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Colombian ELT Community and Scholarship: Current Pathways and Potency

La Comunidad y el Conocimiento Colombiano en la Enseñanza del Inglés: Sus Caminos y Potencia Actual

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Abstract

This editorial article reflects on the paradigmatic changes that the Colombian ELT community has recently experienced due to the developments of local scholarship in varied topics. This editorial article makes the changes evident by introducing the papers for this special issue of HOW journal on its 25 years of numbered issues using the Open Journal Systems software. These include topics as interculturality, literacy, English language pre-service teacher construction and professional development, critical views about bilingual education policy, and the interrelation between gender and ELT. The local scholarship development in these topics displays a rupture with the ELT canon. By so doing, the Colombian ELT scholarship shows a potency that wields foundations for the ELT field in the country.

Keywords: Colombian ELT, ELT field, ELT scholarship, ELT knowledge, ELT foundations

Resumen

Este artículo editorial reflexiona sobre los cambios paradigmáticos que la comunidad colombiana del ELT ha experimentado recientemente debido a los desarrollos que el conocimiento local respectivo

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ha tenido en varios temas. Este artículo editorial hace evidente estos cambios al introducir los artículos que hacen parte del número especial de la revista HOW en sus 25 años de publicar números con el software Open Journal Systems. Estos incluyen temas como la interculturalidad, la literacidad, la construcción y el desarrollo profesional de los docentes en formación, las visiones críticas acerca de la política de educación bilingüe y la interrelación entre género y el ELT. De todo esto, el desarrollo del conocimiento local sobre el ELT muestra su potencia que a su vez ensambla las bases para el ELT en el país.

Palabras clave: ELT colombiano, ELT, conocimiento, bases

Introduction

HOW began as a newsletter publishing short articles since the creation of the Colombian Association of Teachers of English (Asocopi) in 1966. By 1979, HOW had already edited 39 small publications. Since that year, a higher number of academic articles were included in each issue. In 1986, publishing HOW as a newsletter stopped for 10 years. The issuing of HOW resumed in 1996, the year when Mr. Luis Fernando Gómez, as the chief editor, issued HOW's number 1 of volume 1. During the next ten years, the editorial team of HOW consolidated it as a journal by following the parameters issued by Colciencias and the current trends of international periodicals[3]. This special issue celebrates 25 years of HOW as a journal publishing issued numbers to maintain "communication among English language teachers both in Colombia and abroad by offering opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge resulting from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching-learning issues."[4]

After more than half a century, English language teachers, educators, and researchers belonging to the Colombian ELT community have created a great variety of knowledge in and from their contexts. The more this knowledge creation happens, the more we, as an ELT community, become conscious about the need to communicate how ELT education occurs around the country. The permanent actions in which this creation occurs reveal a prominent production of local scholarship about ELT in Colombia. Part of it searches for conceptualizing the ELT field, another for struggle and resistance to imposed and hegemonic discourses and practices in the field, and another for change by considering peripheral perspectives or knowledge 'otherwise'. The truth is that the local ELT community might feel tension when abstracting the ELT field from the traditional standings. This is what we perceive in Asocopi and HOW; possibly, other Colombian journals in the field have also seen this. The ELT community has found that knowledge from elsewhere has influenced us since it extendedly holds decontextualized and unsuitable frames.

[3] We would like to thank Jesús Alirio Bastidas, Ph.D., and Melba Libia Cárdenas, Ph.D., for this historical account of the journal. To know about the challenges that ASOCOPI and HOW have lived together, we suggest reading Cárdenas (2016), Meadows (2016), Lucero and Díaz (2016), and Bastidas (2017).

[4] This is the purpose of HOW journal (https://howjournalcolombia.org/index.php/how)

Thus, a need to think of Colombian ELT from our geopolitical locations has gained terrain. In the multiple topics in which this is evident, visions of emancipation are tangible. The articles in this current issue are evidence of this fact. They are local creations that display a look at other frontiers that surpass foreign and established frames about how to teach English and what to consider while doing it. On the whole, they constitute an assemblage of how Colombian ELT occurs from the authors' conceptualizations, which in turn present casts of a rupture with the established ELT canon.

There is consequently a search for more situated epistemologies, for other complementary paths that can give additional opportunities of constructing the Colombian ELT scholarship. It is our view that this reality is potent; there will then be more possibilities for our community to be completely viable. The production and constitution of the Colombian ELT scholarship should maintain a constant connection with the variety of our contexts. With this editorial article, and with this special issue of HOW in its 25 years of numbered issues using the Open Journal Systems software, we would like to invite the Colombian ELT community to continue searching for those possibilities of being and for those alternatives to strengthen local scholarship.

Reflecting upon Paradigmatic Changes in Colombian ELT Development

We, English language teachers and educators, do research and communicate it in a language that we learned and which now allows us to create thoughts, dwell in local stories, and create knowledge in situated realities. The social, political, epistemic, and geographical locations of our teachers' selves are involved in the act of creating knowledge. These different locations should entail the emergence of new categories of thought. Martinez Boom (2004) develops the concept of 'geo-pedagogy' to refer to the different shapes taken by schools, teachers, and pedagogy in particular areas of Colombia as defined by cultural or land borders. Therefore, a geo-pedagogy for ELT invites us to think of situated realities and practices.

The awareness of the need for a geo-localization of knowledge creation was not produced in a vacuum. Our first fountains of theoretical knowledge could have been ELT authors and practices coming from the Global North. Yet, many of us would not be able to continue giving meaning to our local realities exclusively with categories from elsewhere; in fact, we have gradually become more conscious about our place in the world and the need to raise our voices when it comes to understanding and defining what it means to teach and learn in the multi-faceted Colombian contexts.

Such 'in-between' epistemic (theoretical), physical (geographical), and emotional locations amid two worlds --the South and the North-- possibly entail the need to develop

'border thinking'. In other words, these realities in which we are locally --and globally-- embedded most likely push us to develop what Mignolo (2013) calls 'border thinking'. Border thinking is about 'thinking otherwise', 'thinking alternatively', or 'thinking from outside' of the existing theoretical perspectives available by distancing ourselves from taken-for-granted perspectives of, in our case, the ELT field (for probing more deeply into the concept of border thinking see also Anzaldúa, 1987).

The concept of border thinking may help us become aware that as English language teachers, educators, or researchers, we are intercultural translators of two worlds that are simultaneously in struggle and symbiosis. In other words, the Global North is loosely understood as a set of world views (i.e., hegemonic and transnational ideas on how to run the world's economy, education, politics, subjectivities, and much more) that stem from North America and Western Europe. It has impacted the Global South (i.e., developing countries which receive the --mostly negative-- effect of said hegemonic ideas developed in the North) in ways that cause more harm than good. Education --particularly ELT-- is no exception to this phenomenon.

As a matter of fact, some of the Global-North traits incorporated into the Global-South ELT practices can be observable in at least three areas, as described by Saavedra & Salazar-Pérez (2018); these are, (a) the over-emphasis allocated to testing and its results in students' subjectivities and social mobility; (b) the fine-grained and poorly contested discourse of language-as-a-resource that pervades most language programs; and (c) the burden placed upon teachers and learners for the lack of success at learning English within educational systems that are undoubtedly unfair, inequitable, racist, and classist.

In such a state of affairs, English language teachers, educators, or researchers who may feel geopolitically located in the Global South or those who have a view of social justice in ELT might not feel comfortable conceptualizing the ELT field in said terms. So, how have ELT teachers, educators, and researchers started to delink or detach from Global North epistemological traits? To answer this question, there is a need to take a look at the broader sociological and educational Colombian context. Some attempts to develop border thinking in Colombia can be found as early as the 1970s of the past century with --but not exclusively-- sociologist Fals Borda who wrote that knowledge is unfinished, subject to be reasoned through dialogue, and prompt to have a social, economic, and political impact. Therefore, a vision of social responsibility with the particularities of each context should guide the production of knowledge. He contended that:

> Neither the frames of reference nor the existing categories in the normal sociological paradigms that had been received from Europe and the United States were satisfactory. We found many of those frames inapplicable to the existing realities, ideologically biased to defend the dominant

> bourgeois elite, and extremely specialized or compartmentalized to understand the global meaning of the phenomena we found daily. (Fals Borda, 2009, p. 257) [Own translation]

In a similar vein, reflecting upon the emergence of situated knowledge, Mejia Jiménez (2011) points out that the pedagogical knowledge created in Latin America is multiple yet scattered. For him, the intent to have local production of knowledge can be traced back to the formation of the republics. For example, in the 50s and 60s of the past century, he says, there were multiple intentions to develop our own ways of thinking. Despite being heavily attached to Euro-American worldviews, some borders were being delimited to configure a thought of our own.

Mejia Jiménez (2011) explains that despite the subordinated relationship with the Euro-American world in terms of politics, economics, or intellectual production, some Latin American authors recognized that such subordination was hindering the development of our own ways of thinking/feeling and experiencing the world. Even so, we must recognize that many ideas of emancipation also came via the critical thought of those geographical regions. Still, at the heart of such reflections, the idea that there was a need to think of Latin America from our own geopolitical locations has been more and more prevalent consciously or unconsciously, either by political decision or by the impossibility to fully apply theoretical or methodological principles alien to the Latin American contexts.

The fact that there was much debate going on in the social sciences in more general terms could have possibly permeated several visions of emancipation in a number of educational areas, and particularly in some conceptualizations of the ELT field. Although an overt reflection on delinking from mainstream ELT thought cannot be taken as a general trend in the Colombian ELT, we can be assured that there has been a gradual increase in the local production of knowledges as observed in the thought-provoking ideas that this issue brings.

Walking the Trails of Local Knowledge

The articles in this current issue are presented as foundations that escape from the supposed rationality of what needs to be done, and how, in Colombian ELT. These foundations to a great extent move away from foreign and established grand narratives about how to teach English and what to consider while doing it. Altogether, the articles offer bases that embody several positions on varied topics. For example, Bertha Ramos, by providing a comprehensive view of what interculturality means, and how it has contributed to current and future trends in the field of ELT and teacher education in Colombia, clamors for situated views of intercultural practices as possibilities to understand and explore interculturality in the Colombian ELT. In a similar line of thought, Carlos Rico Troncoso avows what foreign language teaching should be, and how we as an ELT community should be thinking about

culture and interculturality in our classrooms. His invitation is to think about the need to interculturalize foreign language teaching in our contexts.

Other positions come from sustained work on the topic of literacies in Colombia. For example, Ana Clara Sánchez Olarte highlights the complexity of Colombian education, the dynamic nature of contexts and meanings in it, and the examination of the role of those contexts in the English language teaching and learning processes in the country. Additionally, Amparo Clavijo Olarte, by sharing her beliefs about language and literacy practices, clamors for an understanding of literacy as a social practice that evolves as critical literacies to develop knowledge through community pedagogies and city semiotic landscapes. In a similar fashion, Raúl Alberto Mora shares how critical theories have informed his main research areas and work on literacy. Through a series of epiphanies manifested during his journey as a researcher and scholar-activist, he discusses his main scholarly influences with the literature, mentors, and colleagues in this field. Frank Giraldo offers a view of the assessment of literacy practices in the Colombian ELT. In his paper, he discusses ongoing issues about language assessment literacy that have emerged in his research works. He offers suggestions for fostering them among pre- and in-service teachers of English in the country. He argues for a collective raising of the status and nature of language assessment and its impact on teachers' professional development in the country.

The room is also open for positions referring to English language pre-service teachers' education. The way they are constructed as English language teachers during pedagogical practicum is the interest of Jairo Castañeda Trujillo. In his paper, he focuses on their experiences that he has collected during his research works with them; the experiences that enact the construction of their teacher *selves* become his raising voice in Colombian ELT. As important as the construction of pre-service teachers as English language teachers is, it is the professional development that they, and in-service teachers, can receive. Adriana Gonzalez Moncada considers the professional development of English teachers in Colombia by showing in her paper how the discourses and decisions about teachers' continuing learning represent their views of language and second language acquisition, teaching, and learning. She highlights the power of these concepts over the major decisions made at the local and school levels from the discourses that have shaped English teachers' professional development in Colombia's National Program of Bilingualism. For her, there is a necessity of maintaining critical scholarly work to contribute to the construction of local knowledge for future reflection in Colombian ELT. Correspondingly, by following a critical view of the bilingual education policy in Colombia, Carmen Helena Guerrero and Álvaro Quintero Polo offer their contributions to the ELT field in Colombia by discussing the dimensions of language policies and the teachers' relevant agency to the study of these policies in the country.

Other relevant topics are also part of this special issue. For instance, Harold Castañeda-Peña presents in his article a systematization of reference frameworks for the study of the

particular interrelation between gender and ELT. From a historical perspective, he constructs a reflection on the collective achievements in this field of study in Colombia. He argues for a reflection on potential actions at the research and pedagogical levels in the interrelation between gender and ELT. Additionally, Melba Libia Cárdenas analyzes the role played by locally edited journals in the decolonialization of knowledge. She identifies the contributions, suggestions, and challenges for publications in the English Language Teaching area. She does it based on her studies on academic writing and the publication of scientific journals in the ELT field. She encourages greater participation by the ELT community in the dissemination of their work in order to value knowledge generated in peripheral contexts, without ignoring links with the global world.

Coming to Grips with Colombian ELT Thought

Local construction of scholarship in the Colombian ELT, apart from the contents of the above-mentioned articles in this current issue, also occurs in the vast production presented in other national journals. To mention just a few, the Colombian ELT community recognizes HOW, Profile, GiST, Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, Eletawa, and Íkala, among others from varied universities in the country, as sources that portray different ways of thinking about the ELT in the country. The topics are varied: developing language and communication skills in varied contexts and levels, teaching English to learners with diverse characteristics, reflecting on teachers' and students' educational practices, displaying results of implementing various teaching and assessment approaches or methodologies, and analyzing tendencies and beliefs in English language education, among other topics. There is usually an article for a topic a researcher can imagine in the field of ELT in Colombia. This richness of topics provides a dialogue among local authors that is also evident in their publications in other external journals. This multiverse of knowledges[5] (Qin, 2018), in our opinion, makes visible the Colombian ELT, in and out of the country, without constituting its authors' thinking as attaining formulas or procedures to follow but as valuable foundations that enter the global field of ELT. In agreement with Mignolo and Walsh (2018), (ELT) teachers are not containers, nor replicators of knowledge but producers of it.

Altogether, these authors have to some extent developed an assemblage of associated foundations of how Colombian ELT may occur and be constituted. Their works give meaning to their practices in specific contextual circumstances, in several cases, by abandoning, initially, a technical or instrumental vision of language and language education. Thus, they have ended up problematizing the canon of ELT knowledge and practices (as indicated by Castañeda-Peña, 2018; Castañeda-Londoño, 2018) to debate them for the search of more

[5] Qin (2018) talks about a multiverse of knowledge (in singular). We pluralize knowledge since it is our belief that knowledge is heterogeneous, of different types and dimensions, and context-situated (see Castañeda-Londoño, 2018, 2021).

situated epistemologies that allow the emergence of grounds of knowledges and experiences in our contexts.

In the articles included in this current issue, we then perceive a delinking, a rupture with that canon of ELT knowledge and practices. The Colombian authors of these articles, as well as many others that have expressed this rupture, seem to clamor for resistance and dismantlement of the idea that canon tells the unique truths of how to think and do ELT around the world. By thorough observation, analysis, reasoning, and research on what happens in the diversity of contexts of ELT in Colombia, local authors have perceived different ways in which the canon of ELT knowledge and practices can be decontextualized and incongruous while maintaining a dominant status. As Clavijo-Olarte (this issue) deeply thinks from her experiences, "theory informs, but the practice has the power to transform" (p. 49).

That transformation can occur in other complementary ways with the reflection on experiences while teaching the English language or doing research on it. For instance, the possibility that the Colombian ELT community has to get access to literature and combined digital resources about topics of interest in the ELT field, locally and globally, provides chances of constructing scholarship; so is it when the Colombian ELT community can get into professional development and postgraduate studies that allow analyzing, reflecting on, re-thinking, and transforming processes and practices in language education. These changes improve if they are experienced in company with members of the ELT community. The opportunities to share and create knowledge increase noticeably when efforts are made collectively. Through collaborative work, not only can working and researching with colleagues be more significant and fruitful but also writing and sharing about research studies on common topics of interest can be more satisfactory and grow.

