Postcolonial Female Voices of Ecuadorian EFL Secondary School Teachers: Becoming a *Glocalized* Practitioner

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Abstract

This article reports a qualitative study on *glocalized* teaching in Ecuador through the voices of three female Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Their stories portray their transformation after attending a training course where they learned strategies to contextualize the official curriculum and teaching materials to the reality of their students. The training was part of a national project funded by the United States Embassy that instructed selected public school teachers in active and reflective teaching methodologies. The researchers visited the participants at their schools for class observations, retrospective interviews, and the collection of narrative evidence on the perceived impact of this training program. Employing elements of narrative inquiry, short stories were constructed before their content and context analysis. The findings provide a pictorial view of the journey towards postcolonial EFL teaching with a glocalized approach and the training program at its core. Three main categories were identified after the story analysis: the becoming of a *glocalized* teacher, the contextualization of content and resources for teaching in the global world, and the recognition and value of ancestral languages, culture, and gender. This study contributes to the literature on diverse identity construction in foreign language teaching in the South Cone, which may be relatable to postcolonial EFL practitioners in other parts of the world.

Keywords: Voices in English teaching, narrative inquiry, postcolonial EFL teaching, female voices in English teaching, teacher training

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem and Contribution of This Study

Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in South America face persistent challenges, including limited resources and exposure to the language, lack of training, and repeated curriculum reforms that fail to meet global standards. In Ecuador, as in many postcolonial countries, these issues intersect with gender disparities (Barragán-Camacho et al., 2023). Although women represent the majority of EFL teachers, their professional narratives remain largely invisible. What is more, little is known about how female educators negotiate global expectations while preserving local identities-a gap this study seeks to address.

This study is grounded on the concept of *glocalization*, which refers to adapting global products or services to local cultures, a good lens for reconciling language-teaching global norms with local realities. In this sense, this article explores the experiences of three female EFL teachers in Ecuador, who volunteered to share their experiences before and after the training on the ECRIF (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, Fluency) framework, which emphasizes reflective practice. This article advances understanding of how female EFL teachers reconcile global expectations with local identities through reflective practice, offering a model for culturally responsive language teaching in postcolonial contexts.

1.2 English Language Teaching, Glocalization and Gender

Even though the concept of *glocalization* was initially coined in business, it has been used across different domains to explain numerous real-life experiences and situations (Roudometof, 2016). *Glocalization* has also been applied in English Language education to integrate global pedagogical standards with local cultural and linguistic realities through evidence-based strategies that inform curriculum design, teacher preparation, and classroom practice; thereby addressing the complexities of educating diverse learners (Wright, 2025). In addition, Khondker (2005) observes that important aspects of *glocalization*, like social life, thrive on diversity, while history and culture independently shape unique group experiences.

While *glocalization* emphasizes cultural adaptation, gender dynamics in English Language Teaching (ELT) reveal persistent inequities that shape teachers' experiences. For instance, sexism has been encountered in ELT material as previous studies have reported (Wijayanti

et al., 2022). Females are largely underrepresented in ELT textbooks, and when they are featured, they are frequently portrayed in roles or described with adjectives that perpetuate gender stereotypes and sexism (Humardhiana & Hidayah, 2020; Bataineh, 2021; Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021). Similar studies have been reported on elementary (Norova, 2020; Rasool et al., 2019) and tertiary education (Espeleta et al., 2024).

In Ecuador, women represent 77.9% of EFL teachers (Barragán-Camacho et al., 2023); nevertheless, it is more likely to find males in supervising positions, especially in private institutions. Clearly, the local culture and gender dynamics have not been considered in these contexts, which has led female teachers to seek opportunities in the public system to achieve equal professional growth. However, many of her stories remain unknown.

1.3 The ECRIF Framework and Reflective Practice

The ECRIF framework was developed by SIT TESOL Trainers Josh Kurzweil and Mary Scholl (Kurzweil, 2007) and has been implemented and studied by TEFL practitioners around the world (AlSaleem, 2018) and in Ecuador (Zambrano Muñoz et al., 2024). This framework seeks to provide students with comprehensive training in English, focusing on the balanced development of oral expression, listening comprehension, reading, interaction, and writing, with an emphasis on effective communication and active language use in real-life situations (Tosuncuoglu, 2017). It includes activities such as storytelling, role-plays, images, recordings, activities to match and categorize, and brainstorming, among others.

The main purpose of ECRIF is to provide teachers with tools to reflect on their teaching practice and invite their students to reflect on their learning process. Therefore, reflection on doing (Freire, 1998) is a key element in this framework empowering teachers and learners to own their journey toward acquiring a foreign language. This framework suits several countries in their postcolonial era, as they conceive education as an emancipatory journey that liberates their people from the threat of oppresion due to their lack of knowledge or abilities, empowering them to become part of the global world. In this view, the ECRIF framework is welcomed by postcolonial teachers.

