previous teaching experience (Ellis, 2012). According to Veliz and Chen (2025), this monolingual, English-dominant approach overlooks and undervalues the rich linguistic diversity that CaLD learners contribute to the classroom, thus reinforcing a deficit perspective by prioritising the target language while neglecting to validate and support multi/plurilingualism. With a view to moving beyond this narrow perspective on language, scholars proposed reconceptualising the LA model into critical language awareness (CLA).

The development of CLA has been explored in several studies. In the US, Zhang-Wu and Tian (2023) examined a translanguaging-infused course in a language teacher education programme, drawing on interviews, teaching journals, lesson plans, and pictorial posters. Teacher candidates reconceptualised bi/multilingualism, acknowledged the power dynamics within language use and challenged English-only ideologies, yet their emerging CLA was not matched in their lesson plans, reflecting the difficulty of translating theoretical understanding into practice. In a control–experimental study, Mahalingappa et al. (2025) integrated CLA content into a language teacher preparation course, addressing how language works in sociopolitical contexts, language and identity, language ideologies, and diversity. Although both groups valued the relationship between language and identity, the experimental group reported significantly greater awareness of language diversity, the need to support diverse students, their own language use relative to 'standard English', and their own language ideologies.

Despite efforts to expand LA from a focus on language as a system to CLA to address power, identity, and privilege (Shapiro, 2022), further steps have been made to centre students' dynamic language practices and challenge colonial legacies of language oppression. This further step has been in the form of a reconceptualised model under the name of CMLA (García, 2017). CMLA, according to García (2017), emphasises the importance of teacher awareness of the socially constructed nature of language, recognising the historical impacts of colonial and imperialistic language oppression and appreciating the value of plurilingualism in fostering a democratic society. A more recent adaptation of CMLA places power at the centre of attention to emphasise the necessity for teachers to develop an awareness of how power intersects with cognitive, affective, social, and performative domains (Prasad & Lory, 2020). In their case study, Prasad and Lory (2020) examined how a critical multilingual approach to language instruction is adopted by a PST and a novice teacher educator. Moreover, through ideological 'shifts', the case study participants veered from affective 'sympathy' with CMLA to a deeper understanding of power dynamics as they enacted a CMLA stance in their teaching practices.

Manan and David (2021) highlight the role CMLA could play in educators' professional training in multilingual and multiethnic countries, creating pedagogical spaces that value 'multiple languages, literacies, and identities in the classroom' (p. 670). In teacher education, CMLA should equip teachers with a critical awareness, through their language use and practice, to challenge social inequities rather than reproduce the status quo (Clark & Ivanič, 1997). De Costa and Van Gorp (2023) argue that efforts to decolonise pedagogy align well with the broader aims of CMLA, suggesting that ELTE could incorporate CMLA as a framework for engaging with the sociopolitical dimensions of language use in multilingual contexts.

Yet, while Cummins (2023) asserts that 'virtually all teachers can choose to implement LA projects across the curriculum and move along a trajectory towards CLA and CMLA' (p. 570), a deliberate

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and critical transition from CLA to CMLA is essential in language teacher education. This shift is not merely a natural progression but a necessary reorientation that demands a deeper engagement with the sociopolitical dimensions of language (De Costa & Van Gorp, 2023). This transition necessitates a pedagogical shift that moves beyond an awareness of language, language structures, and formalities as well as ideologies (as promoted in CLA) to actively challenging and disrupting hegemonic discourses that sustain linguistic and social inequities (García, 2017; Manan & David, 2021). In the Chilean context, where language education remains largely anchored in the principles of LA with some emerging traces of CLA, the need for a deliberate transition towards CMLA becomes even more pressing.

While LA focuses on explicit knowledge about language systems and CLA foregrounds critical awareness of power, ideology, and inequality in language use, CMLA extends this critique by centring multilingualism as lived practice. CMLA is not only concerned with recognising English dominance, but also with valuing, legitimising, and pedagogically mobilising multiple languages and linguistic repertoires, including minoritised and Indigenous languages (García, 2017; Prasad & Lory, 2020). In empirical terms, CMLA becomes visible when teachers move beyond critique to articulate how multilingual realities should reshape curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom interaction.