We perceived that all these traits are evident in the papers that the invited authors have written for this special issue of HOW on its 25 years of numbered issues using the Open Journal Systems software. We are sure that these traits have also been shared by many in the Colombian ELT community. Certainly, plenty of others can emerge. Our invitation is to continue searching for opportunities to make, in this case, Colombian scholarship about ELT more foundational, situated, varied, dynamic, transformative, and transcendental. Let the Colombian ELT scholarship walk with the help of its community.

The Potency of the Colombian ELT Scholarship

The articles published in this special issue of HOW journal, plus the numerous articles published thus far by Colombian authors in the multiple and well-known journals at home and overseas, show how potent local scholarship about ELT is. This scholarship looks at the

diversity of events, situations, experiences, and knowledges that happen in the Colombian contexts of ELT. Thus, local scholarship is alive; it is active with plentiful chances of continued existence.

As presented in the previous subtitle, the diversity of topics about which Colombian authors have written eventually creates a foundation in the ELT field of the country. Each article forms the scaffolding for the construction of more scholarship since each is sustained and opens tracks to keep studying what happens in the Colombian field of ELT. As a local ELT community, we are still in debt to peruse more closely at the potency of Colombian ELT scholarship which, combined with a stronger feeling of ownership, can then create more possibilities of being in the extended global field of ELT.

As part of the Colombian ELT community, we should keep burning the flame of constructed scholarship; in this way, the possibilities of being (existence) for this community are more palpable. If we raise the voices of local teachers, educators, researchers, and student-teachers, more opportunities to find out what happens in our contexts are possible. If more contextualized studies are known, more chances to transform our teaching and learning actions of the English language can emerge. If we continue revealing more findings and insights of those studies, more chances for building our continuity of thinking and doing are latent. If we constantly explore what happens in our contexts, we will probably know more about our relationship with English and English language education. If we study the idea of exploring what we know and how we learned it, more chances to discover the foundations of our own local and situated scholarship and conditions can occur.

All these steps can lead us to discover more and more that we need to dismantle the idea that the grand narratives of ELT education are the only ones that tell the truth or the totality of what to do in ELT. Our scholarship will then gain extended validity among us and around the world.

Therefore, it is time to keep strengthening all local scholarship and all the possible academic connections with Colombian English-language teachers, educators, and researchers at all levels (school, university, language institutions). In this way, the construction of their teaching and research methodologies, practices, and knowledges can go together with, and furnish, the corresponding knowledge locally produced. As a community, we need to reclaim the local knowledge that foreign experts and publishing houses seem to have beclouded by establishing their discourses, conceptualizations, ideologies, and experiences.

The potency of the Colombian ELT scholarship is then evident in its publications and in the diversity of the topics of interest of its community, as well as in the actions to teach English in the Colombian multiplicity of contexts and the situated practices to educate new teachers of this language all around the country. As a community, we should keep all this scholarship going and spreading.

However, it is also time to challenge the idea of the importation of ELT scholarship[6] by considering local knowledges. As members of different strands of thought in the Colombian ELT community, we need to take ownership of our language teaching knowledge, practices, and experiences so that we can challenge the idea of adopting, adapting, or introducing foreign approaches for our contexts[7]. We need to divest ourselves of all that has colonized our ELT community so that we will be able to see what constructs our scholarship in context (most of it already evident in the articles about Colombian ELT by local authors). It is the development of self-belief that will allow us to grow as a community. We can then claim the right of having a well-recognized Colombian ELT all around the world[8].

There is also a need to acknowledge that locally-produced knowledge has impacted practices. Mainly, student-teachers, teacher-researchers, and teacher educators are in a continuous attempt to develop reflections, materials, and ways to do things suited for specific observed needs that recognize the particularities of each context (e.g., Vásquez-Guarnizo et al., 2020; Quintero Polo, 2019; Cruz Arcila, 2018, to name only a few). Undoubtedly, more systematic context analysis and tailored proposals lead to renewed ELT teaching and learning practices.

Concluding Remarks

In tune with Global South principles and experience, we should not think of knowledge as being impartial, impersonal, universal, or delocalized. On the contrary, we English language teachers, educators, and researchers should praise and document the epistemological diversity of our realities. Little by little we have been learning to topple the statue of a single knowledge hierarchy that forefronts the foreign as the epitome of good theory and practice. As mentioned before, let us continue denaturalizing the grand narratives of the ELT field. Let us continue thinking-feeling, researching, and writing of literacies, interculturality, language assessment, professional development, pedagogical practicum, gender, bilingual policy (and more) in ways that help us regain the right to speak our truths (Mignolo, 2000).

We are at a point in history that demands committed work towards a deeper understanding of social realities and communities, and each day we are developing more suited methodologies and local frameworks of reference from which to start further explorations. Our field cannot

[6] Or marketization (Usma Wilches, 2009) and businessification (Gonzalez Moncada, 2009) of English, and English language teaching and professional development.

[7] With respect to this idea, see for example, Guerrero Nieto and Quintero Polo (2009), Romero Pinto (2013), Hurie (2018), Guerrero (2018), and Le Gal (2018).

[8] This idea can also build awareness of the white supremacy in Colombian ELT, due to the hegemony and normalization of its postulates (see Estacio Barrios, 2017; Bonilla-Medina, 2017; Branschat, 2019).

be alien to such happenings. The more areas of interest that are explored and documented locally, the better prepared we will feel to cope with the challenges that teaching and learning pose in particular Colombian contexts of ELT.

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25 Years of HOW: A Celebration of Language Teaching and Learning

25 Años de HOW: Una Celebración de la Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas

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Abstract

This article overviews the major themes and pedagogical devethlopments that have emerged via the academic endeavors of practitioners and researchers in the last 25 years, while also touching on how my work adheres to these developments. The document starts with a brief historical background on the establishment of HOW as a resource for the academic community.

The next part of the article deals with the theoretical tenets that have influenced my published works. One of those perspectives is the post-method pedagogy, which acknowledges the limitations of attempting to determine what the "best" language teaching method is for everyone, and proposes three parameters to guide language teaching and learning. The next perspective is the psychology of language learning, particularly positive psychology, which is a field that adds balance to the study of negative emotions in the classroom and can be the basis for interventions that aim at enhancing the language learning process. The final construct discussed in the article is metacognition, which refers to how language teachers adapt their mental processes and behaviors to the emerging demands of their context. The article concludes highlighting a number of topics that were relevant three decades ago and that will likely keep their relevance in the future: the complexity of education, the dynamic nature of context and meaning, and the examination of the role of context in the L2 teaching/learning processes, to name only three.

Keywords: language teaching, language learning, post-method, positive psychology, metacognition

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Resumen

Este artículo da una breve mirada a los temas y avances pedagógicos que han permeado el quehacer académico de los docentes dedicados a su práctica profesional y a la investigación en los últimos 25 años. Además, el artículo esboza cómo esos avances han influido en mis publicaciones. El documento comienza con un breve repaso histórico de cómo HOW se estableció como un medio de expresión para la comunidad académica. En la siguiente sección, se discuten los principios que han influido en mi trabajo. Una de esas perspectivas es el post-método, el cual reconoce las desventajas de decidir cuál es el "mejor método" para toda situación y propone tres parámetros para guiar el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje. Otra perspectiva es la psicología del aprendizaje de lenguas, específicamente la psicología positiva, la cual equilibra el estudio de las emociones en el aula y puede ser la base para investigaciones sobre el proceso de enseñanza de lenguas. Finalmente, la meta cognición se examina como la forma en que los profesores de lenguas adaptan su cognición y conducta a las exigencias que van apareciendo en su contexto. El artículo concluye resaltando algunos temas que eran importantes hace tres décadas y que seguramente serán relevantes a futuro: La complejidad de los procesos educativos, la naturaleza cambiante del contexto y su significado y, finalmente, la investigación del papel del contexto en los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de lenguas, aprendizaje de lenguas, post-método, psicología positiva, meta cognición

A Brief Historical Background

I am grateful for the opportunity HOW has given me to take stock of the points of discussion in the field of English Language Teaching and Teacher Education that I have addressed in my professional practice and in the articles I have had published since the beginning of my professional practice. Before elaborating on that, I would like to revisit briefly some events connected to the establishment of the journal.

In the 1990s, Dr. Luis Fernando Gómez relaunched HOW with the support of an ad hoc Editorial Committee based in Medellin. At that time Dr. Gómez, as Chief Editor of HOW, outlined the nature of the journal and its purpose at that new stage stating that:

> The Editorial Committee is concerned with the improvement of the quality of English teaching in Colombia as well as having the journal serve as an effective means of communication among our English teachers. Like other similar publications, the role of HOW is to stimulate intellectual growth and professional advancement of all who are involved in English Teaching as a Foreign Language and Bilingual Education in Colombia (Gómez, 1996, p. 1)

The journal, in its first volume and number and in its current form, included papers that had been presented in academic conferences and which comprised a variety of topics. Highlighting the importance of including a wide range of issues, the Chief Editor aptly pointed out that "to exclude any (topic) would be an injustice to the truth of our profession" (Gómez, 1996, p. 1).

In 1997, after the National ASOCOPI Conference was held in Pasto, Colombia, the ad hoc Editorial Committee moved to that city and HOW was published by Universidad de Nariño with Dr. Edmundo Mora as the Editor.

The first article I ever wrote for HOW appeared in that issue. That short reflection article on the role of culture in language teaching called for understanding that English learning takes place in a context and goes well beyond the mere exchange of messages in the second language (L2) between speakers. The article concluded emphasizing the complexity of context, the dynamic nature of context and meaning, and the need to include context in the teaching/learning processes in the classroom (Obando, Obando, & Sánchez, 1997). My connection to HOW grew stronger as other articles focused on translation (Obando & Sánchez, 1998); multiple intelligences (Sánchez & Obando, 1999), and grammar in writing (Sánchez, Caicedo, & Obando, 2000) got published.

In early 2000, Dr. Edmundo Mora asked me to get more closely involved with the editing and reviewing processes of the journal. These tasks greatly contributed to enriching my professional practice and gave me the opportunity to get in touch with prominent professionals from Colombia whose remarkable careers have strengthened the academic community and have positioned HOW as an international journal in important bibliographical databases like SciELO. In 2003, the last year HOW was edited and published at Universidad de Nariño, HOW underwent a makeover to make it more streamline and to look similar in size and appearance to similar publications from around the world. In 2004, under the leadership of Dr. Melba Libia Cárdenas and her team, HOW started the challenging process of inserting itself in the international community and successfully completing indexing processes with international reference systems (e.g., EBSCO, Educational Research Abstracts-ERA, The Education Resources Information Center- ERIC). Today, HOW is a vibrant, impactful, and relevant journal whose articles reflect global trends, while always keeping a critical eye on local realities, policies, trends in teacher education, the changing roles of L2 teachers, and initiatives from L2 teachers at all levels. HOW is also a journal that promotes an equitable and fair system of knowledge by giving the academic community access to its contents through the Directory of Open Access Journal – DOAJ, Dialnet, Latindex, Redalyc and SciELO Colombia.

Topics of Interest, Theoretical Frameworks and Influences

In the context I just described, I can say that my topics of interest in the field of second and foreign language education have been varied and permeated by my academic preparation and by my experiences both as a language learner and teacher. Mainly, I have moved between two areas: The first, L2 instruction and the development of communicative competence; the second, the issues that affect teacher educators and future foreign language teachers.

In the former, I have focused on practical ideas regarding how to address the skills and components of language such as grammar and pronunciation in the classroom (Sánchez Solarte & Obando Guerrero, 2002), on evaluating trends in foreign language methodology (i.e., communicative language teaching) (Sánchez Solarte, 2001), and lately, on analyzing the psychological aspects of language learning such as foreign language anxiety, which may affect teachers and learners (Sánchez Solarte & Sánchez Solarte, 2017). In the latter strand, I have concentrated on issues affecting teachers. In this area I have published articles focused on evaluating foreign language policy in Colombia (Sánchez Solarte & Obando Guerrero, 2008), the importance of classroom management for novice L2 teachers (Sánchez Solarte, 2019), and exploring foreign language teacher education programs (Obando & Sánchez Solarte, 2018) and general English courses at college levels in order to understand learner satisfaction (Sánchez Solarte, Obando Guerrero & Santacruz Ibarra, 2017).

All these issues are conceptualized from the perspective of the post-method condition or post-method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2012). I adhere to this perspective because it positions L2 teachers as key agents of change in the classroom. Post-method teachers are called upon to be autonomous, to use their prior knowledge and to exercise their autonomy while navigating the limitations that may be imposed by institutions, curricula, and textbooks. Importantly, in the post-method condition, teachers are seen as metacognitive individuals who deliberately reflect on their own teaching, analyze and evaluate their instructional practices, can initiate change and monitor the effects of these changes, and have an evolving personal knowledge of language learning and teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). L2 instruction in the post-method pedagogy is sustained by three principles that go beyond the prescriptive nature of 20th century methods. Instruction acknowledges the dynamic, complex, and challenging nature of L2 classrooms (Mercer, 2016) through the parameters of *particularity, practicality,* and *possibility*. The first parameter has to do with the fact that language teaching and learning is an event that takes place with learners with a particular set of goals, learning in a specific institution and within a particular sociocultural milieu. Thus, the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, or writing is based on teachers' reflection and decision-making processes about what works to achieve the set learning goals, for whom, and under what learning conditions.

The parameter of practicality addresses L2 teachers' capacity to monitor their own effective practices and the need to go beyond the divide in theory and practice. Theory and practice can belong to both theorists and teachers. Teachers in the post-method condition move from applying theories to theorizing their practice. That is, observing their practices, reflecting on them, evaluating them, engaging with what happens in the classroom and taking action based on these observations and engagement.

Finally, the parameter of possibility is based on Freire's position that pedagogy is connected to power and that pedagogy can create social inequalities. This parameter acknowledges that

when L2 learners come into the classroom, they also bring their experiences, which have been shaped by their social, political, and economic environment. This is particularly relevant for an EFL context like Colombia, where the experience of, for instance, learning English in urban and rural areas, will be radically different for the teachers and learners. The parameter of possibility clarifies that those unique experiences "have the potential to alter classroom aims and activities in ways unintended and unexpected by policy planners or curriculum designers or textbook producers" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 174).

The parameter of possibility is the one most closely connected to my writing in the area of teacher education. In general, the post-method condition advocates that teacher education needs to move beyond the transmission of a body of knowledge. Instead, it must be dialogically constructed by agents who think and act critically. Teacher educators are responsible for creating the conditions for this dialogue so that future L2 teachers can construct a framework that allows them "to know, to analyze, to recognize, to do, and to see what constitutes learning, teaching, and teacher development" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 122). HOW and other journals in Colombia have facilitated the dialogical construction of the foreign language teaching profession and our understanding of learning and teaching. This dialogue has, at times, been invigorated by government policies which might be seen as disconnected from the parameter of possibility and which have prompted a plethora of articles published in HOW and in other outstanding Colombian journals.

Another perspective that has influenced my professional practice and my writing is the understanding that L2 teaching and learning are complex and important endeavors for our country, and that people deserve to be happy while they teach and learn. I cannot help but agree with Noddings' (2003) assertion that despite the substantial changes we are going through as a society and the swift advancement of technology, education falls short of providing individuals a space where they can aim not just for the development of skills, knowledge, and behaviors, but also for happiness. This notion, echoed by Braslavsky (2006) more than 15 years ago, resonated with me because I too believe that "high quality education is the education that allows everybody to learn what they need to learn, at the right time of their lives and their societies and, in happiness" (Braslavksy, 2006, p. 87). The research and reflection topics that have occupied my thoughts in the last 25 years have to do precisely with how L2 learning can be supported by effective practices and with how L2 teaching can be guided by principles that render instruction valuable for the learner and fulfilling for the teacher.