1.4 Globalization and Its Impact on ELT in Ecuador

The influence of globalization has facilitated the incorporation of communicative and cultural approaches, along with a wide range of technological tools, into the teaching of the English language in Ecuador. The use of educational technologies such as mobile applications, online platforms and learning software has increased significantly in recent years, providing educators and students with a wide range of tools for language learning (Ledesma Acosta, 2025).

Furthermore, globalization has promoted international cooperation in English education in Ecuador through exchange and collaboration programs among educational institutions. Participation in international collaborative projects provides Ecuadorian educators with new pedagogical approaches, innovative pedagogical resources, and professional development opportunities that enrich the English language teaching in the country (Newman et al., 2023). It is often claimed that educational resources, cooperation programs and teachers' professional development should reflect greater linguistic and cultural diversity to help students enhance more authentic and contextual communication skills.

1.5 Research Questions

Considering the aforementioned framework, these two research questions guided this study:

(1) How do the stories of the participants evidence the journey to become EFL teachers with a *glocalized* approach?

(2) How did the training on the ECRIF framework affect their perceptions and teaching practice as female EFL teachers?

2. Method

This qualitative study explores *glocalization* in the teaching of EFL. The study applies narrative enquiry with the short story approach as described by Barkhuizen (2016). The rationale for analyzing these teachers' stories following the narrative inquiry approach lies in the importance of stories as models of lives (Heilbrun, 1988; Wilson & Ritchie, 1994) and for understanding human experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Caine et al., 2013). It also acknowledges the power of words and prose to portray one person's experiences and reflections (Denzin, 1994) and the potential of a voice to resonate and resemble the voice of other beings (Gudmundsdottir, 2001).

2.1 Participants Eligibility and Sampling

This study employed purposive, criterion-based sampling to select three female tenured teachers from the public-school sector. The selection was predicated on three primary criteria: (1) successful enrollment and completion of the ECRIF training program; (2) active implementation of the ECRIF model in pedagogical planning and delivery; and (3) a minimum of five years of professional tenure to ensure a stable baseline for 'lived experience.' While the sample size is small (n=3), this choice was intentional and justified by the study's focus on interpretive depth rather than statistical generalization. These three teachers had direct experience with the specific challenges of resource-scarce environments and linguistic diversity (Kichwa and Spanish; speakers' L1). Therefore, they provided rich information necessary to evidence transformation in the teacher practice and professional development. Table 1 shows some demographic data of the three participants that are related to their teaching context and position:

Table 1. Study Participants

Participant*	Position	Type of School	Years of experience
Maria	English teacher and Coordinator with tenure	Rural area	6-10
Karina	English teacher with tenure	Rural area	13
Jenny	English teacher with tenure	Urban area	15

*Fictitious names are used

2.2 Data Collection

Upon obtaining permission from the Ministry of Education to contact teachers who voluntarily participated in this study, the researchers observed teachers in classrooms twice over the course of three months. Participant observation notes were taken, and each participant completed three 1-hour online video interviews. In addition, each participant submitted a reflective journal to the research team at least once a month. Altogether, the research team spent 12-14 weeks with each participant as part of this process (See Appendices A and B for the interview guiding questions and the reflective journal template).

Two interviews were held before the class observation. The first interview focused on the teacher's path to becoming an English educator, their career choices, tenure achievement, influential mentors, and most rewarding teaching experiences. The second interview examined the teacher's institutional context, self-perception as an English educator, the impact of training courses on their professional practice, and their views on planning effective teacher training programs. The third interview explored the teacher's experience during training, the strategies learned, the challenges faced, the solutions, and the willingness to recommend or replicate the training, and reflections on the observed class.

2.3 Short Stories Development

Short stories are a core part of this study, as they portray the teachers' beliefs, voices, and culture, which are important to be heard and understood (Bell, 1997; 2002). Furthermore, stories analyzed through context and content allow to unfold the realities of the participants, their settings, and their social relationships so that the knowledge can be transferred to others with shared characteristics (Conle, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Huber et al., 2016). Therefore, within the frame of narrative inquiry as a method, when conducted with respect, caring collaboration and closeness, it has the potential to empower the participants to let their voices be heard (Hogan, 1988; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In writing the stories in this study, the researchers employed several verification procedures to be faithful to both facts and facilities (Denzin, 1989) and to develop stories that can be believed (Moen, 2006). Purposefully, some informal tone is used in the stories to better present the voices of the teachers who participated in this study.

2.4 Coding, Data Analysis, and Trustworthiness

Initially, a systematic multi-stage open coding was applied to raw segments to assign labels based on patterns of teacher motivation, resource scarcity, and pedagogical shifts. Through thematic condensation, these discrete codes were distilled into higher-order categories that eventually formed the analytical dimensions of 'Content' and 'Context' providing a structured overview of the participants' realities. In the end, the processed data were synthesized into a comparative format to contrast the teachers' professional conditions before and after the training interventions to accentuate their transformation.