6. Ideology in this study

Because the notion of ideology recurs throughout this article, we clarify how we use it. Following scholarship on language ideologies, we understand ideology not as individual opinion or 'false belief' but as socially and historically produced sets of beliefs, assumptions, and values about languages, their speakers, and their uses (Gal, 2023; Kroskrity, 2010; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Ideologies naturalise the interests of particular social groups by presenting some languages, varieties, speakers, and ways of teaching as normal, legitimate, or superior, and others as deficient or out of place, and in doing so they help to reproduce unequal relations of power (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Deroo & Ponzio, 2023; Veliz & Toledo-Sandoval, 2026). In this study, ideology is considered at three interrelated levels. In relation to language, it concerns what counts as 'proper' or legitimate language, as in standard-language ideology, native-speakerism, and monolingualism, which position English (and particular varieties of English) above learners' Spanish, Indigenous, and heritage languages. In relation to culture, it concerns whose knowledge, identities, and ways of life are valued in the classroom, for example, when Anglophone cultures are presented as the 'global' norm and local cultures and Indigenous knowledges as peripheral. In relation to teaching, it concerns beliefs about what a competent English teacher knows and does, such as the view that expertise resides in mastery of grammar, phonology, and proficiency rather than in pedagogical, sociocultural, and critical knowledge. We refer to this constellation as Anglocentric, linguistics-driven ideologies.

Ideology is also central to how we understand the shift from LA to CMLA. A language-awareness orientation, which foregrounds explicit knowledge about language systems, can leave these ideologies unexamined and, in that sense, is not ideologically neutral. CLA makes ideology its object of critique by asking teachers and learners to notice how language use naturalises unequal power relations (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Shapiro, 2022). CMLA extends this critique by centring multilingual repertoires and the historical legacies of colonial language oppression (García, 2017), and by asking teachers to act on this awareness in their pedagogy, a movement that Prasad and Lory (2020) describe as ideological 'shifts'. Accordingly, ideology operates in this article in two ways: as the object of participants' critical awareness (e.g., their views on the dominance of English, native-speaker norms, or the 'bilingual' ideal), and as an analytic category through which we interpret how participants position themselves in relation to these ideologies, from critique of English dominance (CLA) to articulating alternatives that value multiple languages and cultural–linguistic identities (CMLA) (see Sections 11 and 12).

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7. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore complex human experiences and social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for unpacking the nuances of individuals' experiences, as it allows for an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives, interpretations, and lived experiences. Its affordances lie primarily in its ability to capture the richness of human behaviour, the contextual factors influencing it, and the intricate ways individuals construct meaning. In this study, we sought to develop a more nuanced understanding of PSTs' critical views of the English language in an increasingly diverse Chilean landscape and the perceived required knowledge for them to embrace such diversity in Chilean classrooms. This allowed for the exploration of how ELTE programmes are responding to this changing environment in preparing classroom-ready teachers for teaching in diverse settings.

8. Participants

The eight participants were drawn from 28 PSTs recruited for a larger project on teachers' language ideologies, agency, and identity in contexts of multicultural and multilingual diversity in Chile; data from the other 20 are not reported here. Participants were randomly selected from those in the last 2 years of their ELTE programme; four, in their final year, were also completing a research (dissertation) project (Table 1).

Being in the final stages of the ELTE programme entails that significant practicum experience would have been undertaken to inform PSTs' understandings of language, pedagogy, and diversity in classrooms, along with their sense of preparedness for CaLD classrooms. Furthermore, all eight participants had also accrued paid school-based teaching experience while studying, ranging from 6 months to 2.5 years (see Table 1), typically through part-time teaching posts (see Fiona's account). This paid work is distinct from, and additional to, the compulsory supervised practicum. The participants were therefore pre-service rather than in-service teachers: none had graduated or was employed as a fully qualified teacher at the time of the interviews. Table 1 presents an overview of participants' profile.