More recently, the theoretical perspectives that have been at the center of my work have to do with the psychology of language learning and metacognition, specifically with language teacher psychology and L2 teacher metacognition. I have chosen to focus on these perspectives in connection with L2 teachers because in the post-method era, teachers play a key role in the decision-making processes related to the orchestration, execution, evaluation,

and transformation of the events that take place in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Thus, the hypothesis might be that a focus on teachers and their multifaceted work might bring about a better understanding of their practices, and, by extension, shed light on whether those practices are linked to various aspects of learning. These two theoretical perspectives are also included here because I believe that in the next few years, they will be at the center of numerous research initiatives and publications around the world and will be of interest for researchers and practitioners.

Language Teacher Psychology and Positive Psychology

Research focused on the psychology of language teachers has been limited when compared to the diversity and depth of studies on language learners (Frenzel, 2014; Mercer et al., 2016; Mercer, 2018). In addition to this lack of balance, studies on negative emotions such as anxiety, or phenomena like burnout (Burić et al., 2019) seem to have harnessed most of the attention in research until recently. The gap of what is known about the psychology of L2 teachers deserves to be addressed to "appreciate the kind of support language teachers need to ensure that they flourish in their professional role" (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018, p. 2). As a response to the focus on deficiencies and limitations, positive psychology, or "the scientific study of what goes right in life" (Peterson, 2006, p. 4) has gained traction in the last 20 years and has become a field that might have the answer to the question of what is needed for language teachers (and learners) to flourish (Seligman, 2011). In addition to this, positive psychology is valuable because a) it showcases the multidimensionality of the experience of language learners and teachers, b) it contributes to enriching the field with the development and application of rather novel research methods, and c) it contributes to the development of effective practices in language teaching (i.e., activities and lessons) that have been deemed effective in positive psychology and that are suitable to be adapted to L2 instruction (MacIntyre, 2021). These ideas circle back with the notion of learning in happiness; additionally, the three foundations of positive psychology further convinced me of the relevance of exploring this area. Positive psychology is founded upon *positive experiences, positive character traits, and positive institutions* (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

As a researcher and teacher educator, I wondered which positive experiences take place in Colombian L2 classrooms, which character strengths are used to support learning, and whether as well as how classrooms, schools, policies, and governments facilitate flourishing. The unpacking of each one of these principles opens a wide array of research avenues and intriguing issues to explore in an EFL setting like Colombia. I will discuss the principles briefly.

Positive subjective experiences refer to emotions. Emotions are "multi-component, coordinated processes of psychological subsystems including affective, cognitive,

motivational, expressive, and peripheral physiological processes" (Pekrun, 2006, p. 316). An overview by Frenzel (2014) indicates that teachers experience multiple emotions in the classroom (i.e., enjoyment, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, boredom, and pity) and that the interactions with students in the classroom and with different elements in the teacher's environment are a powerful source of emotions (Day & Gu, 2014). Positive emotions emerge from interactions such as a student acknowledging the teacher's support. This may result in joy, satisfaction or pride (Hargreaves, 2000). Conversely, negative emotions like anger or frustration stem largely from classroom management issues like poor discipline or student misbehavior (Chang, 2013).

Positive character traits relate to individual differences that can be capitalized to foster learning. In this sense, character strengths are morally valued facets of an individual's personality (Park & Peterson, 2009), or distinguishable routes toward displaying one or another of the virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 13). Twenty-four strengths organized around six virtues that are found in all cultures have been identified. These virtues are wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). These strengths and virtues contribute to an individual's optimal life and are related to the features of effective learners (e.g., being creative or actively monitoring their own learning) (McIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

Positive institutions comprise the final pillar of positive psychology, which is the less developed one in research (McIntyre & Mercer, 2014), possibly because institutions per se tend not to be the subject of studies on psychology (MacIntyre, 2021). This tenet deals with the organizational structures such as governments, schools, and networks that "enable success and promote positive language learning environments" (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014, p. 165) and it would be highly valuable if research laid the foundation for principles that articulate high impact policies which promote the flourishing of both teachers and learners. One caveat worth noting is that researchers and practitioners must be weary of the false premise that positive psychology means that people must always be happy, or that it is a "tyranny of positive thinking" (MacIntyre, 2021). Positive psychology brings a balance to the field and adds to the conversation as to how there is a continuum of positive and negative emotions, instead of just replacing negative emotions with positive ones.

Positive psychology is a rapidly expanding field in SLA, and directing research efforts towards it will open the door to theory development and pedagogical implications and interventions. This will further clarify the role of the emotional dimension of teachers and learners in the facilitation of learning. My personal reflections about the psychology of language learning and the need for empirical connections between these many constructs and the language classroom resulted in an article published in HOW (Sánchez Solarte & Sánchez Solarte, 2017), which reported the application of strategies derived from the systemic therapy model to address foreign language anxiety in a group of 13 college students. The quantitative

and qualitative findings suggested that negative emotions like anxiety may influence learners' outcomes and that interventions can be useful in helping learners overcome unwanted interferences in the language learning process. Since then, and for reasons already discussed, I have focused on the psychology of language teachers and on the aspects that can affect their well-being and performance.

One aspect that influences teachers' performance is classroom management, which as suggested before, can trigger negative emotions in teachers, influence learning outcomes, and is reported to be one of the strongest sources of stress for L2 teachers (Lewis, 2009). Classroom management is not an emerging, reactive, or intuitive response of teachers to unexpected situations in the classroom, but rather "a well-planned set of procedures and routines for avoiding problems and having a plan in place for when misbehavior does occur" (Rawlings et al., 2017, p. 399). Classroom management examines how language teachers deal simultaneously with multiple issues inside the classroom that might range from changing the physical environment to handling learner misbehavior. Planning for every possible scenario is impossible, but being a metacognitive teacher is not. If a plan is in place and monitoring and evaluation of that plan are granted, the likelihood of classroom management to influence teacher emotions and attrition in the classroom might decrease. An article outlining the dimensions of classroom management and the importance of balancing routines with readiness to deal with unexpected situations was published in HOW (Sánchez Solarte, 2019). The planning, intention, deliberateness in the actions of teachers inside the classroom as well as the reflection and evaluation of their practices and beliefs are linked to metacognition. This is the last theoretical perspective that I want to discuss here, and that has infused how I approach my topics of interest and my contributions to the L2 teaching and L2 teacher education.

Language Teacher Metacognition

In its early days, metacognition was described as thinking about thinking (Flavell, 1979). More recent attempts at defining it state that it is "the activity of monitoring and controlling one's cognition" (Young & Fry, 2008, p. 1). In the field of teaching, Jiang et al. (2016) consider that metacognition refers to how teachers monitor and control their cognitive processes. A current definition suggests that "when applied to the language teaching domain, metacognition is the situative adaptation of teacher thought and behavior to the demands of their L2 teaching environment" (Hiver et al., 2021, p. 57). Metacognition entails awareness of one's cognition and is a key element in instruction since adaptation allows teachers to purposefully modify and broaden their experiences depending on the conditions provided by the teaching and learning context. Teachers develop and draw on metacognition to successfully navigate complex dynamic classrooms (Hiver et al., 2021). This conscious and intentional adaptation characterizes exemplary L2 teaching and highlights the importance of

metacognition for L2 teachers and for teacher education programs. Metacognition is made up of three components: *metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive skills, and metacognitive experiences*. Metacognitive knowledge refers to the teachers' beliefs about how to structure tasks and is related to the decision-making processes teachers go through to decide which methods or strategies are the best to achieve instructional objectives (Hiver et al., 2021).

Metacognitive skills include deliberate and intentional activities and the use of strategies for planning, monitoring, and regulating the outcomes of cognitive processing. In the classroom, this would translate as a teacher who can plan, monitor their behavior, regulate their teaching methods, evaluate their performance and solve problems (Jiang et al., 2016; Veenman, 2017), all while these events take place in the classroom.

Metacognitive experiences relate to the teachers' awareness of the task that they are performing, which gives teachers feedback about their progress towards the planned outcomes in real time (Hiver et al., 2021). It is important to note that these three dimensions interact with each other and with the context where teaching is taking place.

Metacognition and the need for teachers to reflect, evaluate their practices, make moment-to-moment decisions, and intervene and change course in the classroom when a strategy does not promote learning were the basis for two studies that were published in HOW (Sánchez Solarte & Obando, 2017; Obando Guerrero & Sánchez Solarte, 2018). These studies intended to identify how satisfied L2 students were with their learning experiences and to use this input to reflect and develop awareness. The studies provided valuable insights into the learners' perceptions of the L2 learning experience and highlighted different elements: First, the importance of permanent monitoring and evaluation of what is done in the classroom. Second, the need for awareness of how different elements of the context are connected and affect instruction, and third, the need to expand the awareness of what is being done and what needs to be done to foster exemplary teaching.

Going Forward

It might be audacious to offer suggestions about vast fields such as ELT or Teacher education. However, the understandings I have developed in the last 25 years of professional practice entail the need to acknowledge that teaching and learning are complex activities that cannot be separated from the context where they occur. In Colombia, the varied educational landscapes shaped by socioeconomic status, violence, inequality, geography, culture, access to resources, extent to which policies are implemented, and available resources to implement said policies need to be recognized as factors that influence learner outcomes. Other factors influencing English Language Teaching exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and that deserve further examination by the agents involved in education (i.e., policymakers,

administrators, teachers) are the technological divide, which forced teachers and students to depend on a cell phone and the blatant inequality and privilege showcased in the access to internet services (Turkewitz & Villamil, 2020). All these issues are intertwined and their effects may be tangible in the effectiveness of content learning, grades or learner attrition, but also in the well-being of people and their right to teach, learn and live happily. These variables also influence instruction and the extent to which teachers can create conditions for learning. Regardless of which theoretical frameworks are being expanded by research, and which issues are gaining impetus around the world, an awareness of where we are developing our professional practice is essential to move forward. This awareness can foster the bottom-up processes of discussion, development and agreed implementation of policies where the voices of teachers are heard, where the understandings of Colombian researchers are the basis for theorizing our practices, and where stronger bridges are built between the government, practitioners, and researchers.

It is particularly important that multiple research methods are used in order to adequately capture the broad nature of the phenomena and the constructs related to language learning and teaching. Issues like teacher hope, learner resilience, foreign language anxiety, or learner engagement, to name a few, have the potential to be studied from many perspectives and to foster creating or adapting a variety of instruments and approaches that prompt the construction of knowledge around these constructs.

I was asked to outline the impact of my work. I think this is a hard task since I do not know how to articulate how my papers published in this journal and elsewhere have impacted other authors or studies. However, the number of citations of some of my works (Sánchez Solarte & Obando, 2008; Sánchez Solarte, 2019) leads me to think that the issues that my colleagues and I have worked with, have added to the ongoing conversation about language policy in Colombia and about classroom management. To me, this means that these topics are valuable for L2 teachers and hint at the idea that the debate about language policy in Colombia is not over. I believe that dissenting voices can all be heard, agreements can be reached, collaborative work can be fostered if the goals of L2 learning, teaching and learning in Colombia are constructed rather than imposed. The article on classroom management may be perceived as relevant because it explicitly lays out the challenges novice teachers may face when they start their professional practice, but it also gives them specific ideas they may choose to use when they design their classroom management plan. This also tells me that future foreign language teachers may need to discuss issues like their take on discipline and student misbehavior before they actually face an audience, so that these novice L2 teachers can start off on the right foot.

To conclude this article, I would like to say that issues that were relevant more than 25 years ago and that I mentioned in the first article I wrote for HOW are still relevant today: the complexity of education, the dynamic nature of context and meaning, and the

examination of the role of context in the L2 teaching/learning processes. These issues will surely be the subject of empirical studies, meta-analyses and essays. I am certain that HOW will keep on providing a welcoming space where scholars from all over the world can share their experiences and knowledge, amplify their voices, and join the dialogue around language learning and teaching.

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Publishing in Local ELT Journals: A Way to Decolonialize Knowledge

Publicar en Revistas Locales de Enseñanza del Inglés: Una Forma de Descolonizar el Conocimiento

Melba Libia Cárdenas[1]

Abstract

Educational institutions, particularly those for higher education, seek to ensure their visibility and valid indicators for institutional accreditation processes through the publications of their teachers. Their projection is intimately associated with the circulation of their production in accredited publications whose reputations depend on their positions in prestigious rankings, databases, and indexing systems. That is why Colombia, in recent years, has experienced an increase in the number of scientific journals published in the country. This phenomenon was a reaction by academics to the obstacles for publishing in renowned journals, generally edited in hegemonic or central contexts, where it is presumed that knowledge is disseminated for the whole world. In this article, I analyze the role played by locally edited journals in the decolonialization of knowledge. I base my analysis on studies carried out in the fields of the English teacher as researcher and writer, academic writings, and the publication of scientific journals. I identify the contributions, suggestions and challenges for publications in the English Language Teaching area. I also stress the importance of strengthening professional communities, encouraging greater participation by professors in the dissemination of their work, and the need to value knowledge generated in peripheral contexts, without ignoring links with the global world.

Keywords: academic writing, decolonializing knowledge, ELT journals, publishing, scientific journals

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Resumen

Las instituciones educativas, principalmente de educación superior, buscan asegurar su visibilidad e indicadores válidos para los procesos de acreditación institucional mediante las publicaciones de sus docentes. Su proyección está íntimamente asociada a la circulación de su producción en publicaciones acreditadas, cuya reputación depende de su ubicación en prestigiosos ránquines, bases de datos y sistemas de indexación. Por ello, Colombia vivió en los últimos años un incremento en el número de revistas científicas editadas en el país. El fenómeno fue una reacción de los académicos frente a los obstáculos para publicar en revistas de renombre, editadas generalmente en contextos hegemónicos o de centro donde se presume se divulga conocimiento pertinente para todo el mundo. En este artículo analizo el papel que juegan las revistas editadas localmente en la descolonización del conocimiento. Para ello me baso en estudios realizados en los campos del docente de inglés como investigador y escritor, la escritura académica y la publicación de revistas científicas. Identifico los aportes, sugerencias y retos para las publicaciones del área de la enseñanza del inglés. Asimismo, destaco la importancia de fortalecer las comunidades profesionales, motivar una mayor participación de los docentes en la difusión de sus trabajos y la necesidad de valorar el conocimiento que se genera en contextos periféricos, sin desconocer los nexos con el mundo global.

Palabras clave: descolonización del conocimiento, escritura académica, publicación, revistas científicas, revistas de ELT

Introduction

The recognition of journals published in the West, viewed as "leading", "prestigious" and "elite", makes us frequently ask: Why should we[2] publish in local journals? What for? In the past three decades, an important number of journals have been consolidated in Colombia. Some of them focus on foreign languages and related subjects and others involve questions of education. The rise and consolidation of scientific journals about English Language Teaching (ELT) in Colombia is associated with the integration of the research component from initial teacher education; greater involvement by teachers in applied research and in national and international academic events; and their interest in disseminating their work (Cárdenas, 2014, 2016). With the aim of achieving this last purpose, there is ever greater participation in writing articles for publication in journals, preferably in those indexed nationally or internationally.

In the most recent classification of journals published in the country (Minciencias, 2020), 277 such journals were indexed. One-hundred twenty-eight correspond to the field of social sciences and 52 to the humanities. Within the social sciences, eleven are in the field of education sciences and within the larger field of humanities, eight are in languages and literature. Four specialized journals are in the areas of ELT and Teaching English to

[2] Note that "we" has been used in the manuscript as part of its stylistic choice: we, inclusive, to involve the reader.

Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) published exclusively in the English language: *HOW* (created in 1969 and led by the Colombian Association of Teachers of English (Asociación Colombiana de Profesores de Inglés – ASOCOPI), *Profile* (created in 2000 and published by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia), *GIST Education and Learning Research Journal* (founded in 2007, at the Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana – ÚNICA) and *Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning – LACLIL* (created in 2008, by the Universidad de La Sabana). Other journals address topics more broadly associated with education, languages and cultures, and applied linguistics. These are: *Lenguaje* (founded in 1972, at the Universidad del Valle), *Folios* (published since 1990 by the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional), Íkala (created in 1996, at the Universidad de Antioquia), *Educación y Educadores* (published since 1997 by the Universidad de La Sabana) and *Colombian Applied Linguistics* (created in 1999, at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas).