The short stories were analyzed following an adaptation Barkhuizen's methodology (2016), which observes their content and context. Therefore, in this study, the content analysis is based on three questions: who, where and when; and the context is analyzed according to the *story* (internal or close to the teacher: classroom), the *Story* (colleagues, coordinators, and institutional level), and the *STORY* (in relation to government policies, regulations of the Ministry of Education).

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed resources of credibility and dependability. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the data, and data triangulation—integrating structured interviews, reflective journals, and classroom observations to verify findings across different sources. Dependability was maintained through a transparent audit trail that documented the systematic coding stages and the process of thematic condensation from raw labels to the final comparative synthesis of pre- and post-intervention states. Additionally, regular peer debriefing sessions were conducted to ensure inter-coder consistency regarding data treatment, analysis, and conclusions.

2.5 Researchers and Reflexivity

The researchers in this study were part of an academic consortium called Leadership in English Academic Research Network (LEARN), funded by the United States Embassy and the US Consulate in Ecuador (Newman et al., 2023). Their participation in this project exposed them to the ECRIF methodology, the teachers who entered the training program, and narrative inquiry. They are all university professors: three males and one female. Gender and personal experiences were acknowledged to avoid interfering with the voices of the participants that are the focus of this study. To ensure reflexivity, researchers engaged in peer debriefing sessions to critically examine how their positionalities might shape interpretations. This process aligns with narrative inquiry principles that emphasize relational ethics and researcher transparency (Clandinin & Connely, 1990; Barkhuizen, 2016).

2.6 Ethical considerations

This study followed the national research good practices by obtaining consent and ethical approval from the Ministry of Education through a Memorandum MINEDUC-SFE-2022-00228-M. After the ethical approval, the researchers proceeded with class observations, teachers visits, and interviews. In addition, teachers provided informed consent, and their names have been changed to protect their identities.

3. Findings

The findings are presented through the narratives of the three participants, integrated with the researchers' reflective analysis. These stories are purposefully extensive to maintain narrative integrity and provide the thick description necessary to capture the nuances of the teachers' lived experiences. By preserving the informal, authentic tone of the participants, this section emphasizes their unique voices as they navigate *glocalization*. Specifically, the length reflects their complex journey of adopting global pedagogical models while maintaining their local identities, ultimately illustrating how reflective teaching transforms their professional reality.

3.1 Maria: The Challenge of Becoming an Empowered and Resourceful Teacher

Maria (fictitious name) not only left her position at a private high school to enter a public institution but was also motivated by her desire to transform the realities of the teenagers attending public schools in Ecuador. Her enthusiasm and excellent pronunciation allowed her to stand out among the other teachers. This story describes the journey from an eager English student to an empowered teacher.

Maria remembers wanting to become a teacher since she was very young. As she was growing older, she started liking English. The sound of English attracted her, and she was eager to learn it; however, she struggled to learn it in her early secondary school years. While a secondary school student, Maria received an award that granted her a discount on a private English course. Maria commented that she comes from a vulnerable socio-economic background and she had no means to pay for a private course, so she convinced her uncle to sponsor her. Maria's English skills continued to improve, and she finished secondary school with good grades. To this day, Maria identifies herself as 'the product of public education' as she underwent her primary, secondary, and tertiary studies in public institutions.

When she visited the Language Teacher School, she realized it was what she wanted to do. She wanted to be an English teacher! She wanted to teach other students who struggled in learning the language. She recalls that after enrolling in the Language Education School, she said, 'This is my place!'

As a university student, Maria felt comfortable learning the language and teaching skills. Maria's teachers were good at offering advice on the realities of teaching in the field, such as how teaching in public institutions differ from teaching in the private sector because the educational context was not the same. Having good teachers at the university motivated Maria to continue with her goal of becoming a teacher.

Maria started teaching when she was just 19. She had done some private tutoring, but she says substituting fornan English teacher at a municipal secondary school was her first 'real' teaching experience. The challenges of her first job were making long trips to reach the rural school, handling large classes of about 40 students, and realizing the students struggled to learn the language. She accepted the job without considering monetary remuneration, but for the sake of gaining experience. During her three months as a substitute teacher, her university teachers suggested ways to address distracted and underperforming students, and the lack of resources.

Maria reflects that private and public schools feel like 'two different worlds' for a teacher, but despite the difficulties, she could 'reach them'. As she was about to finish her university studies, she got a job in a private institution where she could teach primary and secondary students. She acknowledges that the English coordinator of that institution played a paramount role in her formation. She became an Arts teacher within the IB program, a totally new experience for her; her new role allowed her to indulge her love for art. During her four years in the private institution, she taught Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and preparation courses for Cambridge exams. The experience contributed to her development in language and teaching practice with the continuous support, training, and correction of her coordinators.