Participants came from eight different universities (five private, three public). All attended undergraduate ELTE programmes that prepare teachers for the national school system and, despite minor differences in how courses and practicums are organised, share a core emphasis on linguistic proficiency, grammar, and professional standards shaped by national accreditation requirements, with critical and inclusive perspectives less explicitly foregrounded (Barger et al., 2024; Epperson & Páez, 2024). Six participants reported knowing languages other than Spanish and English, mostly at a limited level: French (Pedro, Fiona), Japanese (Camila), German (Silvia), and Mapudungun (Eric, Sofia).

Table 1. Years of paid teaching experience and study of participating pre-service teachers

Name	Year of study	Years of paid teaching experience	University setting
Silvia	4	1	Private
Sofia	5 (undertaking research project)	1.5	Private
Camila	5 (undertaking research project)	2	Public
Eric	4	0.5	Private
Fran	4	1	Public
Pedro	5 (undertaking research project)	2.5	Public
Daniel	4	1	Private
Fiona	5 (undertaking research project)	1.5	Private

Note: Years of teaching experience refers to paid school-based teaching undertaken while studying and does not include the compulsory practicum.

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Three (Eric, Sofia, and Daniel) identified as coming from low-socioeconomic backgrounds which, they reported, had influenced their perspectives on language diversity and inclusion.

9. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews where participants were interviewed one-on-one for an average duration of 67 minutes. In general, interviews ranged between 46 and 74 minutes and were conducted online through Zoom. With participants' consent, each interview (see Appendix A for interview questions) was recorded and saved in an institution-authenticated research drive for security and further analysis. To leverage participants' language repertoires, they were encouraged to translanguage during the interview (e.g., Spanish and English) to provide a more equitable, safer, and more comfortable space for better conveying their views, experiences, and emotions in a linguistically flexible and unconstrained manner. The transcribed data of the eight participants yielded over 18,000 words of raw material, which was reduced to approximately 17,000 words after a 'data cleaning process'. This was intended to eliminate any unnecessary or irrelevant text that did not make any meaningful contribution to the overall narrative by participants. Examples included repetitions, off-topic comments, and unrelated remarks by the researcher or participant, etc.

The transcription process of interview data was assisted by the Zoom automated transcription functionality. To ensure the accuracy and fidelity of transcriptions to participants' responses, each interview was carefully listened to once to correct any inconsistencies in the transcriptions and to develop greater familiarity with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2021). Member checking – returning data to participants so that they can verify or elaborate on them (Urry et al., 2024) – was

Table 2. Summary of emerging themes, salient codes, and illustrative excerpts

Themes	Salient codes	Illustrative excerpts
Global opportunities and cultural dominance	· English facilitates job prospects · English as a lingua franca · English for mobility and travel · English dominance · Marginalisation of heritage/Indigenous languages · Tension between functional English and ideology	'It doesn't let us see the value in our own culture or own local languages' (Fran)
The knowledge base for diverse contexts	· Satisfaction with linguistic instruction · Emphasis on grammatical knowledge · Need for enhanced pedagogical training · Lack of preparation for diverse contexts · Questioning the critical purpose of English teaching · Developing critical thinking skills in students	'We need more exposure to the pedagogical side of teaching English' (Daniel) 'Why are we even teaching this language and not another?' (Eric)
ELTE for a multilingual world: A reimagined curriculum	· Gap in critical humanities subjects · Call for philosophy/sociology reinstatement · Integrating inter/cross-cultural understanding · Need for critical studies of language · Challenging power dynamics and social justice	'… and Englishes, and varieties, and traditions, and also other languages' (Pedro) 'Give us the tools to challenge knowledge' (Eric)

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used to support the trustworthiness of the data. To avoid sending participants a large volume of transcribed data for member checking, we provided transcripts of the first 15–20 minutes of their interviews and allowed 3 weeks for review. Participants were asked to contact the lead author with any queries about the transcribed sample or to confirm that it accurately represented their responses.

We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), an iterative process of coding, theming, decontextualising, and recontextualising the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The lead author coded the transcripts through multiple readings, and all authors developed the themes collaboratively by discussing connections across codes. In reporting the findings, we indicate how many and which participants expressed a view; these counts describe the distribution of views within this small sample and are not intended to generalise. Three themes were developed:

1. Global opportunities and cultural dominance
2. The knowledge base for diverse contexts
3. ELTE for a multilingual world: A reimagined curriculum

Table 2 summarises the salient codes associated with each theme, with brief illustrative excerpts.