On the other hand, journals have been created to encourage research and publication among undergraduate and postgraduate students of writings stemming from subjects they study or from their graduation projects. Particularly outstanding have been efforts to encourage writing and dissemination in local communities by *Enletawa Journal (*created in 2009, at the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia) and *Opening Writing Doors Journal* (published between 2002 and 2015*).*

We note that publications for teacher educators and language teachers have gradually multiplied in Colombia, not only due to their participation in research projects, but because the institutions are interested in leading processes for research or innovation and knowledge sharing. They also place greater importance on their faculty members making their production visible in national and international journals. Additionally, in many scenarios, the pressure exercised by governmental science and technology policies is much more evident in their attempts to have productions by academics become contributions to the productivity and visibility of both the country and its educational institutions. This is a signal of the "*publish or perish*" phenomenon, which refers to the pressure in the academic world for professors to publish rapidly and in a sustained manner to maintain their professional careers or advance in them. In this regard, Hicks, Wouters, Waltman, de Rijcke, and Rafols (2015) make the following historical summary:

> Prior to 2000, experts used the Science Citation Index of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), in its CD-ROM version, to make specialized analyses. In 2002, Thomson Reuters launched an integrated web platform that extensively made the Web of Science database accessible to a wide-ranging public. Other indexes of citations then appeared to compete with Web of Science: Scopus Elsevier (2004) and Google Academico (beta version created in 2004). Web-based instruments were later introduced, such as InCites (which uses Web of Science) and SciVal (which uses Scopus) along with software to analyze individual profiles of citations based on Google Scholar (Publish or Perish, which appeared in 2007). (p. 275)

In Colombia, governmental policies for evaluating journals have generated tensions because scholars question ethical, utilitarian, and mercantilist implications of the parameters of citation that, to a great extent, determine the classification and visibility of publications as greater or lesser contributors to scientific progress (Cárdenas & Nieto, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Leon-Sarmiento, Bayona-Prieto, Bayona, & León, 2005; Londoño, 2006). Equally, there is resentment over pressures to increase the exogamy of authors that publish in journals along with the idiomatic barriers, because greater preponderance is given to English-language publications; above all, those published outside of the institution where teachers work and, preferably, in countries of the center.

From the perspective of the global economy, we use the term "periphery" to refer to countries such as Colombia, in contrast to "the center" (the hegemonic territory). The center is usually used to refer to Western English-speaking countries with strong economies (Cárdenas & Rainey, 2018), which disseminate knowledge in the English language.

Paradoxically, the fact that a journal publishes in English does not guarantee greater appraisal or easier access to the above-mentioned bases and international indexing systems. Publishing in English is also a challenge for teachers from the field of ELT, which is why there is recognition of the need to examine the circumstances associated with that. Considering that we generally start to show our work in local scientific journals, we propose to examine their role in the dissemination of the work of teachers in professional and academic communities, along with encouragement of the recognition of their contributions towards knowledge in the field of ELT.

Towards the Decolonization of Knowledge: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

Colombian journals arise and evolve within a period of Latin American initiatives to consolidate publications as venues to encourage dissemination of the knowledge of nationals, along with authors from diverse latitudes: from both the periphery and from the center. The principles that motivate their creation and continuity are associated with the ideology of decolonization of knowledge that traditionally has conceded superiority and privileges to the theories and approaches of the center, thus perpetuating the status quo of scientific journals published in the West, with long-standing tradition and scarce diversity in the geographical location of their authors.

Local journals, as spaces for the dissemination of diverse types of knowledge (research products, reflections, and pedagogical experiences, among others), constitute ways to counteract the limitations that we teachers have for publishing in scientific journals of the center. This has been clear in the review of literature, in studies made in the framework of

teacher professional development programs and in my own publishing work. Regarding the latter reference framework, it is important to mention that the proposals presented in this article also stem from my experiences as creator and editor of the journal *Profile*, as well as my participation as guest editor of the journal *HOW*[3].

As shown in Figure 1, to advance in the decolonization of knowledge through local journals requires people who contribute to them (teachers as researchers and writers) and who have skills in academic writing. The journals, as means of knowledge dissemination, not only facilitate publication of their manuscripts, but also make them visible in the academic and professional communities. Additionally, in their editorial work, the journals examine the policies that govern their evaluation and decide which profiles of writings and authors can be published in them.

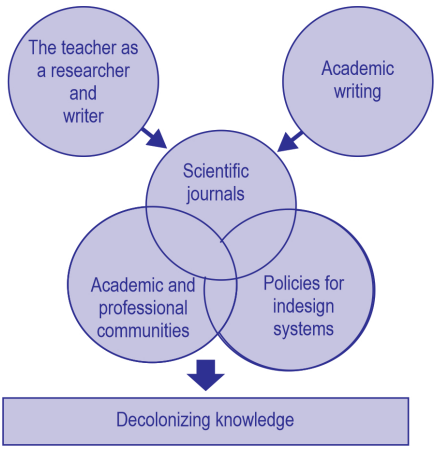

Figure 1. Fundamental axes for decolonization of knowledge through local journals

The Scientific Journals

Scientific journals, also referred to as specialized, scientific, or serialized scientific publications, are defined as periodical publications that seek to gather scientific progress through the dissemination of new research, innovations, scientific and technical information, and lines of thinking in a particular discipline or area of knowledge. These journals "traditionally constitute the main means for communication and conservation of scientific

[3] I was the editor of HOW in 2004 and again from 2006 to 2018. The journal received support through the experience of Profile, which enabled it to incorporate international editorial standards and achieve indexation.

progress —considered in a broad sense: the pure and natural sciences as well as the social sciences and humanities" (Patalano, 2005, p. 217). They are also a way of contributing "to consolidate communities of specialists around specific topics, make it possible to generate bibliometric indicators about the positioning that in a particular time period an entity for dissemination within the academic community that it serves may achieve" (Aguado-López & Rogel-Salazar, 2009, p. iv). In line with Ramírez Martínez, Martínez Ruiz, & Castellanos Domínguez (2012), journals can also be understood as "a reflection of the general functioning of the sciences, other institutions, their researchers, and the relationship that each discipline has with itself, with other disciplines, and with society" (Colciencias, 2016, p. 1).

> Scientific journals essentially seek to disseminate knowledge and to reach determined audiences through different means (print, digital or combined). We acknowledge that through digital media and the strategies employed to ensure visibility among the communities of interest, "journals can define the greater or lesser degree of success (in other words, dissemination) of the work that researchers disseminate through them." (Jiménez Contreras, 1992, pp. 174-175)

In the past three decades, subjects associated with the national criteria for scientific journals published in Colombia have been studied. Particularly noteworthy are the first initiatives to evaluate serialized publications (Gómez, 1999) and the construction of a national indexing system (Charum, 2004). Similarly, the following issues have been examined: difficulties for the journals to be included in the most well-known systems for indexation and referencing (SIR) (Delgado, 2011); problems associated with editorial processes to ensure the quality of publications (Gómez, Anduckia, & Rincón, 1998; Ramírez Martínez et al., 2012); and challenges to ensure periodicity and visibility (Charum et al., 2003; Delgado, 2011; Jiménez Medina & González Hernández, 2013; Molina-Molina & De-Moya-Anegón, 2013). There has even been discussion about the careers of university professors in terms of the *"puntímetro"* or score, as the main reason for publishing to obtain points that will give rise to salary raises/increases (Gómez-Morales, 2015).

These aspects have been determinants in the life of foreign language journals. For example, we made a documentary analysis of the evolution of the *HOW* journal and a characterization of the profiles of its authors, topics of interest, concerns about academic writing, and the repercussions of new national policies with respect to opportunities for national academics so that their publications in journals such as that one will gain deserved recognition. A series of challenges concerning publishing policies and processes, which are intimately associated with current trends in the evaluation systems that govern the classifications of academic journals, was also identified (Cárdenas, 2016).

In *Profile* journal, we examined the guidance for primary and secondary school teachers to publish in it and their difficulties as writers (Cárdenas, 2003; Cárdenas & Nieto, 2010); the problems observed by peer evaluators in manuscripts submitted for publication as well

as their implications for both academic writing and for teacher education (Cárdenas, 2019a); and the experience of teachers at diverse educational levels who have published in the journal about the reasons that led them to submit their manuscripts, their experiences during the publication process, and the meaning they place on the publication of their articles in the journal (Cárdenas, 2014, 2020). Additionally, we describe and analyze the circumstances in which the journal came into existence, experiences of authors who have published in it, concerns regarding matters of indexation and classification inherent to the Colombian context, the nature of the knowledge circulated in *Profile* and the challenges for publication in a peripheral context (Cárdenas & Rainey, 2018). In light of this panorama, it is now interesting to analyze two elements that facilitate the presence of English teachers in local journals: their research activity and academic writing.

The English Teacher as Researcher and Author of Articles

We conceive of the teacher as an education researcher and intellectual (according to the postulates of Giroux, 1988; Nieto, 2006). Independently of the academic communities to which they belong, teachers have a cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1987), an accumulation of knowledge that makes it possible for them to participate in the knowledge society through their engagement in research and the subsequent publication of their findings. To make this possible, it is necessary to open venues for scientific dissemination that enable plural participation by the teachers. Thus, we face the challenge of having journals that transcend the concept of knowledge production in hegemonic contexts, to recognize contributions that stem from peripheral scenarios.

Based on the recognition that research can be undertaken by English teachers, of the knowledge that can be produced and the possibility to publish from the periphery in order to reach diverse educational and geographical contexts, a dialog is fomented among local communities, as well as between the periphery and the center. Therefore, the teacher's involvement in the dialogue that surrounds research and publication enables a form of empowerment. We clarify here that we understand the term to empower as a legitimate act to give power and authority so that teachers can play a more active role in the decisions by educational institutions, to thereby give them greater control over their work, and a voice in their profession (Kincheloe, 2003; Noffke & Somekh, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). Thus, the local contexts where teachers work and the impact of their actions can be transformed, by which we can clearly see an empowerment of the teacher as social agent.

Academic Writing

Academic writing occupies a central place in the process of construction, dissemination and legitimization of knowledge (Canagarajah, 2006). From this perspective, we recognize

that in the local journals of Colombia, a priority is placed on awareness of the meaning of the internationalization of TESOL and the goal of surmounting the dependency of the dominant academic circles. Canagarajah associates those advances with the transition of a modernist orientation to a postmodernist one in the discourses. In connection to this, we can assert that we are promoting changes in the forms of knowledge dissemination and paying more attention to the geographic location of research, authorship, types of articles, and research methods.

In the research line that refers to academic writing, we can mention works that characterize the publications by English teachers (Rainey, 2005) and experiences in the accompaniment of authors during writing processes for publishing in scientific journals (Cárdenas, 2003, 2014; Cárdenas & Nieto, 2010; Cárdenas & Rainey, 2018; Lillis, Magyar, & Robinson-Pant, 2010; Pérez-Llantada, Plo, & Ferguson, 2011; Smiles & Short, 2006). However, the literature shows that neither the perceptions of the authors and of those who accompany them (evaluators and editors), nor the research on English teachers as researchers and writers, nor their relationships with the professional cycle, have occupied a predominant place. We find thematic gaps that justify our interest in the experiences and meaning(s) of the journals as to the personal and professional dimensions of the authors, and the editorial processes that mediate the editing of academic journals published in peripheral countries, committed to shedding light on the educational and research work of English-language teachers in their professional and scientific communities.

Nonetheless, in reference to our interest in publishing results of action and innovation research projects carried out by primary and secondary school teachers, we have explored the role of that research approach in study groups and in networking (Cárdenas & Nieto, 2007, 2010; Cárdenas, Nieto, & Del Campo, 2011). In those studies, and in the ones cited below, we find that the vision of the journals and the accompaniment for possible authors play a preponderant role in achieving the objectives and in self-esteem. We have thus dealt with authors' and evaluators' perceptions regarding English teachers' difficulties in publishing scientific articles in peripheral contexts (Cárdenas, 2019a). Evaluators and authors agree on two problematic areas: academic writing and the inclusion of relevant content, according to the structure of the type of article. Certain authors also point to the effect of personal and employment circumstances as regards time management, work systems, and lack of confidence to reach their goals.

Furthermore, and following the narrative research approach, life stories have made it possible to detect fingerprints from the first publications by some English teachers (Cárdenas, 2019b). The accounts provide an understanding of the complexity of writing for publication, of the challenges in becoming a teacher and researcher and how multiple and changing identities are created throughout our lives and professional cycles. Finally, we summarize the study of the reasons that led a group of English teachers to send their manuscripts to be

published in *Profile*. The analysis was made from the perspective of the logic of scientific-social reasoning in the authors' opinions, and it was found that

> The most important reason was communicative logic because the link with the academic community is of interest. Similarly, and in relation to the instrumental reason, the participants recognize the effect of publication in a renowned journal: personal satisfaction, recognition by their academic peers and, in a few cases, incentives that can be obtained for their professional career, represented in the teaching hierarchy or salary. In turn, although in a lesser proportion, there are arguments associated with critical logic, which reflect the authors' commitment as agents devoted to educational change, knowledge generation and research in their professional field. (Cárdenas, 2020, p. 222)

In the studies that we have mentioned, as well as in academic fora in the ELT field, we observe interest in showing the work of teachers and, also, to problematize dominant discourses that seek to perpetuate dependency on hegemonic knowledge, and which insist that it be transmitted worldwide, so that we continue the tradition of applying everything that comes in from abroad, without greater recognition of the contributions of local academics. Also, and to the extent that there is progress towards publications totally online or in both printed and electronic versions, and without restrictions for consultation of complete texts, there is an ever-increasing questioning over the adoption of guidelines from the "center" for publishing management and evaluation. These are associated with postmodernist and poststructuralist visions that sustain their conception of journals as social agents and promoters of the construction of academic communities.

The Role of Local Journals in the Decolonization of Knowledge

We have said that the elements shown in Figure 1 are fundamental axes for the decolonization of knowledge through local journals. In addition to these serialized publications, there must exist a commitment by the faculty to enable those publications to maintain their periodicity. In this sense, the possibility for English teachers also to be perceived as writers depends, to a great extent, on their conceptions about the role writing academic articles plays in their profession. As previously stated, the journals not only enable dissemination of knowledge contributed by teachers; they also create a culture for the dissemination of their own collection of knowledge and writings while attracting academic and professional communities. Also, and although indirectly, journals can contribute towards incorporation of the knowledge they publish into the work of teaching and enable those who read them to have dialogues with the authors or cite them in future publications. The journals in turn have the possibility to decide upon their vision and adoption of the parameters (policies and indexing systems) that govern them.

The continuity in the publication of local ELT journals that we have cited is congruent with the proposals by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda (1997), a promotor of participatory action research, who is recognized as having connected a developing country of the South with intellectuals from the world of education and captured the attention of university professors who attempt to rebuild educational research in the hope of greater social justice. He thus argued that it is possible to produce serious and responsible knowledge that can be gathered through group experiences and information sharing.

Some of Fals-Borda's proposals were subsequently gathered in the first *"Manifiesto" sobre la autoestima y la creatividad en la ciencia colombiana* ["Manifesto" on self-esteem and creativity in Colombian science] (Mora-Osejo & Fals-Borda, 2002) and are widely disseminated in Colombian and European spheres. That document debates "the effects of Eurocentrism in the development and simultaneous widening of the gap between the countries of the North and South" (p. 6). He also refers to "the urgent need for all societies to make universal knowledge available, [of] knowledge contextualized with our singular and complex realities" (p. 7). The authors also comment on the role of the universities as agents of change, committed to those realities. They thus conclude by pointing out that "participative universities committed to the common good, particularly the urgencies of grassroots communities, are required…The participative universities must be core crucibles of the mechanisms for creation, accumulation, teaching and dissemination of knowledge" (p. 16).