She became a substitute coordinator and had to observe classes, prepare reports, provide one-to-one feedback, and review lesson plans. At the beginning, she struggled with that new role, particularly with handling her relationship with her peers. Upon the coordinator's return, Maria continued her teaching position. She was content with her current activity but also eager to take on the challenge of getting a new job. She got a teaching position at another private institution because of her mastery of technological tools. She worked at that school for three months before deciding to apply to enter the public sector.

Entering the public sector as a teacher requires applying, fulfilling ambitious requirements, undergoing various interviews and exams, and accepting a position in whatever place the government decides to locate newly hired teachers. Maria completed the entire process and landed a full-time teaching position at a rural school that had never received English instruction. Her greatest challenge was commuting to the school with no bus to access this very remote area. Another struggle was 'having to deconstruct bad teachings and mispronunciation' as it 'was more difficult than having to teach them from scratch'. Despite the difficulties, lack of technological resources, and the lack of books with material closer to the students' context, Maria felt happy with the opportunity to be the 'Señorita Miss' as her students and their parents used to call her. It was hard work as she had to teach all the courses, but she felt prepared for the challenge!

Maria rejoiced when recalling her students' achievements at that rural public school. She enthusiastically recalls how students began interacting in English in their everyday activities for the very first time and when they proudly reported, 'Miss, now I am ready to travel to the United States!' Her students' progress elevated her motivation to teach them.

It was not the end of her journey. Due to her second pregnancy, Maria was transferred to another public institution closer to home. She had received her tenure and became the coordinator of the English Department. As the coordinator, she tried to replicate the good practices of her former coordinators, who supported her in becoming a better teacher. She also applied the teachings and advice of her university teachers and the experiences she gained along her journey.

Maria reflects on how working in a public school prevented her from improving her English proficiency and teaching performance, as she had to lower her standards to help her students advance. Therefore, she became interested in applying for the ECRIF training scholarship as a good opportunity to upgrade her skills, as she says, 'One of the best experiences ever.' She became more confident in English, could exchange experiences with her coursemates, and learned methods she could apply in her teaching practice. Seeing her students' improvement was 'one of the greatest rewards', as she puts it.

Reflective teaching is one of the components of ECRIF training. Maria's reflective journal evidences her engagement with her learners' needs and context, as well as the impact of the training on her teaching practice. She wrote in her journal about her students' progress, and the result of her enhanced teaching technique: '…I could not realize the impact that the training caused on my teaching abilities, but I am very grateful for the training and being open to new skills and to develop in my students the love for English'. Maria also identified the effect of the training on her academic and professional development. She applied her training as she adapted the curriculum to fulfil her teaching purposes and contextualized the material to be better understood thus suitable to her students' realities. Some vivid examples are the ways she creates or adapts teaching materials such as pictures of school surroundings to illustrate vocabulary and using the word 'chongoneña' to refer to the local bus her students use. She says her students notice a change in her teaching practice, and she gladly mentions, 'I am a better version now'.

3.2 Karina: The Challenges of ELT Resource Constraints amid three Languages

Karina (fictitious name) has been an English teacher for 13 years at the middle- and high-school levels, and speaks Spanish, Kichwa, and English. She says that to teach English to native Kichwa speakers, it is important to reach the students where they are linguistically, in this case, by incorporating their native Kichwa language into the classroom.

Her story illustrates the reality many teachers face in Ecuador, with a lack of resources and various limitations. The ways she has demonstrated pedagogical agency in a resource-constrained environment, is an example of teaching in a public secondary school, in a bilingual Spanish-Kichwa setting.

Karina explained that many students in the Kichwa-speaking community wanted to learn English, as many shared the primary goal of living abroad, often achieved by earning scholarships. To do so required a strong level of English proficiency. Karina has applied adaptive expertise and contextualized material design given limited resources and materials in her community. Now she incorporates the ECRIF framework she learned in her training, which motivates students to communicate in a third language, English. She also recognized and emphasized that to teach a foreign language in a school of this kind, it is necessary to be able to use all the three languages (Kichwa, Spanish, and English) since a high percentage of students are Kichwa speakers.

After completing the training, she helped her students reach a higher level of language acquisition. Based on class observations, Karina used her planning effectively, including warm-up activities to orient students to each class session, especially focusing on oral activities to practice their oral English skills. Students completed a variety of these activities, always incorporating several skills proven to aid their development. These activities are always very hands-on and interactive, using aids such as flashcards or technology, creating a highly stimulating environment for her students. It was easy to observe that everything was centred on the students and their active development, as a result of applying the ECRIF framework.

Overall, the students were observed to be more engaged when they could draw on their own linguistic context and appreciate their diversity. Respecting students' linguistic roots, fostering affective engagement, and treating students holistically—in the sense of incorporating their entire linguistic selves—seemed to yield observable gains in class participation.