10. Researcher/Author positionality

Leonardo: Given the qualitative nature of this study, it is vital to acknowledge the researchers' reflexivity and positionality in the research process. This allows for a critical understanding of the researchers' role in knowledge production with greater clarity around the theoretical assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and levels of subjectivity involved in the reading and interpretation of results. As three researchers from the Global South, teaching and researching in the Global North, we feel deeply committed to expanding the discussion on how our positionality shapes our interpretations and methodological choices. Our ethnic backgrounds and lived experiences inform our engagement with, and reading of, the data. Given our commitment to social justice and equity in language education, we approached the analysis with an awareness of the power dynamics embedded and embodied in language education and teacher preparation in the context of Chile. My own research on English language education in Chile, including work cited in this article, also informed the study design and his reading of participants' critiques.

Julian: As a transnational, translingual practitioner researcher and teacher educator in Applied Linguistics and TESOL, I am experienced in working with international students from CaLD backgrounds and multicultural communities in the Global North (USA, Canada, Australia). Hence, my experiences have helped me better understand the challenges encountered by PSTs during their practicums and how global English imperialism still perpetuates hegemonic ideologies that dictate education reforms and directions of ELTE programmes in the Global South.

Andy: As a scholar from the Global South who has experienced marginalisation and now holds a privileged position in a major Australian university, including editorial roles in several journals, I am committed to creating opportunities for minoritised scholars in applied linguistics to share research that is locally significant and globally relevant. This commitment shaped my attention to knowledge diversity and to context-sensitive understandings of language, identity, and power in this study.

11. Findings

We present three themes, each addressing one RQ. The first theme, 'Global opportunities and cultural dominance', addresses RQ1 (perceptions of the role and status of English in Chile); the second, 'The knowledge base for diverse contexts', addresses RQ2 (the knowledge considered necessary for CaLD contexts); and the third, 'ELTE for a multilingual world: A reimagined curriculum', addresses RQ3 (envisaged curricular changes and the extent to which they reflect principles of CMLA).

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11.1. Global opportunities and cultural dominance

To address RQ1, participants were asked to reflect on the role and status of English in Chile. Daniel, Silvia, and Pedro described English as a gateway to opportunity. Daniel, for example, saw English as 'the language that open doors like the programme we have in Chile' and 'the language for interconnections', while Silvia linked it to travel, employability, cultural understanding, and identity:

> For me, English is an opportunity for job prospects that also allows you [to] travel the world with easier communication, but very important is the fact that you learn about other cultures. You appreciate cultural diversity, and yourself as a person.

With an emphasis on the cultural dimension of language, Fran critiqued the fact that English has come to occupy a central place in the Chilean sociopolitical space that has limited opportunities for dialogue that recognises the value of local cultures and Indigenous languages:

> I love English and the opportunities it opens up, but in our local culture, it has a dominant place like everywhere in societies; it doesn't let us see the value in our own culture or own local languages. It's unfair, what do you think?

Fran's critique of English dominance reflects CLA and touches on the undervaluing of local and Indigenous linguistic knowledges and identities (Prasad & Lory, 2020). Pedro also valued English as a gateway to global opportunities but argued that local languages, as a 'mark of local identities', deserve equal attention in schooling:

> Because of English I got a scholarship for a semester abroad so it provides opportunities for global connections and understanding, but the same importance should go to our local, traditional customs and languages from primary or pre-school. More awareness, understanding, and teaching about our roots because it's a mark of local identities.

Daniel, Silvia, Fran, and Pedro thus presented English as a vehicle for communication, mobility, and professional growth and, in Fran's and Pedro's cases, also as a source of tension within Chilean society. Their accounts echo the tensions between the functional utility of English and the ideological implications of its dominance reported in previous Chilean research (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2024; Barahona et al., 2024).