In agreement with this perspective, and from the epistemologies of the South, we may infer that maintaining local ELT journals, despite the disadvantages they may have compared to those of the center, is a way to respond to the need to have

> new production processes, appraisal of valid scientific and nonscientific knowledge, and new relationships with different types of knowledge, based on the practices of social classes and groups that have systematically suffered destruction, oppression and discrimination caused by capitalism, colonialism, and all naturalizations of inequality in which they have unfolded. (De Sousa Santos, 2011, p. 35)

Since the beginnings of modernity, scientific journals have played a fundamental role in the construction and consolidation of science as a social institution and of scientific communities while also serving as a mechanism for dissemination of the achievements of these communities. Maintaining a local publication, without losing sight of its vision, and while responding to institutional, national, and international requirements, leads us to a decolonization of knowledge. This is possible because local knowledge is valued, written by diverse teachers, and can be read through open access. Also, as opposed to practices to pay to publish or to read what is published in journals of the center, access is permitted to research products generally financed with public funds.

Open access leads to democratization of knowledge and rejects its commercialization, a practice widely established in the "center". "In this sense, it involves generating and strengthening venues for scientific dissemination created by and for Latin America and the Caribbean. These, in turn, will bring about a process of decolonization of scientific knowledge" (Aguado-López & Vargas Arbeláez, 2016, p. 86).

Our commitment therefore falls on two geographic settings: the local and the global. As stated by González (2012), the impact indicators refer exclusively to global impact and say little or nothing about local impact. In the same spirit, it can be affirmed that we are in a crossroad: "on one side, to carry out and disseminate research that responds to local needs, and on the other, to do research that would have universal meaning and impact on the academic communities of each discipline" (González, 2012, par. 4).

On the other hand, indicators to measure the quality of Colombian journals have led to the application of publishing policies that favor the members of certain communities, denominated as "academic elites"—university professors or research centers— and ignore base or grassroots professionals —non-university teachers. In doing so, they seek to emulate the powerful "cult" or "modern" countries that have achieved supremacy in scientific and technological production and dissemination, increasing even more the divisions between the production of hegemonic and peripheral knowledge (Pageau, 2010). Those circumstances are unique to "an epoch —the epoch of Eurocentric modernity— that attributes total priority to scientific knowledge and the practices directly derived from it: the technologies" (De Sousa Santos, 2016, p. 163). Ironically, access to technologies is not fairly distributed in social groups or in academic communities, nor is it equitable among university institutions where that knowledge is given precedence. However, as the author adds, "belief in scientific progress is a sufficiently strong hope to neutralize any fears about the limitations of current knowledge" (p. 163). Here the universities play an important role, because they generate knowledge and lead publications to contribute to the knowledge society.

Currently, the main challenge, among many others, stems from recognition of the contributions of others' and of one's own capacities. We may thus decide to explore scenarios to coordinate the knowledge possessed by one another (by each contributor/author). In this sense, Pageau (2010) argues that, while there are no definitive solutions, it is possible to establish associations of meaning between hegemonic and peripheral knowledge, through opening and inclusive and decentered production. In our case, the search for inclusion of different voices in local journals implies not falling into the extremes of rhetoric for supremacy of the local or a change simply to capture works by certain communities. On the contrary, and in line with proposals for decolonization of knowledge, a perspective of inclusion is proposed, so that the greatest number of English teachers' voices may, in circumstances of equality, express themselves through recognition of the knowledge they possess and the mediation to boost those who have less experience.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on a review of the literature and of studies carried out in the spheres of the English teacher as researcher and author, of academic writing and publication of scientific journals, we have argued that it is possible to advance towards decolonization of knowledge through those publications. We recognize that the appraisal of the journals does not depend exclusively on the institutions where they are published or on those who publish in them, because journals have become "the symbolic capital, through legitimizing entities, such as Publindex, Colciencias, and have organized the quality of knowledge by categories, accepted by higher education institutions" (Jiménez Medina & González Hernández, 2013, p. 189). However, the first challenge for ELT journals published in Colombia is, without ignoring the knowledge that originates in the contexts of the "center", to adopt submissions that, from their contexts of the South or of the periphery, contribute towards their area of specialty and society in general. In fact, some of our Colombian ELT journals include not only university academics, but also grassroots teachers and new authors, whose voices are generally absent from academic publications. However, we would have to examine the degree of appreciation of local work, for example, through rates of rejection of manuscripts that are submitted for evaluation, of locally published citations and of the mentions they receive in journals published in other countries.

Local ELT journals coincide in their interest in surmounting the cult of one single pattern, namely, of the hegemony of the Occidental science model, which perpetuates dependence on authors from the academies of the North, as a standardizing power for the dogma from select latitudes and which forces scientific journals to adhere strictly to the precepts of the dominant models in their management of journals. The large percentage of authors in the journals who work in Colombia or in Latin America shows the importance of representing a science from the South and for the South from the periphery; in other words, based on local realities, to contribute to communities with similar interests or problems and the preparation of diverse generations of writers. We thus require university professors who work a bit more on the creation of venues for communication. This is already occurring in Colombia, for example, in the above-mentioned local journals. It is fair to ask, however, if they all adopt the principles of fairness regarding contributions by authors from diverse educational contexts and if they recognize the authors' characteristics, understand the nature of their writings and the possible guidance they require to fulfill the journals' own quality criteria.

The consolidation of local ELT journals has also enabled the training and professionalization of editors and evaluators, as well as the motivation of teacher researchers and teacher educators who have been acquiring experience in publishing and have become leaders in certain areas. This reality has facilitated the definition or construction of the self as an author, evaluator, and editor. It has also stemmed from the recognition of new forms

of research, an activity that until recently was viewed as the exclusive territory of an elite of the professional community. Nonetheless, we recognize that it is necessary to work even more on academic writing and research starting from the earliest stages of teacher education.

We hope that the vision and mission of the journals that, as we understand them, coincide with the perspectives for decolonization of knowledge, will not succumb to pressure aimed at ensuring their national and international classification. From our own experience, we may affirm that maintaining the journals in concordance with this line of thinking implies being aware not only of the particularities of academic writing and publishing processes, but of providing alternatives for the accompaniment of teachers at diverse educational levels and geographical contexts.

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Language and Literacy Practices in Teacher Education: Contributions from a Local Agenda

Prácticas de Lenguaje y Literacidad en la Formación de Docentes: Contribuciones desde una Agenda Local

Amparo Clavijo-Olarte[1]

Abstract

Language and literacy practices in teacher education are decisive in the education of future language teachers. In this article, I share my beliefs as a teacher educator about language and literacy practices constructed with teachers in Bogota. Thus, my intention is to weave my professional narrative through the connections I can make from theory and praxis to explain teachers´ understandings of language and literacy through their life and literacy experiences and the way they organize their practice as language teachers. My research trajectory of thirty years documenting the local literacy practices within the research area of *literacy studies and local pedagogies for social transformation* has significantly informed my practice. University-school partnerships and international collaborations for research and teaching in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Manchester, in the USA, and Dundee, in the UK, have nurtured me personally and professionally. My understanding of literacy as a social practice evolved to critical literacies and I developed knowledge in community pedagogies and city semiotic landscapes through reflections and collaborations via working with teachers. Community-based pedagogies (CBPs) invite teachers to see their life and work in relation to places they live and teach as meaningful content for linguistic, social, cultural, ecological, and economic resources to inspire students´ inquiries and teachers´ transformative practices. The city semiotic landscapes are powerful literacies for language learning; therefore, they currently adhere to the research group´s agenda (2019-2021). I describe my understandings, contributions, and suggestions as concerns in the field of teacher education in

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Colombia. My conclusions raise awareness about the need to address these topics in teacher education programs in Colombia.

Keywords: city literacies, community practices, language, literacy, teacher education

Resumen

Las prácticas lingüísticas y de alfabetización en la formación del profesorado son decisivas en la formación de los futuros profesores de idiomas. En este artículo, comparto mis creencias como formadora de maestros sobre las prácticas de lenguaje y alfabetización construidas con maestros en Bogotá. Por lo tanto, mi intención es tejer mi narrativa profesional a través de las conexiones que puedo hacer desde la teoría y la praxis para explicar la comprensión de los profesores del lenguaje y la alfabetización a través de sus experiencias de vida y alfabetización y la forma en que organizan su práctica como profesores de idiomas. Mi trayectoria investigadora de treinta años documentando las prácticas locales de alfabetización dentro del área de investigación de los estudios de alfabetización y las pedagogías locales para la transformación social ha informado significativamente mi práctica. Las asociaciones entre universidades y escuelas y las colaboraciones internacionales para la investigación y la docencia en Brasil, Chile, Costa Rica, Manchester, en los EE. UU. Y Dundee, en el Reino Unido, me han nutrido personal y profesionalmente. Mi comprensión de la alfabetización como práctica social evolucionó a alfabetizaciones críticas y desarrollé conocimiento en pedagogías comunitarias y paisajes semióticos de la ciudad a través de reflexiones y colaboraciones a través del trabajo con maestros. Las pedagogías basadas en la comunidad (PBC) invitan a los maestros a ver su vida y trabajo en relación con los lugares donde viven y enseñan como contenido significativo para recursos lingüísticos, sociales, culturales, ecológicos y económicos para inspirar las consultas de los estudiantes y las prácticas transformadoras de los maestros. Los paisajes semióticos de la ciudad son alfabetizaciones poderosas para el aprendizaje de idiomas; por tanto, actualmente se adhieren a la agenda del grupo de investigación (2019-2021). Describo mis entendimientos, contribuciones y sugerencias como preocupaciones en el campo de la formación docente en Colombia. Mis conclusiones generan conciencia sobre la necesidad de abordar estos temas en los programas de formación docente en Colombia.

Palabras clave: literacidad y ciudad, lenguaje, literacidades, formación del profesorado, prácticas comunitarias

Introduction

The narrative that depicts my professional and research trajectory addresses local issues in the fields of teacher education and literacy studies. Thus, I would like to start my personal and professional narrative by recognizing that my beliefs about language and literacy practices are informed by my experiences as a learner, as a teacher, engaging in professional development with other teachers, and by twenty years doing qualitative research. I believe that my personal experiences as a learner, teacher, teacher educator, and researcher have informed my teaching and shaped my identity as a bilingual person and teacher researcher through years of collaborative work.

As a Learner

My beliefs about language teaching and learning have initially been constructed from experiences as a learner in primary, secondary, and university. Later, academic reflections through experiences as a research assistant in graduate school with Dr. Sarah Hudelson, documenting the biliteracy development of a group of second grade immigrant children in a public school in Phoenix, Arizona, informed my concept of language development (Spanish and English) as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon for the Mexican immigrants in Arizona in 1990. Experiences like the one mentioned here changed my perspective of teaching a second language to children; it taught me that learners make meaning from reading whole stories and making connections with lived experiences better than from learning isolated vocabulary or small, decontextualized parts of a text. Children, as second language learners, started interpreting a story by reading the images, predicting its contents, making connections with their funds of knowledge (Moll, et al, 1992), and using Spanish to share their interpretations of a story (Hudelson, 1984, 1989). The weekly data collection experience, learning with Dr. Hudelson about research and children learning at schools placed me in an optimal position as a novice researcher interacting with children and the teacher. This experience has informed my teaching of critical literacy and qualitative research in the graduate courses at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas and at local and international universities I have visited as a guest professor.

Zeichner (2012) considers that in college and university-based teacher education programs, making connections between campus courses and field experiences is important in order to balance theory and practice. Thus, I believe that the weekly field experiences as a novice researcher analyzing the biliteracy development of second grade immigrant Mexican children helped me make sense of the decontextualized theories of second language acquisition studied in the university classroom. Embracing the idea that theory informs but reflective practice has the power to transform and lead to action has made it my guiding principle in teacher education.

As a Teacher Educator Doing Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

A few years later in 1998, Esperanza Torres and I as faculty members at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas were asked by the Secretary of Education of Bogotá to put together a proposal for a one-year teacher professional development program (TPD) on literacy learning in Spanish and English. We offered it; fifty-eight Colombian teachers from public schools in Bogota enrolled and participated in the program. Esperanza Torres was the instructor. We provided the program with a structure by modules and a theoretical

framework to understand, through teachers´ life and literacy histories, the importance of family and social events in learning to read and write in early years. Teachers´ literacy histories brought memories of their teachers and classroom activities; feelings towards critical people like parents and teachers; and the role of school in the life of teachers (See Goodman, 1980, as cited in Clavijo & Torres, 1999).

Thus, I could theorize that teachers´ knowledge of literacy is personal knowledge built from personal and professional experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) called it personal practical knowledge. Therefore, I believe that teachers´ life and literacy histories are important resources, on the one hand, to analyze the ways teachers build their concept of literacy through life experiences; and on the other, to understand their decision-making for pedagogy and curriculum to foster students´ literacy. The experience of having teachers write their life history as a source of pedagogical knowledge and of identifying their literacy experiences as a practical personal knowledge for their teaching was significant to them and to us as the teacher educators. Teachers also had the opportunity to have their students write their life histories and understand the literacy situations they were having in the classroom and at home. The narratives produced by teachers and children became powerful sources for reflection for teachers about their pedagogy and for children it provided room to learn about the centrality of connecting their personal story for learning in school.

As a Teacher Educator and Researcher

The TPD with the fifty-eight teachers became a powerful resource for teaching and research. I developed my doctoral research about teachers´ knowledge of literacy in Spanish and English and gathered data such as teachers´ life histories, classroom projects, and in-depth interviews with them to create case studies of teachers. Since then (1998), I have been using life and literacy histories in my teaching to language teachers as tools to learn about their concepts and beliefs of literacy as sources that inform their practice. I consider that literacy histories can be a source to reflect with teachers about their own concepts of literacy, the role of language and literacy in their personal and academic life to address epistemological perspectives of critical literacy like Street´s (1995) depadegogization of literacy in schools. His premise, along with Freire and Macedo´s (1987) reading the world and the word, and Wells (1995) proposal to learn through inquiry, suggests the need to articulate language pedagogy and curriculum with learners´ life and community knowledge through inquiry projects that can make learning meaningful to them. This connection between the individuals´ life experiences and language pedagogy has geared my teaching and research to always consider the individual´s experiences as central in the mission of making schooling meaningful for teachers and learners since our teaching should contribute to educate future citizens for a better Colombian society.

I have presented my view of language and literacy as a learner, teacher, teacher educator, and novice researcher through personal and professional experiences engaging in teacher professional development between 1998 and 2000. Next, I share the main points of discussion that I address in this article as related to my teaching and research trajectory in language and literacy for language teacher education. My teaching and research from 2009 to the present spin around two topics: (1) Teacher education integrated in a community-situated agenda: using community as a resource and (2) Linguistic landscape projects as opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.

Integrating Teacher Education in a Community-situated Agenda: Using Community as a Resource

In this section, I would like to share details of a continuous international collaboration with Judy Sharkey from University of New Hampshire to carry out research with teachers in Bogota´s public schools to promote knowledge of local community as resources for teaching and learning. The collaboration was initiated in 2008 at a conference in Medellin and has evolved throughout the years to our current ethnography and community-based pedagogy (CBP) project with schoolteachers, artists, and university students in the neighborhood of La Candelaria in Bogotá.

Our multiyear collaboration (2009-2021) initially focused on the following questions: *What is the role of local knowledge in preparing language teachers in this time of globalized education reforms and standards? How do perceptions of community inform teachers' understanding of local?* From our common interest of investigating community knowledge with teachers in Bogota, with the members of the research group *Lectoescrinautas*[2], we proposed and carried out three research projects in five localities of Bogotá: Kennedy, Puente Aranda, San Cristobal, Mártires, La Candelaria, and Santa Fé. We studied local literacies as critical resources in teacher education to transform teaching and learning. Through action-research projects with urban teachers at public schools, we documented their ways of using community-based pedagogies to promote learning through an inquiry curriculum (For more details see Sharkey, 2012; Clavijo, 2015; Sharkey, Clavijo, & Ramirez, 2016; Clavijo & Ramirez, 2019).