It is crucial to recognize that the difficulties educators like Karina face are not isolated incidents but part of a larger structural reality that continues to influence English language education in the multilingual regions of Ecuador. In areas where Spanish and Kichwa coexist as the predominant languages, the incorporation of English introduces a third linguistic dimension that requires careful pedagogical mediation. This intricacy highlights the necessity for strategies that affirm students' linguistic identities rather than positioning English as a substitute or superior language. Rather, English should be introduced as an additional communicative resource—one that can broaden students' cultural and academic perspectives without undermining the significance of their native languages.

Nevertheless, in many rural educational institutions, the implementation of such inclusive pedagogical practices is often hindered by resource scarcity and institutional constraints. Schools may be deficient in fundamental technological infrastructure, including dependable Internet connectivity, operational projectors, or even sufficient board space and classroom furnishings. These deficiencies impede the educator's ability to apply modern methodologies that depend on multimedia resources, authentic listening activities, or task-oriented exercises. Even though globalization has fostered an unparalleled influx of digital resources, not every institution is currently equipped to utilize them effectively. This disparity underscores the need to develop low-resource teaching strategies that are both pedagogically sound and culturally attuned.

In this context, teachers like Karina exemplify the kind of adaptive expertise that is vital in challenging circumstances. Her innovative

utilization of locally accessible materials and her readiness to integrate Kichwa, Spanish, and English within a single class session exemplify a pedagogical flexibility that corresponds with contemporary theories of translanguaging. This approach acknowledges the complete linguistic repertoire of multilingual students as an asset rather than a hindrance, enabling learners to establish meaningful connections among languages. Evidence indicates that translanguaging practices enhance learner engagement, strengthen metalinguistic awareness, and foster confidence in acquiring a new language—especially in environments where standardized resources are limited.

Another significant element highlighted by Karina's experience is the importance of professional development in nurturing teacher agency. Her involvement in training facilitated by the US Embassy not only provided her with methodological tools such as the ECRIF framework but also established a support network and access to contemporary pedagogical dialogues. Such initiatives serve to narrow the divide between rural educators and global advancements in ELT, providing opportunities that are frequently inaccessible through national institutions. The lack of Ministry-led professional development focused specifically on English remains a significant impediment, particularly for educators working in multilingual or marginalized contexts. Consequently, many teachers continue to rely on outdated grammar-translation methods they lack opportunities to explore alternative pedagogical approaches.

Furthermore, Karina's experience illustrates the significant influence that targeted training can have on students' educational trajectories. When learners encounter instruction that acknowledges their linguistic backgrounds, provides structured support, and offers authentic communication opportunities, they are more willing to engage and invest in the educational process. This phenomenon is particularly apparent in situations where students frequently perceive English proficiency as a gateway to scholarships, international opportunities, and long-term socio-economic enhancement. Thus, the implications extend beyond mere language acquisition and delve into broader themes of equity and opportunity.

Looking ahead, it is increasingly evident that addressing resource limitations in multilingual ELT contexts necessitates collaborative efforts across multiple levels. Policymakers must prioritize teacher training programs tailored to the distinct needs of bilingual and trilingual classrooms; institutions must ensure that rural schools have equitable access to technological and material resources; and international collaborations should continue to offer avenues for teachers' professional advancement. At the classroom level, educators should be encouraged—and enabled—to adopt culturally responsive and linguistically inclusive practices that acknowledge the realities of their students' lives.

Hence, the narrative presented here not only highlights the challenges but also the substantial potential of Ecuador's multilingual educational landscape. When teachers are afforded sufficient support and training, when students' languages are honored, and when pedagogical innovation is fostered, even resource-constrained schools can evolve into environments of rich linguistic exchange and meaningful development in English language proficiency.

In sum, these trends show how globalization has influenced the evolution of the teaching resources used to teach English in Ecuador, from the incorporation of technology to greater attention to communication and culture, as well as the promotion of international collaboration in the educational field. However, the opportunity to maintain the local language, Kichwa, and the characteristics of the students' setting allows Karina to contextualize the adapted material to her learners' unique needs. Therefore, maintaining a *glocalized* view is possible depending on how teachers incorporate methods, materials, and resources into their teaching practices.

3.3 Jenny: The Challenges of a Female EFL Teacher Seeking Opportunities to Fulfil Her Calling

Jenny (fictitious name) decided to work in public schools, even if it meant a lower salary or less convenient working conditions. One of the reasons for this change is a perceived lack of professional recognition during 15 years in better-paid private institutions.

Even though women account for most public EFL teachers in Ecuador, Jenny still feels they do not lead EFL education as they should. She believes that, in general, employers prefer hiring women to teach but would rather have a man leading the EFL department. 'My experience placed me in different positions as a temporary EFL department coordinator, until a man was hired to run the department.' She also noticed that in every school she worked for, the EFL department was led by a man. Therefore, she concluded that there was no room for professional growth for women in private schools.

The most inspiring and encouraging peers in her career have all been women. After graduating from high school, her ambition was to study international business, so she chose to study English despite not liking it: 'I hated English in high school because I heard a song and I could not understand it,' she claimed. She was determined to pursue a career in international business and realized how essential English was to achieving her goal. One of her teachers suggested that she take a training course at a local university to improve her language skills. However, it was not a language class but a teacher-training course. The professor had seen her potential as a teacher and had steered her toward a teaching track.