11.2. The knowledge base for diverse contexts

Regarding their university preparation, participants expressed some ambivalence about the focus on language and linguistics in their programmes. All eight valued the disciplinary knowledge they had acquired, and five (Camila, Eric, Daniel, Fiona, and Sofia) spoke explicitly about its depth. Camila, for example, expressed overall satisfaction with her linguistic preparation:

> I'm happy with the teacher training I've received. I think I've received good instruction to be a good English teacher, with great knowledge about the language, the grammar, and the phonology to teach my students.

Eric similarly felt that 'the strong grammatical knowledge that I have is good because it will make me a good teacher, to teach with more confidence', and Daniel wished to be 'an expert in the language and know all the grammar tricks about how language works'. Fiona described applying her grammatical knowledge as a part-time teacher:

> With the knowledge I've learnt in university so far I can share my skills and knowledge with students, too. In my school – I teach part-time – I am becoming like a grammar expert because

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> students in the upper years ask me questions all the time, and I can answer them well with no hesitation.

Daniel, however, while valuing the linguistic foundation of his training, felt that universities should focus more on pedagogy as classrooms become more diverse:

> I'm actually very happy to know more about language and all the linguistics courses, the language and grammar subjects, the phonetics and phonology, I love the subjects. But I do feel that we need more exposure to the pedagogical side of teaching English, how to do it in different ways, and especially in different contexts.

Three participants (Eric, Sofia, and Daniel) indicated that developing a critical stance towards English, multilingualism, and social justice was as important as disciplinary knowledge. These three were also the participants who identified as coming from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, which, by their own account, shaped their views on diversity and inclusion. Eric posed fundamental questions about the purposes of English teaching:

> I know the knowledge of English is important for us because we are teachers of English and we want to be good, but why are [we] teaching English? Who is learning the language? Why are we even teaching this language and not another? Do students know why this language and not another? I think these are fair questions for all.

Sofia similarly emphasised developing students' capacity to be 'critical' users of the language:

> The language side of it is fine for me at uni. I learn everything and try to apply all the learning of the language, but it's also important for us to develop the skills for empowering our students to be critical thinkers in a world of globalisation.

While acknowledging the importance of explicit knowledge of English, Eric and Sofia raised questions about the role, purpose, and function of English teaching that, as Gómez and Walker (2020) note, often remain unaddressed in Chilean ELTE. These concerns, together with Fran's call for attention to 'how discrimination and power happen in society' (see Section 11.3), suggest possible emerging ideological shifts aligned with CLA and, in Eric's question about 'this language and not another', with CMLA. They indicate that, for these participants, linguistic knowledge alone was not considered sufficient.

11.3. ELTE for a multilingual world: A reimagined curriculum

Having explored PSTs' views and understandings of their disciplinary knowledge of language along with their understandings of the role and status of English in the Chilean context, they were prompted to critically reflect on a reimagined ELTE curriculum that responds more effectively to the increasing social, cultural, and linguistic changes of Chilean classrooms.

Daniel, Eric, and Fran suggested that the weighting of their programmes towards linguistics, while valued, was not sufficient on its own for teaching in diverse classrooms, and that a reimagined curriculum should balance the 'formalities' of language with the sociopolitical dimensions of its teaching, learning, and use. Silvia, who had recently completed her final practicum, proposed reinstating philosophy, drawing on a conversation with her supervising teacher:

> I recently finished my last practicum and I was talking to my supervising teacher and she said that in the past, around 15 years ago, students would study philosophy, sociology, anthropology and other subjects like that … that … really developed that critical view of the world, who we are, how we know the knowledge, but these days, we don't have any of that. I think having philosophy as a subject would make a huge difference.

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Silvia's account suggests that, in her experience and in her supervising teacher's recollection, humanities-based subjects that 'really developed that critical view of the world' are less present in ELTE than in the past; we did not examine programme documents to verify this. Pedro envisaged a curriculum centred on inter-, intra-, and cross-cultural understanding as a 'pillar' of effective inclusive practice:

> A pillar of effective practice in today's world is to have a really good cultural understanding of ourselves, others in our context and of other cultures, and Englishes, and varieties, and traditions, and also other languages. Without this, we are teaching English from a really narrow perspective.