The central aspects for language teacher education and research that we have learned through doing community-based pedagogies are related to (1) the practice-oriented focus of *the field assignments* for reflection, teaching, and research; (2) the generation of *local knowledge*

[2] The members of the research group Lectoescrinautas are: Luz Maribel Ramírez, Judy Sharkey, Rosa Alejandra Medina, and Amparo Clavijo Olarte (Main Researcher). In the current project in the historic center (2019-2021), six students participated: Daniel Calderón Aponte, Alejandra Rodríguez B., Yuly Andrea Nieto, Kewin Arley Prieto, María Clara Nader, and Juan Camilo Rodríguez. Theresa Austin is the international advisor.

for decision-making in curriculum and teaching; (3) the *transformative* nature of critical and inclusive pedagogies like CBP that teaches teachers to recognize and make student and community assets the subject of curriculum (Comber, 2018); (4) and finally, the *agentive role that teachers and learners take using CBP to connect school and community.*

The field-assignments teachers do when physically or virtually mapping their community foster reflection for teaching and research because teachers move out of the comfort zone of the classroom and focus on the outside resources to contextualize language within the realities of the linguistic landscape in students´ *barrios*. Teachers take agency towards designing meaningful curricula using the linguistic, social, and cultural resources available and engage students in learning about the social and cultural issues in their community.

Promoting community pedagogies for social transformation with teachers implied mapping the physical communities to identify the resources in the linguistic landscape for curriculum and teaching. This led us (Judy and I) to design and implement, between 2009 and 2011, new field-based assignments and to share them with our students, Judy´s UNH students and my graduate students in Bogotá. Examples included my students´ reflections in the advanced literacy seminar visiting the mega libraries in Bogota. In the visit, graduate students in Bogotá were expected to explore the array of literacy practices and opportunities available and create new types of community-based assignments for their students. Judy´s students in Manchester focused on creating and teaching community-themed curriculum units in neighborhood centers to serve immigrant/refugee families and students (see Sharkey & Clavijo-Olarte, 2012, for more detailed descriptions of assignments). My graduate students, embarking on community investigations near their teaching sites, reported that reading the UNH students' work helped them better understand the purpose and rationale of the assignment (Zeichner et al., 2014).

The field assignments carried out by graduate students in the critical literacy seminar promoted reflection on the ways to utilize local community resources to promote inquiry in the English class. It took teachers to slowly identify the deficit perspectives of teaching that they held (Comber & Kamler, 2004) to get out of the deficit towards more positive and constructive views of students as capable learners with knowledge and experiences that are valuable for teaching and learning in classrooms. It also implied for teachers to position local resources as meaningful for learning and inquiry and to connect local and global realities in ELT. Furthermore, the teacher education courses mentioned above fostered field explorations, written reflections, curricular design, innovative pedagogical projects, and classroom research by graduate students.

My advising a significant number of graduate students´ theses on CBP generated local knowledge for decision-making in curriculum and teaching that had an impact on teachers and their institutions. CBP research with graduate students in different educational contexts

in Bogota has been transformative for teachers and the teacher education field. Their research has addressed issues of social justice, inclusion of minority populations, and collaborative work with content area teachers.

A considerable portion of working with students' research projects and in my graduate and undergraduate teacher education seminars took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. It required my students and me to be thoughtful of the need to adapt instructional practices to meet the needs of their students and institutions. Equally important was to think of the most appropriate ways to carry out research activities with students while considering their possibilities and limitations as regards access to the Internet. These considerations corroborate the transformative nature of critical and inclusive pedagogies like CBP and promote the agentive role that teachers and learners take using CBP to address the common needs of students, families, school, and community in order to promote social justice in critical times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

My initial work in CBP transformed the conceptual and research understanding of English teachers who were my thesis advisees in the graduate program. In the development of the second project, a larger group of graduate students became teachers´ leaders to implement CBP with content-area teachers from social studies, science, chemistry, English, and physical education in their public schools. Collaboratively, with my research group, we addressed the following questions: *How do we help teachers value knowledge of local communities as rich resources for teaching and learning? How do community-based pedagogies affect the ways in which teachers connect their students' lives to their curriculum?* (See Clavijo & Ramirez, 2019, for more information). Collaborating with teachers in schools to help them gain knowledge about their local communities for teaching had significant impact on their professional learning as teacher researchers, in their institutions, and in the teacher education program at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

In the three research projects in which we explore the role of local knowledge in preparing language teachers, we have applied a sociocultural perspective to language and literacy in teacher education (LLTE) to theoretically inform our research. That view values the social and cultural resources and realities of the educational context of students and families for teaching and research. The theoretical contributions of Freire and Macedo (1987), Moll et al., (1992), and Ruiz (1984) have directly impacted my work as a teacher educator and researcher at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas as well as the work I have done with the research group in public schools in Bogotá during twenty-five years.

Similarly, our research acknowledges Johnson (2009) and Golombek and Johnson´s (2011) conceptualization of teacher learning as a situated, collaborative, constructive, and transformative process. Including the local in the teacher education agenda also required us to consider a local perspective towards language policy and practice (Schecter, Solomon, &

Kitmmer, 2003; Canagarajah, 2005), and to foster a commitment among teachers to consider the community as relevant in teaching (Murrell, 2001). An informed perspective of the local social, cultural, and linguistic realities has contributed to making relevant decisions in language teacher education programs in critical ways by considering that we need to become aware of the colonizing spirit of the national linguistic policies towards English education. As such, we need to promote the construction of local knowledge that will connect to global initiatives for transformative, equitable, and inclusive pedagogies.

Meaningful Collaborations towards the Implementation of Community-Based Pedagogy beyond the Local

Beyond the local context of Bogotá, using the CBP framework became relevant to teacher educators and their students at three public universities at the national level. It was a great opportunity to share our interest to help teachers value knowledge of local communities as rich resources for teaching and learning with colleagues to think together about transformative ways for teaching and research in language teacher education programs. Thus, from 2017 to 2019, with colleagues from Universidad Industrial de Santander, Universidad del Tolima, and Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, we held two annual collegial encounters to share our epistemological perspective on teacher education using CBP and the outcomes of our projects with teachers in Bogota´s schools.

International collaborations with colleagues from Brazil and Chile were also significant scenarios from which to share community-based teaching and research experiences in ways that reciprocally informed and complemented our interests and social commitment to public education in Latin America. For instance, I particularly value the contributions of peer Brazilian scholars on the multicultural and multilingual nature of city literacies. I have demonstrated the evident impact of including city literacies in public education institutions. I also value the continuous professional dialogue with Latin American peer researchers that nurture our professional interest and research.

I would like to highlight two key elements that have made my teaching and research trajectory a significant professional experience. The professional *collaborations* with colleagues from universities in some Colombian regions (Universidad Industrial de Santander, Universidad del Tolima, and Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia), as well as The University of New Hampshire, and The University of Massachusetts-Amherst. All fostered collegial work and the development of research projects that inform teacher education. Our learning from projects also generated coauthored publications and presentations in conferences. The second aspect refers to the impact that these projects have generated towards *teacher and learners´ agency* (Hernández, et al., 2020) since both teachers and learners become actively engaged in physically mapping their neighborhoods as a field assignment to identify their

resources. This field assignment is geared towards the identification of social issues that can generate local inquiry and foster learners´ local knowledge production at different educational levels. For example, the works of Nieto (2020), Clavijo & Rincon (2016), Calderon-Aponte (2020), Rodriguez (2020), Gutierrez (2020), Gómez (2014), Clavijo & Gómez (2020).

I have gained considerable learning from sharing with colleagues in national conferences, teaching seminars together at different universities, reading professional articles about the pedagogical value of using the linguistic landscape for teaching, and carrying out collaborative research projects through international collaborations about the relevance of investigating local literacies. During the last three years we have decided to delve into another major area of interest for language teacher education which is the multicultural and multilingual nature of the semiotic landscape in the city of Bogotá. With this ethnography we want to expand our understanding of the discourses and texts within city places for teaching. Therefore, in the following section I share the latest research project developed from 2019 to 2021.

More recently, my colleagues and I, in the research group that I lead, decided to embark on an ethnography (Pink, 2008) that aimed at documenting the multicultural nature of the linguistic landscape of the historic district of Bogotá as a resource for learning and teaching. We engaged with local people, artists, teachers, and university students to document multimodal texts and discourses that could inform instructional literacy practices in teacher education programs, (Lozano et al., 2020; Clavijo & Austin, forthcoming).

Linguistic Landscape Projects as Opportunities for Learning beyond the Classroom

Because our experiences with CBP to integrate the community resources in language teacher education courses have been transformative for teacher educators, teacher researchers, and students, we consider that promoting linguistic landscape projects with teachers and students offers them meaningful opportunities for learning beyond the classroom; for example, Rodriguez´s (2021) pedagogical project with EFL students analyzing the public university sociocultural landscape; Nieto´s (2018) project with language students in a private university; Gutierrez's (2020) and Rincón's (2016) projects with high school students in public schools; Gómez's (2016) project with fifth-grade students; and González's (2012) project with Embera children at a public school to see the transformative dimension of their pedagogical and research experiences. The abovementioned projects began from pedagogical reflections in the critical literacy seminar that I teach every year and evolved into research projects that I oriented as a thesis director.

My group´s current research project in the historic district in downtown Bogotá includes the perspectives of teachers, graffiti artists, and university students to document

the multimodal and multicultural nature of the texts and discourses of La Candelaria and Santa Fe in the historic district. Thus, we posed the question: *How does investigating Bogotá´s historic center provide opportunities for learning about literacies, ethnography, and pedagogy of place?* We used ethnography to analyze how local people engage with multimodal texts, and linguistic landscapes to inform instructional literacy practices in teacher education programs. In this regard, Lozano et al., (2020) believe that "connecting students´ identities and experiences with authentic cultural and linguistic materials beyond the classroom holds great potential for language instruction because of the cognitively engaging and meaningful learning possible in these contexts" (p. 18).

Through this ongoing collaboration, we have expanded our understanding of the role that teachers assign to the linguistic, cultural, and social resources of their neighborhood for language learning, curriculum design, and pedagogy in schools in five localities of Bogotá: Kennedy, San Cristobal, Mártires, Puente Aranda, and La Candelaria and Santa Fe as part of the historic district of Bogotá. It has brought about change in the perception of language learning, literacy, curriculum, instruction, and students´ and families´ funds of knowledge. Evidence of change in teachers´ thinking and practice is illustrated in the following testimony:

> From my explorations of CBP I could see and practice how the community can be a multimodal book, for those who teach languages and their students who do not have access to paper books or high-tech equipment. Language was there on the walls, notices, flyers, adds [ads], family histories, songs, etc. After visiting and accompanying the teachers in their explorations of the community, I began to look at communities as learning resources. As a teacher, I could flesh out Freire´s reading the world to reading the word. The family business, beauty parlors and local park full of willows and endemic plan[t] and animal species make better chemistry book[s] and labs to practice science, learn about botanic [botany], ecology and conservation than teachers´ tests and dead scribbles on the whiteboard. I understood educational research is situated/community based. Researching CBP was an empowering process for teachers, students and for me as a novice teacher researcher. (Survey, Rosa Alejandra Medina, June 22, 2015) [sic]

Additionally, our explorations of the several texts in La Candelaria allowed us to conceive the city of Bogotá as a multimodal, multicultural, and multilingual "text" and context that is certainly worth reading and inquiring upon. We had the opportunity to become researchers within our own communities (Comber, 2015) which, through ethnographic and inquiry-based processes, utilized the urban scenarios and communities as meaningful resources to foster language learning and teaching, as well as literacy development.

The text in the graffiti in English says, "On Bogotá Streets you can try, but you can´t divide the tribe" (Image 1). It was taken at Carrera 4 and 17th Street in Bogotá. Seeing how La Candelaria offers several texts written in languages other than Spanish, the official language of Colombia, was surprising for us. This suggests, as in Mora et al.'s (2018) study, that English and other languages are permeating the literacies and social spheres of our

Image 1. On Bogotá Streets

Image 2. A child.

Photos taken by the research group Lectoescrinautas.

city. Image 2, taken in La Candelaria, is a mural of an indigenous child who seems to have been enrolled in the guerrilla groups because of the weapons that hang from his chest. His face shows frustration and sadness. Like him, many underage children are forced to join the armed groups in the territories in Colombia. Like these two images, many more in the historic center display political and ideological messages that denounce national problems of displacement or assassination of social leaders; multicultural texts that reveal our diverse population and cultures throughout Colombia; and socioeconomic problems that people are living due to unemployment or lack of opportunities to survive during the Covid-19 pandemic. I believe that the social, economic, and political situations revealed in multimodal texts in the public spaces in Bogotá can permeate the language curriculum and generate meaningful discussions and contextualized reading of Bogota´s linguistic landscape.

Furthermore, doing ethnography of place became an opportunity for me to expand my perspective of doing qualitative research with social actors like artists, business owners, and university students and teachers. I believe that the visual ethnography of the places around schools in the historic center can promote student and teacher agency by visiting and documenting the texts of places in their cities and neighborhoods. It also provided insights about the political, social, and cultural dimensions of the semiotic landscape in the historic center of Bogotá. These dimensions of the semiotic landscape became relevant aspects for reflection in critical literacy, ethnography, and language teacher education seminars.

The Impact of Using the Local Community Resources for Teaching and Research

I consider that the topics of my academic work have strongly impacted other authors and studies in Colombia. The studies framed on critical literacies, CBP, and semiotic landscape have addressed and provided transformative teaching and learning possibilities for

critical populations in public education. My research on critical literacy with teachers (which includes families and local communities) has shown to be of primary importance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Within a year and a half of the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers have had to move from face-to-face teaching to distant teaching mediated by internet platforms. This situation has represented struggles for teachers, students, and families. In public schools in Bogotá and the rural contexts the situation is worse since many children do not have internet connectivity and they have not had access to education for that time. The CBP framework that connects out-of-school literacies with the school curriculum fosters collaborative work with parents to help children learn. The pandemic has been a good opportunity for school-parent collaboration towards a transformative pedagogy. Thus, teacher education courses that we, teacher educators, guide should address the current needs of teachers transitioning from face-to-face teaching to remote teaching and back to a different alternating face-to-face teaching (for further information on this project, see Gómez's (2020) Multimodal Narratives and Students' Voices in Community Practices in Times of Covid-19). My studies have connected critical literacies with CBP in ways that have provided new understandings in teacher education. I have raised awareness about the invisible voices of linguistic minority students as the missing voices of the current language education policies in the country. In the work with Gonzalez (2014), one of my graduate students, it has been evident that the curriculum as a multicultural and multilingual project for schools with indigenous children contributes to change the monolingual perspective of the school and teachers within this project. A primary contribution of my research that has influenced graduate students' thinking and teaching has to move out of traditional and deficit-oriented discourses in language teaching towards a more positive and inclusive teaching that values the knowledge that students built within families for learning. In my teaching I have provided teachers with opportunities for meaningful learning beyond the classroom that has impacted many young learners in schools, language centers, and universities.

Finally, the powerful narratives that teachers and teacher educators have constructed around language and literacy practices in teacher education evidence the relevance of viewing students as capable learners at all levels of education; of using the resources from the linguistic landscape of their communities to learn languages and to think critically about the resources in their *barrios*; of revealing teacher and learner agency by doing local inquiry and constructing locally relevant knowledge; and of creating opportunities for students and parents to write multimodal narratives.

Conclusions

This article has allowed me to reveal the impact of critical reflection in the construction of local agendas for teacher education. I suggest that teacher education programs should

orient their curriculum to practice-based frameworks. More field assignments are required for teachers to go outside of the classroom and map the resources of the community to connect them with their teaching. Relating school, family, neighborhoods, and communities promotes teacher agency by engaging teachers and students in reflection and inquiry. These are lenses which allow them to construct informed decisions by situating language practice in connection with the realities of the city in which learners and teachers live and learn (Lozano et al., 2020).

In my research trajectory, I have demonstrated that research as a learning experience requires adopting a critical and a participatory approach. The critical stance refers to the ways to comprehend the complexities of the data in the collection and analysis process. The participatory aspect, on the other hand, includes the epistemological negotiations among the members of the group that need to be mediated through horizontal relationships established by researchers. Finally, I have shown the significance of professional academic collaborations. The results of collaborations with teacher educators build strong research communities of practice and interest. The valuable interactions of my research group generate a great deal of learning together towards common goals when working directly with teachers, families, community members, and international colleagues. Thus, if we sustain solid communities of practice and interest, we can obtain enriching and diverse perspectives that orient teaching and research on teacher education.