Jenny was 17 and most of her classmates were much older. One day, a lady in the class approached her and asked if she was interested in a teaching position. This marked her formal entry into the teaching profession. Her first steps were easy as she felt embraced by more experienced female teachers. 'I was lucky to learn (to teach) by doing it. If I ever had a question or a doubt, it was they who assisted me.' All these positive experiences led her to attend college and earn a bachelor's degree in EFL education.

When Jenny was in her mid-twenties, she became hesitant about whether she was meant for teaching; should she return to her original plan to become a businesswoman? Coincidentally, she was offered a job in an international company. 'My father was shocked as the salary was four times the money I made as a teacher', so she accepted the offer. Then, she felt that this new office position was too easy:

'I was paid a lot for working so little. Only teachers know how hard it is to be a teacher. Teachers must work before, during, and after work time.' Four months passed, and her mom noticed that Jenny was not happy with her new life. She told Jenny, 'You are not the same.' That was reason enough to quit her job. Instead of being reproached or criticized, her boss, an understanding lady provided a pivotal vocational redirection: 'Jenny, do what your heart tells you to do. If you want to be a teacher, be the best teacher you can be.'

Jenny went through a divorce and became a single mom. She barely saw her three children because she worked at a private school located far from home and also gave private lessons. That is why Jenny decided to apply for a teaching position in public schools. Despite the lower salary, she felt that a more flexible schedule and the opportunity to work close to home were perks that money could not compensate for. Most of her colleagues opposed the idea; there is a prejudice that the public sector is not a sound work environment. After two years, consistency and patience paid off: Jenny got tenure at a public school.

Once in her new job in a public school, the principal had Jenny teach other subjects rather than English. She accepted, as the school year was almost over, and he promised that she would be teaching English the following year. The offer was honored for a short time, and Jenny went back to teaching other subjects. It was frustrating for her because the principal did nothing to get Jenny to do what she had been hired for: teach English. Jenny exercised professional agency to advocate for her role. As a result, the principal informed the Ministry of Education that she was no longer needed, and she was transferred to a new school. In her new workplace, she felt greatly appreciated by her new boss, a female principal who valued her role as an EFL teacher.

It was during this period, as she adjusted to the public system, that Jenny was selected to participate in the ECRIF training program—a turning point in her professional identity. Before the training, her teaching was largely shaped by intuition, personal values, and the modelling she had received from other female teachers. During the training, she reported feeling empowered by the clarity of the ECRIF stages, which helped her organize her lessons more intentionally and gave her a renewed sense of control over her practice. After the training, Jenny expressed greater confidence in designing tasks, monitoring students' progress, and advocating for pedagogical decisions grounded in evidence rather than habit. The ECRIF framework helped her recognize her professional agency within a system that had repeatedly overlooked her contributions.

When asked about her most inspiring teacher, she recalled one and described her as a responsible woman who loved her work. Even though her husband was sick with cancer, that teacher never missed a class and was always patient with her students. Jenny always recalls her smile and kindness. This has helped to shape her as a teacher. She strongly believed in teaching with values as a priority. She made an indelible mark on Jenny professionally by realizing the value of making her students eager to attend class.

After her exposure to ECRIF, Jenny could integrate her belief in values-based teaching with a clearer pedagogical structure. She found that the Internalize and Fluency stages aligned with her desire to create meaningful, student-centred learning moments—spaces where care, effort, and personal growth were as important as linguistic accuracy. She also feels that as a female role model, she can inspire other girls. When asking her students about their future, Jenny was shocked to learn that most girls just see themselves getting married and having children, so she encourages young girls to pursue a degree and become successful professionals.

During some class observations, all this caring and her true vocation became evident. All her students paid careful attention to what she said. The environment was not the most appropriate for a class, in any case. In a small classroom with open windows and bars instead of glass, all the noise from the outside could have been the perfect excuse to skip classes or get distracted. Nevertheless, Jenny made sure everyone stayed focused on work. Her post-ECRIF reflections reinforced her belief that effective teaching does not depend on perfect conditions but on intentional planning and sustained interaction. She frequently stated that the ECRIF stages helped her maintain student engagement, even in precarious environments, by providing her with tools to adjust tasks and expectations in real time.

Jenny has the innate capacity to provide and nurture, a traditionally female characteristic. Therefore, we should question why women do not play a greater leadership role in the field.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the stories reveals that the ECRIF training served as more than a pedagogical update; it acted as a catalyst for identity reconstruction. Table 2 illustrates a shift from reactive teaching—where educators were constrained by scarce resources and a sense of professional isolation—to proactive agency. In the post-training phase, the 'Content' of their stories shifts from a struggle for basic motivation to the assertion of a 'glocal' professional identity. Therefore, when teachers master a structured framework (ECRIF), they gain the cognitive 'room' to move beyond survival and toward leadership.