It is interesting to highlight Pedro's view of what a 'narrow perspective' of English language teaching may entail. Pedro suggested that successful English language teaching should transcend the technical and formal aspects of language and integrate a broader, more inclusive, and nuanced understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Fran proposed that critical studies of language should be part of undergraduate preparation:

> For those of us who want to do a Master's in TESOL or Applied Linguistics or TEFL, we should have at least an elective subject on critical discourse or critical studies of language. I know I will have something like this in the master's but why not in undergraduate programmes. We could critically look at the materials, the approaches, the lecture notes, the messages and discourses in society about English from a different perspective, how discrimination and power happen in society, and how migrants are left out.

Eric similarly called for spaces to 'unveil what lies behind the language that we teach and help our students to be more critical of the purposes for learning English':

> A new curriculum should not only impart the knowledge of English, and English being the global language, but give us the tools to challenge knowledge, especially the knowledge connected with English as a powerful language and embrace more social justice.

Fran's and Eric's proposals call for a more critical stance towards English language teaching, consistent with critical pedagogy and CLA (Shapiro, 2022); Fran's attention to discrimination and to how migrants are 'left out' extends this towards the minoritised speakers that CMLA foregrounds. Pedro's call to include 'Englishes, and varieties, and traditions, and also other languages' in teacher preparation comes closest to CMLA as defined above, as it treats multiple languages and varieties, and not only critique of English, as legitimate curricular content (García, 2017).

12. Discussion

This discussion concerns the eight participants in this study and is not intended to generalise to Chilean PSTs or ELTE programmes. Participants' orientations appear to sit along a continuum between CLA and CMLA rather than constituting an enactment of CMLA: critical awareness of English dominance was voiced by several participants, whereas multilingual orientations were articulated by fewer and mainly at the level of curricular imagination. Because our data are retrospective interview accounts, we cannot show how practicum relationships or programme structures shaped these views, although both may help explain why they remained largely aspirational (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Tabali & Monasterio, 2024).

Participants' accounts of the balance between linguistic and pedagogical preparation should also be read in light of the policy and institutional context outlined earlier, in which accreditation requirements and proficiency benchmarks shape ELTE programmes (Barger et al., 2024; Veliz et al., 2024a).

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Participants spoke both as beneficiaries of their programmes, valuing the linguistic knowledge they had gained, and as critics of what those programmes left out.

In relation to RQ1, participants in this study described English as a gateway to employment, mobility, and intercultural communication: Pedro drew on his semester abroad, and Silvia linked English to an appreciation of 'cultural diversity'. Fran and Pedro also expressed concern that the dominance of English may contribute to the undervaluing of local languages and cultures, a concern consistent with recent studies in Chile (Arancibia & Asenjo, 2024; Barger et al., 2024; Gómez, 2024; Veliz et al., 2024a). These accounts of English as both an opportunity and a source of inequality reflect a critique of English dominance rather than a fully developed CMLA orientation (García, 2017).

In relation to RQ2, all eight participants valued the grammatical and linguistic knowledge developed in their programmes, consistent with the linguistics-oriented model of Chilean ELTE described by Abrahams and Silva-Ríos (2017). For three (Daniel, Eric, and Sofia), however, this knowledge appeared necessary but not sufficient for diverse classrooms, a view that resonates with earlier Chilean studies (Barahona et al., 2021; Barger et al., 2024; Veliz et al., 2024a). Eric's questions about why English, rather than another language, is taught touch on the language hierarchies that CMLA foregrounds (García, 2017). Because these three participants also came from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, their views may not be shared by PSTs from other backgrounds.

In relation to RQ3, the curricular changes participants envisaged centred on adding critical and cultural content: an elective in critical studies of language (Fran), tools to 'challenge knowledge' (Eric), philosophy and other humanities subjects (Silvia), and cultural understanding of 'Englishes, and varieties … and also other languages' (Pedro). Fran's and Eric's proposals extend the critique of English dominance associated with CLA, whereas Pedro's proposal and Fran's attention to excluded migrants move further towards CMLA by treating multiple languages, varieties, and speakers as legitimate curricular concerns (García, 2017; Prasad & Lory, 2020). These calls also resonate with decolonial critiques of the geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo & Bussmann, 2023; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). They remain, however, at the level of curricular imagination: participants did not describe enacting them, and their accounts of what their programmes lack reflect their own experiences rather than a review of ELTE curricula.