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Criticality and English Language Education: An Autoethnographic Journey

Criticidad y educación en inglés: Un trayecto autoetnográfico

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Abstract

This article, relying on a series of epiphanies throughout my journey as a researcher and scholar-activist, shares my relationship with criticality and how it has guided my research and teaching agendas. I share how critical theories have informed my main research areas and the questions and issues I have raised in my own work. The article also discusses my main scholarly influences and how my interactions with varied literature, mentors, and colleagues have shaped my own criticality. I also take a moment to reflect on how this journey has helped the field of language education in Colombia to continue with the evolution toward stronger critical and social justice-oriented frameworks and how I see my changing positionality as mentor and ally of colleagues and the future cadres of scholars moving forward.

Keywords: criticality, autoethnography, English language education, advocacy

Resumen

Este artículo, que usa una serie de revelaciones a lo largo de mi trayecto como investigador y académico-activista, comparte mi relación con la criticidad y cómo esta ha guiado mis agendas de investigación y docencia. Comparto cómo las teorías críticas han ilustrado mis temas de investigación principales y las preguntas y asuntos que he generado en mi propio trabajo. El artículo también discute mis principales influencias académicas y cómo mis interacciones con la literatura, mentores y colegas

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han forjado mi criticidad. También aprovecho el momento para reflexionar sobre cómo este trayecto ha aportado a que el campo de la educación en lenguas en Colombia continúe su evolución hacia marcos críticos y de justicia social más fuertes y cómo veo mi cambiante posicionalidad como mentor y aliado de otros colegas y las futuras generaciones de académicos de aquí en adelante.

Palabras clave: criticidad, autoetnografía, educación en inglés, abogacía

Introduction: How I (Of All People) Got Here

First Epiphany: Fall 2005, University of Illinois

> *At the request of my adviser at the time (Dr. Renée T. Clift), I asked for an appointment with Dr. Antonia Darder (a Puerto-Rican critical theorist and activist) to ask questions about critical theory. Dr. Darder asked me one question (because it seems all academic journeys always begin with one pivotal question): Why do you want to study critical theory?*
>
> *That question (and Antonia's answer, as I shared with her in a serendipitous moment at O'Hare International Airport in 2015) made me think about the why of everything I do to this day.*

English language teaching and education have always had a really weird relationship with criticality, sometimes resembling (making a quick reference to current TV show *Ted Lasso*) romantic comedies. It has been one of love and hate, as well as acceptance and denial. As researchers in a field, we are still coming to terms with what it means to be critical in a field like ELT (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2016) while facing the good, the bad, and the ugly inherent to teaching a language such as English (Guerrero, 2009; González, 2011; Kubota, 2021). ETL scholars and practitioners have gravitated towards ideas such as critical thinking and critical reading over the years. Most recently, critical literacy (Mora, 2014c) has become a topic of extended interest in our field (see Mora, Cañas, Gutiérrez-Arismendy, Ramírez, Gaviria, & Golovátina-Mora, 2021, for an extended review). This interest has particularly emerged in teacher education (see Ramírez, 2020, 2021, for a meta-analysis of the field) as pre-service and in-service teachers are raising new questions about what we do and how to infuse our work within stronger views of social justice (Ortega, 2019; Sierra Piedrahita, 2016) and equitable frameworks in our policies and instructional practices (Mora, Chiquito, & Zapata, 2019).

When *HOW journal* invited me of all people (and when I say "of all people," it is because it has been difficult yet so interesting to come to terms with the idea of assessing the impact of my work) to share my insights about my own work and how it overlaps with the growth of the field of ELT in Colombia, I had to ponder how to approach it. I chose to talk about criticality as my relationship with critical theories has highly informed and influenced my academic evolution, especially in the past two decades (when I have moved from being a school teacher to being a graduate student and now a teacher educator, researcher, and advocate/co-conspirator to other teachers in Colombia).

This article will keep in mind the spirit and format for this special issue, imbuing my thoughts about the field and my conceptual reflexivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mora, 2012, 2014x) with some autoethnographic epiphanies (Denzin, 2013) to reflect on the journey (Bresler, 2021; Forber-Pratt, 2015). In that sense, this article affords me both a moment of gratitude about the road traveled and a challenge to think of the road ahead so that our ELT community, as a community of learning and activism, can be more critical and better at criticality, especially as the field of language education in Colombia keeps asking harder and deeper questions about what and why we learn and teach languages (Mora, 2013a) and what that means for the changing sociopolitical landscape of our home country.

Criticality and ELT: My Roots and Routes

Second Epiphany: 1999, Medellín

> *I had my first publication ever (Mora, 1999) in HOW journal. I wrote an article about how I used project work to help my students improve their writing skills. Although the paper did not have a critical framework around it, I reflected later as a grad student on how there were elements of action research in its conception. As I looked back at my maiden voyage as an academic writer (one that I have learned to be kinder to as I have grown as a writer and scholar over the years), I can see in that paper that Raúl, a school teacher in Medellín, wrote the foundations of quite a few of the questions that Raúl, the graduate student in the United States, and Raúl, the college professor in Medellín, have brought up in my scholarship, research, and advocacy.*

My formal introduction to critical theory came in graduate school, as I took courses on Critical Literacy, Action Research, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis, and it continues today as I teach a doctoral-level seminar on Introduction to Critical Theory. However, my introduction to criticality started much earlier. I may even trace it back to my undergraduate years (1992-1994), when I started attending local ELT conferences and the ASOCOPI congress. There is one word in Russian (a language I am close to by marital proxy [Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2017b]) that I am very fond of: *pochemuchka (почемучка),* an untranslatable word, usually described as "a person who asks too many questions." However, the thing I like about *pochemuchka* is that it does not have a negative connotation. Rather, asking too many questions in this sense is something worth nurturing, as too many questions are a sign of curiosity. Those who have followed my academic career do know this to be a fact: There is no conference I have ever attended, no class I have ever taken, where I do not feel compelled to raise my hand to ask a question. I have been a *pochemuchka* my entire academic career and I doubt I will be slowing down as I get older.

I bring up this reference to *pochemuchka* because raising questions is at the core of a critical mindset. Raising questions about what I have seen as a teacher has laid the foundation to my background as a critical scholar and co-conspirator (Love, 2019). Criticality has been

my conceptual North Star (Love, 2019) for three focal points that inform my scholarship, teaching, and research. I will unfold these points in this section.

Critical Literacy

My initial framing as a literacy scholar was as someone who worked on "alternative literacy paradigms" (Mora, 2011), which comes directly from my own work in critical literacy (Mora, 2014c; Mora et al., 2021). Critical literacy always invites teachers and teacher educators to ask bigger questions about language in society and how to foster the use of, in our case, English and other second languages (Mora, 2013b) as tools for equity and social agency. In this vein, when I advocate for critical literacy in our field (Mora, 2014c), I am also advocating for the disruption of segmented views of criticality, sometimes espoused in certain views of what we refer to as "critical thinking" or even "critical reading." These views, I would argue, often lack the epistemological foundations that critical literacy possesses, where talking about or, in our case, teaching a language means keeping in mind the sociopolitical or economic implications of this term (Luke, 2017). Critical literacy here means thinking about better ways to learn, teach, and use English, better ways to make the language real and relevant (as opposed to just making it, say, "authentic"), and confronting neoliberal models that continue to permeate the discourse about language teaching and, yes, even the misuse of the term "critical" (Mora, Pandya, Alford, Golden, & de Roock, 2021).

Acronyms, Frameworks, and Terms We Hold Near and Dear

Critical theory and criticality have also guided a series of questions I have raised in the past decade about the terms we use (and sometimes hold deep emotional attachments to) in ELT. I believe that constantly questioning what we mean by these terms and how they come into play in everyday classrooms is necessary to avoid turning these terms into commonplace ones. Raising questions about notions such as bilingualism (Mora, 2014d; Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2011; Mora et al., 2019) or the EFL/ESL binary (Mora, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017b, 2019; Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2017a) is urgent and necessary. I have been particularly adamant about the need to problematize (Mora, 2012) and transcend (Mora, 2017b, 2019) the traditional framing of English as either a *second* or *foreign* language. I particularly believe we need to think of more inclusive frameworks devoid of the strong social inequities already present (and increasingly louder) in a notion such as EFL and the risks of how it can marginalize students in public urban and rural schools, especially when elite private schools keep pushing ESL curricula under the guise of being "bilingual schools" or promoting "bilingual education."

Global South Advocacy[2]

My views on criticality have also surfaced in how I frame my scholarly positionality as a scholar *from* and *in* the Global South (Mora, Cañas, Rosas Chávez, Rocha, & Maciel, 2020). I have advocated in my own work and publications (and even in my recent efforts in international associations, including my incoming three-year appointment to the Literacy Research Association Board of Directors starting December 2021) for a view of the Global South as knowledge creators and not just as vessels receiving knowledge from the Global North (Mora et al, 2021a), but always advocating for dialogic and not reactionary views of the relationship between North and South where we invite the North, recalling some of Vanilla Ice's lyrics, to "stop, collaborate, and listen" as we create fruitful global relationships and think of better ways for us in the South to engage in refined forms of glocal advocacy (Mora, 2016a) that also include the multiple languages and Englishes at play in our regions (Mora, 2016b).

Criticality and ELT: The Influences

Third Epiphany: Fall 2004, University of Illinois

> *My first course as a doctoral student was Critical Literacy with Professor Arlette Willis. I found it so interesting how we started from critical theory and only talked about critical literacy mid-semester. That progression, and Prof. Willis' gift to me of a copy of Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, were two big takeaways from that class. Interestingly enough, I found that similar return-to-Frankfurt-School approach in other classes I took like Action Research and Critical Race Theory and that was the basis to propose the doctoral seminar on Intro to Critical Theory I teach at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana UPB.*

Fourth Epiphany: December 2018, Indian Wells, CA

> *I have an ongoing tradition at the Literacy Research Association annual meeting where I meet for coffee with my mentor, Prof. Willis, before the conference begins. We talk about life, our families, and eventually we talk about literacy as peers and friends (although, truth be told, I always leave learning something else from Arlette). In that moment, we talked about the perils of losing track of the historical roots of concepts. I always recall that conversation when I talk to my students about critical theory, critical literacy, research, and even language teaching methods in my undergraduate course.*

My journey as a critical scholar (a framing I do not take lightly, for I am fully aware of the responsibilities, implications, and risks of wearing such a mantle) has mixed multiple views

[2] In this section I will discuss three terms: Global North, Global South, and glocal. Global North is a socio-political construct that describes countries and regions (many English dominant) that have usually led academic and curricular decisions. Global South refers to emerging regions moving past the dominant discourses to propose new frameworks to participate in the academic and curricular debates. The idea of glocal refers to a mindset that addresses global problems from local perspectives.

stemming from ideas, readings, and conversations across and between the Global South and North, sprinkled with references to popular culture (which, if one stops to listen, can offer valuable lessons worth bringing to one's classes). Conceptually, my views of criticality mix scholars from different eras and diverse readings that I have encountered in my career, especially since graduate school. Looking at critical theory itself, three authors have informed my views of criticality over the years. The first influence, hearkening back to the Frankfurt School, is Theodore W. Adorno. I remember well my first encounter with Adorno in that Critical Literacy course I took at Illinois. I found it salient in Adorno's work how he raised questions about popular culture (Brown, 1992; Witkin, 2003). Although some of his views are debatable, Adorno's initial questions laid the foundation to keep asking questions about popular culture and its value in our classrooms (e.g., Mora, 2006, 2017a).

The second influence, much deeper in my budding scholarship as a graduate student, is the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I have studied Bourdieu's work and discussed his influence and legacy (Mora, 2012) and even attempted to analyze his framework through movies (Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2014). Bourdieu's influence in my critical positionality mostly stems from the need to look carefully at language as a site of social reproduction and power (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and the need to always imbue our educational reflections within science and research, of what Bourdieu describes in his idea of *reflexivity* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mora, 2012, 2014e). Reflexivity is one of the cornerstones of my entire teaching ethos. I make that explicit in every syllabus I write and in my own lessons. Everything I do as a teacher and mentor is deeply framed as a space of reflexivity.

Finally, as a literacy scholar in particular, I cannot deny the influence of the work of Paulo Freire. That, as we celebrate his centennial, might sound like shameless product placement or just opportunism, but I have read and studied Freire for over 15 years, thus bringing that up is rather opportune. Freire's ideas about "reading the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987), which are baseline elements for a critical view of literacy today, first inspired me to do research about the cities as literacy sites (Mora, 2015; Mora, Pulgarín, Ramírez, & Mejía-Vélez, 2018). More recently, Freire's work on *conscientização* (Freire, 1979; Mora 2014a) was the cornerstone of a recent work with my researchers at the Literacies in Second Languages Project (LSLP) (Mora, 2015) merging multimodal design and *conscientização* to give a stronger critical dimension to meaning-making processes in our language classes (Mora, Tobón-Gallego, Mejía-Vélez, & Agudelo, 2022).

Nevertheless, my journey through criticality does not end with Adorno, Bourdieu, and Freire. That is where it *began*. Over the years, more ideas and scholars have joined that path I am treading. Ideas from Gramscian theory, especially hegemony (Jones, 2007), the notion of counter-storytelling from LatCrit (Mora, 2014b; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), ideas from Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker, 1998; Willis, 2008), and even elements from Feminist theory (Beiras, Cantera Espinosa, & Casasanta Garcia, 2017; hooks, 2000;

Walters, 2005) keep informing my ever-evolving (I'm not Pikachu, you know! – My students will understand this Easter Egg!) views around criticality and what it means, recalling Ladson-Billings (1998), for a *nice* field like ELT.

Of course, one cannot build criticality just from reading. Criticality is about talking the talk, walking the walk… and *talking the walk*. I cannot deny the value of multiple conversations with both young and veteran scholars over the years. Conversations with young critical literacy scholars such as Claudia Cañas and Mónica López-Ladino (Cañas, Ocampo, Rodríguez, López-Ladino, & Mora, 2008), Tatiana Chiquito (Chiquito, Restrepo, & Mora, 2019; Mora, Chiquito, & Zapata, 2019), --eliana d. and Diego Zapata-Pescador (d. & Zapata-Pescador, 2021), or Edison Castrillón-Ángel (Castrillón-Ángel & Mora, 2021), just to name a few of the talented mentees I have at LSLP, have given me perspective. I also think about the conversations about criticality I have had with international scholars such as Antonia Darder, Laurence Parker, the late Susan Noffke, Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Gholdy Muhammad, Marcelle Haddix, Jessica Zacher Pandya, Jennifer Alford, Noah Asher Golden, and Roberto de Roock (among many others) as instrumental in this evolution. And of course, my growing relationship with one of my greatest mentors, Arlette Willis, and how her scholarship has shaped my own through her writing (Willis, 2009, 2015, 2020) and all those Starbucks coffees we have had since I graduated in 2010.

Criticality in ELT: What Does It Mean to Be a Critical ELT Scholar and Advocate?

Fifth Epiphany: July 2006

> *Accepting an invitation of then-ASOCOPI President, Dr. Rigoberto Castillo, I offered the Seminar on Research and ELT, hosted by Universidad Nacional. I recall there were teachers and teacher educators from all over the country (highlighted by the presence of Prof. Melba Libia Cárdenas as attendant; high praise to have her as part of the seminar, make no mistake!). I recall that seminar so fondly, as it was a beautiful opportunity to share what I was learning as a doctoral student with my Colombian colleagues (but bittersweet to an end because I was in Bogotá when my nieces, Isabella and Manuela, were born). One of the session's topics was "What do we mean by 'Critical' when we say 'Critical'?" (Disclaimer: That is the title I recall as I wrote this vignette. I was unable to find the slides I used at the seminar!) and the entire session delved into the meanings and implications of framing oneself and one's work as "critical". As I look back on that seminar, I see the seeds I planted in that session in the courses I started teaching when I returned to Colombia, including my methods courses, my research courses, the master's literacy graduate seminar, and the Intro to Critical Theory doctoral seminar we offer at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (UPB).*

A critical perspective around language education is more crucial than ever (Mora et al., 2021b). As I write this paper, I cannot ignore the glaring social inequities in the Colombian education system, exacerbated by the rampant corruption in the government. These

situations continue to disenfranchise our students in urban and rural areas, furthering the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) that keeps denying our students and teachers in these schools the resources that match their desire and ingenuity. I cannot ignore the fact that the push for tests and achievement scores keeps undermining the real-life and meaningful learning our students should enjoy in their schools and classrooms. However, as I point out the issues, I also return to the tenets of criticality, this time going back to Freire (2000) and how criticality and a critical praxis do not come from despair. Criticality stems from love and hope. Criticality stems from the search for better possibilities and from the idea, as my brother Noah Asher Golden always reminds me (while sharing "the gift of pie"), that we are here to *fight*… and *win* the good fight.