Table 2. Stories analysis

Analyical Dimension	Before training	Post-training
Content (who, where, when)	• Teachers face their own challenges in learning the language and finding their motivation to teach. • Teachers begin their careers with the desire to help students face learning difficulties and a lack of motivation. • Teachers use strategies based on their previous experience, but they do not achieve the expected results. • Teachers feel undervalued by the authorities and receive little encouragement to pursue professional development.	• Teachers reflect on their own journey and the importance of finding their own voice and identity as EFL teachers. • Teachers are transformed into empowered, resourceful leaders in public schools. • They become agents of change, motivating their colleagues and taking on roles as area coordinators and mentors. • They actively seek new growth opportunities and recognize their value as experienced professionals.
Context (classroom, institution, curriculum)	Classroom and Institution: • Environments with scarce resources, outdated materials, and limited exposure to authentic language. • Teachers face complex classrooms with linguistic diversity (Kichwa and Spanish) and work environments that lack gender equality and advancement opportunities. Curriculum: • Teachers work with the national curriculum, which is disconnected from the learners' realities.	Classroom: • Creating a stimulating environment through hands-on activities and technology to develop global communication skills. • Gender equality is promoted within the lessons. Curriculum: • Effective adaptation of the national curriculum and lesson design following the ECRIF framework. • Materials reflecting linguistic and cultural diversity are incorporated.

In addition, these findings illustrate the professional evolution of female educators as they navigate the complexities of the public school system in a postcolonial country. Central to this discussion is how the participants' narratives reveal a transformative journey toward a *glocalized* approach to English language teaching. Also, it examines how specialized training in the ECRIF framework fundamentally reshaped both the teaching practices and the professional identities of these female teachers.

Across the three stories, we can observe the position of these teachers in the globalized world through the challenges they faced and overcame. The stories reveal how professional identity is co-constructed through interaction with global pedagogical frameworks (ECRIF) and local sociocultural constraints. This negotiation reflects a dynamic process where teachers assert agency by adapting global norms to their lived realities, reinforcing the notion that identity in postcolonial contexts is fluid and relational. The negotiation process for the resulting constructed identity is described in these three categories:

1. Becoming a *glocalized* teacher.
2. Contextualization of the content and resources for teaching in the global world.
3. Recognition and value of ancestral languages, culture, and gender.

4.1 Becoming a Glocalized Teacher

Several English teachers and learners face challenges in locating themselves along the broad range of various 'Englishes' (Callies et al., 2023). Therefore, Ecuadorians struggle to choose between proudly embracing their 'Latino English' or beginning the journey to align with the English they feel comfortable with, without compromising their culture and identity. This negotiation becomes even more complex for female teachers who, besides the challenges, must face patriarchal ideologies regarding the appointment of women in leading roles. The transition from the private to the public sector represents a rejection of corporate-oriented pedagogical values in favor of a socially situated professional mission. By choosing the public sector, these teachers exercised 'transformative agency' (Patiño-Santos, 2024), reclaiming the EFL classroom as a site for social contribution rather than merely a venue for linguistic delivery.

4.2 Contextualization of the Content and Resources for Teaching in the Global World

The participants' experiences demonstrate that meeting global standards does not require a sacrifice of local relevance; rather, it necessitates a renegotiation of the *glocal* realm (Wright, 2022; 2025). By acting as 'mediators and translators' (Robertson, 1995; Wright, 2025), these teachers did not merely deliver a foreign curriculum; they recontextualized it. For instance, by integrating indigenous perspectives and local Ecuadorian realities into the ECRIF framework, they transformed English from an 'imposed' external tool into a locally-owned medium of expression. This shift actively challenges any attempt to (neo)colonize or westernize EFL learners as Ritzer (2003) suggests, positioning the EFL classroom as a site of decolonial agency.

This agency is particularly distinct in the Ecuadorian context. Unlike postcolonial settings like South Africa, where English carries the historical weight of a former colonial empire (Le Grange, 2007), the Ecuadorian 'postcolonial' condition is defined by a voluntary yet complex engagement with globalism. Consequently, these teachers do not teach English as a legacy of the past, but as a strategic asset for the future in the sought of better wellbeing. Their approach to *glocalization*, therefore, serves a dual purpose: it validates the students' ancestral identities while simultaneously equipping them with the 'global linguistic capital' needed for upward mobility. In this sense,

glocalization in Ecuador is not just a pedagogical technique; it is a transformative strategy to prevent losing ownership of the use of a foreign language in a globalized world.