12.1. Considerations for ELTE and directions for further research

These findings point to directions for further research rather than recommendations for ELTE in Chile as a whole. First, the tension participants described between valued linguistic preparation and limited attention to diversity could be examined in other programmes, with larger and more varied samples and analysis of programme documents. Second, participants' proposals, such as critical studies of language and attention to local, Indigenous, and migrant languages, could be trialled as curricular options and evaluated for their effects on PSTs' practice (De Costa & Van Gorp, 2023; Mahalingappa et al., 2025). Third, studies combining interviews with classroom observation could show whether orientations expressed in interviews translate into teaching.

12.2. Limitations

This study has several limitations. The findings draw on interviews with eight PSTs, each from a different university, selected from the 28 recruited for a larger project, so they cannot be generalised to Chilean PSTs or ELTE programmes. The data are self-reported and retrospective, and we did not observe participants' teaching. Member checking was based on the first 15–20 minutes of each interview rather than full transcripts, and the initial coding was undertaken by the lead author, although the themes were developed collaboratively. Finally, three participants (Eric, Sofia, and Daniel) came from low-socioeconomic backgrounds that, by their own account, shaped their views on diversity

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and inclusion, and several of the more critical excerpts come from these participants. Readers should weigh their excerpts accordingly.

13. Concluding remarks

This study explored how eight Chilean PSTs viewed the role and status of English, the knowledge they considered necessary for CaLD classrooms, and the ELTE curriculum they envisaged. All eight valued the linguistic knowledge their programmes provided; some also judged it insufficient on its own and imagined curricula that would address power and culture and, in a few cases, multiple languages. These views sit along a continuum from CLA towards CMLA and remain largely aspirational. Whether such orientations are more widely shared among Chilean PSTs, and whether they can be enacted within the institutional and practicum structures of ELTE, are questions for further research.

Any move in the direction participants imagined would also depend on structures beyond PSTs' control. Curriculum decisions in Chilean ELTE are made at several levels: national authorities (e.g., Mineduc) set accreditation and professional standards, university departments determine course offerings, and teacher educators design and teach courses according to disciplinary norms and available resources. Whether, and how, CMLA principles could be incorporated within these structures is a question our interview data cannot answer, but one that research with teacher educators, programme documents, and accreditation standards could usefully examine.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

Participants' Critical Views on the Role, Status, and Importance of English in Chilean Society

1. How would you describe the role of English in Chilean society today?
2. What do you think influences the status and importance of English in Chile?
3. How does your own experience with English shape your views on its significance?
4. In what ways do you think English benefits or disadvantages different communities in Chile?
5. How do you perceive the relationship between English and other languages spoken in Chile, including Indigenous and heritage languages?
6. Do you think English is given too much or too little importance in Chilean education and society? Why?

Pre-Service Teachers' Views on the Role of ELT Education Programs in Preparing Them for Diverse Contexts

7. How well do you think your teacher education program has prepared you for working in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms?
8. What aspects of your training do you find most useful in addressing multilingual and multicultural realities in Chile?
9. Are there any areas where you feel unprepared or under-supported in your teacher education program?
10. Do you think current ELTE programs adequately address issues of language ideologies and power in English teaching? Why or why not?

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11. How do you think pre-service teachers could be better supported in developing critical multilingual language awareness?

Pre-Service Teachers' Reflections on a Reimagined ELTE Curriculum

12. If you could redesign the English language teacher education curriculum, what changes would you make?
13. What role do you think Indigenous and heritage languages should play in English language teacher education?
14. How should ELTE programs address issues of linguistic diversity and social justice?
15. What pedagogical approaches do you think would better prepare teachers for working with multilingual students?
16. How do you think English teaching in Chile could move away from an Anglocentric perspective and embrace a more locally relevant approach?
17. What kinds of practical experiences or coursework would help pre-service teachers engage more critically with language ideologies and power dynamics?

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