4.3 Recognition and Value of Ancestral Languages, Culture, and Gender

The analysis of the story of the teacher who works with speakers of the ancestral language (Kichwa) best reinforces the importance of recognizing the local, as Canagarajah (2005) observes. This recognition of ancestral languages demonstrates a tension between the micro-level 'story' (the teacher's classroom) and the macro-level 'STORY' (national curriculum) following Barkhuizen's approach (2016). The findings suggest that these teachers do not merely follow the 'STORY' of the Ministry of Education; they subvert it by 'bilanguaging' (Mignolo, 2000). This indicates that *glocalization* in the Ecuadorian context is an act of decolonial resistance, where the local language is not a barrier to English but a partner in it.

On the subject of gender, the three stories converge on the various challenges faced by female teachers in public schools. Their decisions, motivations, and professional shifts are influenced by their family, pregnancies, and motherhood. They also evidence how the training program and its focus on reflection allowed them to encounter their own value and resources to fulfil their vocation and inspire their students, especially girls, as in the case of Jenny.

5. Conclusion

In response to our stated guiding research questions, we presented the journey of these teachers toward a *glocalized* identity as individuals and professionals. Also, we discussed the influence of the ECRIF framework training on their perceptions, teaching practice, and beliefs. Entering the ECRIF framework training was a life-changing experience for these female teachers. As evident in their stories, they became *glocalized* teachers by contextualizing methodologies and materials that can lead their learners towards a global world. In this reflection, the ability to use English becomes a bridge rather than a goal, empowering postcolonial learners. This bridge allows them to express themselves in a global world without compromising their local culture, traditions, and being.

It is important to highlight the role of supporting agents in these women's journeys: their families, mentors, and funding institutions played a paramount role in their stories, underscoring the need for synergistic work on empowered teaching identity construction.

In conclusion, this article and its narratives contribute to the limited scholarship on female EFL teachers in South America, offering empirical evidence on how *glocalization* operates in postcolonial educational settings as a means for decolonial resistance, bilingual identity, and language ownership. Also, it contributes to the discussion on identity construction and transformation through reflective teaching and a *glocalized* perspective. Future programs in postcolonial teaching should prioritize reflective frameworks like ECRIF, integrate local cultural references into curricula, and implement mentorship initiatives to promote female leadership in ELT.

6. Limitations of the study and implications for policy and teacher education

These study findings are not meant to be generalizable or transferable to other contexts; however, they contribute to scholarly work on language-teaching identity in this postcolonial setting. The thickness of these narratives makes them relatable to other EFL teachers and underscores the urgent need for institutionalized professional development that integrates reflective practice and emerging *glocalized* methodologies. Furthermore, gender disparities in leadership roles call for systemic interventions to ensure equitable career progression for postcolonial female educators.

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The authors declare the use of Gemini 1.5 Pro and Gemini 3 Flash for the structural organization and synthesis of the qualitative findings, academic editing, specifically to refine the structural coherence, formalize the qualitative terminology, and ensure the stylistic rigor of the manuscript's narrative sections. Also, Grammarly Pro was used to check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors in the elaboration of this manuscript. The authors of this paper declare full authorship with compliance with reference, integrity, and scholarly accountability.

Authors' contributions

KSC and JMCD codirected the study were responsible for study design; KSC, JMCD, EE were responsible for data collection, story writing and drafting the manuscript; DH introduced the authors into Narrative Inquiry, reviewed the methodology and revised the manuscript; KSC funding acquisition for the publication of this article. All the authors contributed equally to the analysis, conclusions, and the final version of the manuscript.

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Obtained.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

Interview 1 questions:

1. How did you become an English teacher?
2. How did you choose a career in teaching English as a foreign language?
3. How did you get your tenure?
4. Who was the most influential teacher you have ever had?
5. What is the most rewarding teaching experience you have had?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview 2 questions:

1. Could you please describe the context of your educational institution?
2. How do you define yourself as an English teacher?
3. Could you tell me about a situation that has influenced your professional practice?
4. What is the most positive thing you can highlight from the training course you received?
5. How have the lessons you learned in the training course influenced your professional practice?
6. Do you feel that you are a different teacher after the training course? If different, in what way are you different? If not different, why are you not different?
7. If you had a change in your professional practice, do you think your students noticed the change? Could you explain with an example.
8. According to your criteria and teaching experience, how do you think teacher training courses should be planned?

Interview 3 questions: (after class observation)

1. Describe your experience during the training and the most useful strategies that you learned.
2. What challenges and/or difficulties did you face during the training and how did you overcome them?
3. Would you recommend this training to other teachers? Why? Have you thought about replicating it?
4. Please, tell me about the class I observed. How did you feel about it?

Appendix B

Reflective Journal

Dear Teacher:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our study. The purpose of this reflective journal is to help you recall moments that reflect a change in your professional practice as an English language teacher. You may also include moments when you recall something you learned during the training. It is important that you include examples, without mentioning names of your school stakeholders, colleagues, or your students.

It is not necessary to record a journal entry each day. Only when you deem it necessary. Your insights will help us in the interviews to have more enriching conversations. You may use as many lines, entries, and sheets as you wish.

Date/Time/Place	Event (What happened?)	It reminds me…/It invites me to reflect about…