I am blessed with being in the field long enough (almost 30 years if I count my first days as a preservice teacher!) to grow with it. I have seen the progression in topics (highlighted in the articles and ideas from the brilliant scholars that wrote the other articles in this special issue) whenever I go to our local events and the ASOCOPI Annual Congress. I see in the risks that our master's and doctoral students are taking with their groundbreaking thesis and dissertation proposals, increasingly infused in critical, social justice, and decolonial frameworks. I see it in the publications in our Colombian journals and in the efforts of teacher educators and our school teachers to welcome a critical spirit to the very activities they propose in their classrooms.

Going back to my own efforts, and returning to the three topics I mentioned at the beginning of the article, I find it fitting to offer some suggestions for ELT and language teacher education.

We Are Not Critically Literate; We *Are Critical Literacy*

Writing this title, I recalled a 2009 counterpoint to an article by José Aldemar Álvarez about literacy (Mora, 2009). The counterpoint, titled "It's Not How Literate We Are, It's How We Are Literate", brings to mind the idea I want to share in this section. As Mora and colleagues (2021b) pointed out in the conclusion to *The Handbook of Critical Literacies*, "Critical literacy is not just a buzzword or something we do. Critical literacy shapes who we are as teachers, as researchers, as scholars, as community members, and as family members." (Mora et al., 2021b, p. 465). Critical literacy is more than instructional practices, it is embodied actions and life lessons that become lesson plans and activities. It is life turned into questions that our students can embark upon by using the languages they are learning as their conduit.

We cannot think of critical literacy (or criticality for that matter) as instrumentality. It is life epistemology (Mora, 2016b); it is an ethos that begets techniques. If English language education wants to continue that progression toward real criticality, this is the first step we all must take: We need to understand that criticality as an everyday thing, rather than an add-on

that we sprinkle on our lessons. Criticality means understanding that discussions of social justice, the inequities in our schools, the realities our students and teachers face, and the social, cultural, sexual, religious, or linguistic diversity that turns our classrooms into a true kaleidoscope, is something that *we must talk about* in language learning classes, in methods and approaches or didactics courses, in courses about ICT in ELT, in courses about grammar and pronunciation. Without that embodied criticality, without that sense that we do not *do* critical but we *are* critical, anything we do in our teacher education and professional development programs is going to ring hollow.

We *Can, Should,* and *Are Going to* Do Better than ESL/EFL

The questions about the ESL/EFL binary are questions ingrained in the perils of binary oppositions and the risks for teachers and teacher educators. Sustaining the use of those dichotomized concepts remains a tool for marginalization of our students and teachers alike. Notions like ESL and EFL might have served a purpose in previous decades, as they fit the zeitgeist of the days of the communicative approach and the other methods that preservice teachers may sometimes review in methods and approaches classes. But, in a world increasingly superdiverse (Blommaert & Rampton, 2012; Giraldo & Castaño, 2014) and globalized (Blommaert, 2010), such binary views of language use fail to address the realities of what our students and teachers do with language inside and outside of the schooling structures. My constant advocacy for this shift is the call for a better framework, one that recognizes the linguistic realities of Colombia and the multiplicity of Englishes already present in our cities across urban and rural areas (e.g., Cruz Arcila, 2018). We owe it to ourselves as a community of learning and advocacy to think of something better than we already have.

English in Colombia and what we as a community mean by it continues to evolve. But, remaining shackled to that EFL/ESL binary, with all its colonial (Brittain, 2020l; Guerrero Nieto & Quintero Polo, 2009) and raciolinguistic (Rosa & Flores, 2017) undertones, cannot do the trick. EFL cannot help our students find their potential as language users in this new world. EFL is what keeps holding them back. Recalling a phrase I heard from my mentor, Arlette Willis, at a recent webinar, "The people who brought us *to* this place cannot be the people who move us *from* this place!" This does not apply to just people. It applies to frameworks and acronyms too.

We Are the Global South and We Have A Voice

This year, Claudia Cañas, Gloria Gutiérrez-Arismendy, Natalia Andrea Ramírez, Carlos Andrés Gaviria, and Polina Golovátina-Mora, and I wrote a review about critical literacies in Colombia (Mora et al., 2021a). It was with great delight that we enjoyed reading and reviewing

the work of all the scholars in higher education and schools who are doing and writing about critical literacy. As an ELT community *from* and *in* Colombia, *from* and *in* this region that we call the Global South, we are living an interesting moment: Our scholarship is truly coming of age. Colombia is a knowledge center and the world is listening. Great scholars paved the way for the work we are doing now, and looking at the cadres of master's and doctoral students in our local universities, I would say the future seems brighter than ever.

We need to think globally, not from reactionary views to the conversation with other regions, but in constructive ways where we lead the dialogue and keep learning from others who have traditions. We need to think grassroots, as our work in higher education must continue to create synergies with local schools and our neighborhoods. Criticality is about that dialogue, and that grassroots mentality to create communities (Rincón & Clavijo-Olarte, 2016; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019). It is about having the strength to make our voices heard as scholars when our communities need us most while staying humble to listen to the knowledgeable voices in our communities and other places in the world. The ELT community in Colombia needs to be an advocate and co-conspirator of our teachers and teacher educators and help amplify those voices in the very places that are already poised to listen to us.

Criticality and ELT: Me, an Influencer? A Role Model? When Did THAT Happen?

Sixth Epiphany: October 2019 – ASOCOPI Annual Congress in Bogotá

> *I have always loved going to ASOCOPI since I first attended back in 1994 in Medellín. The presentations, the people there, the atmosphere has always given me inspiration to go back to my classroom and continue teaching. The 2019 Congress felt so different. I have always had folx attending my sessions, some full, some emptier, but I have always felt I have something to say. But, this time in Bogotá, there was a different vibe. It wasn't just the colleagues listening to my presentations. It was the younger teachers and graduate students taking notes to my every suggestion. All of a sudden, I felt like I was in the place of those who built our field when I was a young teacher. It took me a while (and conversations with friends like Claudia Uribe, José Aldemar Álvarez or Liliana Cuesta) to come to terms with the shifting roles and the responsibility that "my students" weren't just those at UPB anymore. "My students" in a way were all the students across our institutions who listened to my suggestions or reached out with a question or read my articles with such interest.*

I sometimes use an expression with friends and in my Instagram feed, #iamjustadude. I use it sometimes as a way to ground, sometimes undermine, my seeming influence in the fields of ELT and literacy studies in Colombia. And I still blush when I read a sentence like this, "Clavijo (2000) as well as Mora (2011) have led the study of literacies, generating in-depth reflection on literacy practices in Colombia" (Castro Garcés, 2021, p. 178). When I read Ángela's article, I read this sentence at least three times, thinking, "SERIOUSLY? ME?"

And no, this is not faux humility; think more in terms of the imposter syndrome we all deal with kicking in.

With this introduction, I think rather than *describe* how my work has arguably impacted the field of ELT in Colombia (I know it has. Just looking at my researchers at the Literacies in Second Languages Project, my #LSLPLegion, is living proof); so, I think I want to use the final words in this article to *thank* those who have used my ideas about criticality expressed in my articles, presentations, and plenaries to build their own work.

I am aware that my work on critical literacy has informed recent research in the field and has given younger scholars in critical literacy more ideas to build their projects. I know that my questions about the ESL/EFL binary, even if still under scrutiny, have helped junior scholars think about their classrooms and what it means to teach English in Colombia. I know that Colombian professors elsewhere have used my articles to build their syllabi when they need to frame a literacy course and I am grateful my articles served that purpose. I am always humbled to hear from teachers about the ideas they drew from my presentations at the ASOCOPI annual conference or in my visits to colleagues at other universities here. If I still smile with glee when I see the citation alerts and see it was from an article by a Colombian scholar, it is because I know there has been an entire village that got me here and a #worldwideacademicfam that nourishes me and sustains me. Because, at the end of the day, that is what embodying criticality looks like. It is about the gratitude for the roots that got you here, all the possible routes you keep taking, and the kindred spirits that you meet along the way. Criticality, being critical, living critical, is about raising your voice loudly to ask the hard questions and working even harder with others to come up with the needed answers.

My final words of gratitude go first to the HOW Editorial Committee for their persistence in getting me to write this article. I am honored and humbled by the text that transpired here. I want to thank all those who have shared writing with me, from my first co-author, Maria Catalina Lopera (Mora & Lopera Gómez, 2001) to my current colleagues and mentees who still write with me, for the opportunities to write and learn together. Finally, all my love and gratitude to the four anchors that keep me grounded and safe in these uncharted waters of academia: my family, Polina, the Clan MacLeod, and my Legion at LSLP. It is *thanks* to them that I am a critical scholar. It is *because* of them that I cannot cease fighting to make criticality an everyday affair in our schools and scholarly lives.

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Language Assessment Literacy: Insights for Educating English Language Teachers through Assessment[1]

La Literacidad en Evaluación de Lenguas: Percepciones para la Educación de Docentes de Inglés a través de la Evaluación

Frank Giraldo[2]

Abstract

At some point, language teachers need to be engaged in language assessment in their profession. Because language assessment is such a primary task for teachers, the field of language testing is encouraging research around the knowledge, skills, and principles that are foundational for sound assessment. In this paper, I provide a definition of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL), especially when it comes to teachers, by reviewing existing models. I then discuss ongoing issues in this area and end the paper by offering language teacher educators suggestions for fostering LAL among pre- and in-service teachers. In the article, I argue that, if more LAL initiatives take place, we are collectively raising the status and nature of language assessment and its impact on teachers' professional development.

Keywords: language assessment, language assessment literacy, language testing, teacher education, teacher professional development

Resumen

En algún momento de su profesión, los profesores de idiomas necesitan involucrarse en la evaluación de lenguas. Debido a que la evaluación es un deber central del docente, actualmente el campo

[1] The insights in this paper and the data in the table come from a research study called Literacidad en Evaluación de Lenguas Extranjeras y Desarrollo Profesional Docente (Language Assessment Literacy and Teachers' Professional Development. The study is sponsored by the Vicerrectoría de Investigaciones y Posgrados of Universidad de Caldas in Manizales, Colombia. Code: 0509020.

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de la evaluación de lenguas extranjeras se encuentra promoviendo la investigación sobre los conocimientos, las destrezas y los principios fundamentales para procesos de evaluación confiables. En este artículo, doy una definición de la Literacidad en Evaluación de Lenguas (LEL), especialmente en lo que concierne a docentes de idiomas, a través de una revisión de modelos de LEL existentes. Luego hago una discusión sobre los temas que siguen en desarrollo en esta área. El artículo lo termino ofreciendo unas recomendaciones para fomentar la LEL entre docentes en formación y aquellos en servicio. En el artículo argumento que, al existir más iniciativas para la formación docente a través de LEL, como formadores de docentes estaremos mejorando el estatus y la naturaleza de la evaluación de lenguas extranjeras y su impacto en el desarrollo profesional docente.

Palabras clave: desarrollo profesional docente, evaluación de lenguas, formación docente, literacidad en evaluación de lenguas

Introduction

Language teacher education programs include varied courses in their curricula. A cursory review of these programs in Colombia and elsewhere indicates that they offer courses on linguistics, second language acquisition, general applied linguistics, and methodologies for language teaching. However, language testing and assessment courses may not be as prominent. In their research, López and Bernal (2009) alerted the field of language teacher education in Colombia, explaining that training in language testing seemed limited or missing in these programs; what was more concerning in their study is that language testing was lacking at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Today, the situation appears to be changing: Another cursory look at teacher education programs in Colombia shows that assessment courses are offered, either as mandatory or optional. The former is especially good news as authors have suggested that compulsory courses be included so that pre-service teachers are better prepared for their in-service practice in assessment (Lam, 2015; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014).

In fact, educating language teachers in and through language assessment should not be taken lightly. All language teachers (and I know this sounds like an absolute) have to assess their students at some point in their careers: Language assessment is inevitable. The opposite, lack of education in language assessment, may have the potential to lead to malpractice and language learners becoming the victims of poor assessment. Thus, our task as teacher educators is (or should be) to offer high quality education in language assessment, because the positive domino effect can be far-reaching. Additionally, as authors in language testing have argued repeatedly, language testing impacts students, institutions, and society at large, so the field needs professionalization (Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2020; Herrera & Macías, 2015; Inbar-Lourie, 2008; 2013; Shohamy, 2001).

The call for education in language assessment has been clear for around 20 years, starting with Brindley's (2001) proposal: Language teachers need to know about what they assess;

how they can design reliable assessment instruments; and how they can use assessment for a positive impact on their contexts. A relevant side of this issue is that teachers themselves have reported a lack of training in language testing (Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2019a; Sultana, 2019; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). What is more, when asked about their needs in language assessment, teachers expect education in all aspects of assessment (Fulcher, 2012).

Against this background, my purpose with this paper is to problematize the overarching theme in my research and academic career: The interface between Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) and language teachers' (both pre- and in-service) professional development. To do so, I take teacher educators as the main audience for my paper. The paper is divided into three sections: A synthesis of conceptual and research issues in LAL; the present situation with LAL; and recommendations for pre- and in-service teacher education in LAL, with some specific attention to Colombia. Overall, I hope that the ideas in this paper can further contribute to the ongoing research arena in LAL for language teachers.

What is Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)?

Language Assessment Literacy is an area within the wider field of language testing. This construct refers to the different levels of knowledge, skills, and principles that stakeholders (teachers, students, administrators, language testers, teacher educators, and others) have or need to engage in the world of language testing. Davies' (2008) seminal paper suggested that LAL include these components, i.e., knowledge, skills, and principles, an overall conceptualization which is still used in the field (see Giraldo, 2021; and Bohn & Tsagari, 2021).

Authors have also conceptualized LAL through models. For example, Fulcher (2012) places *practice* (knowledge and skills) as foundational in his model; *principles* as elemental for guiding practice; and *contexts* as the broader historical, political, and social impact of language testing. Adding to models, Taylor (2013, p. 410) claims that the LAL profile for teachers should include, on different levels, these aspects: "Knowledge of theory, technical skills, principles and concepts, language pedagogy, sociocultural values, local practices, personal beliefs/attitudes, and scores and decision-making". What Taylor does is to expand the knowledge + skills + principles model and suggests that teachers' contexts of assessment be included in their LAL profile. The inclusion of context, as authors have argued, is fundamental in understanding teachers' LAL (Giraldo, 2020; Hill, 2017; Inbar-Lourie, 2012; Scarino, 2013).

Through a review of the existing conceptual and empirical literature, I offered a descriptor-based definition of LAL (Giraldo, 2018). In this work, I provide specific examples of knowledge, skills, and principles for language assessment that teachers are expected to have. I emphasized then, and should do now, that my conceptual framework did not imply

that teachers need to display *all* 66 descriptors; different language assessment contexts require the display of different descriptors. My explication of LAL was guided by these dimensions in language assessment (Giraldo, 2018, p. 187):

- *Knowledge*: Awareness of applied linguistics; theory and concepts; own language assessment context.
- *Skills*: Instructional; design; educational measurement; technological.
- *Principles*: Awareness of and actions towards critical issues in language assessment.

Giraldo (2018) is my most cited, and it has been used to highlight trends in the field (Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021; Butler, Peng, & Lee, 2021), differentiate LAL from its generic term, assessment literacy (Lan & Fan, 2019; Sultana, 2019), and discuss LAL against teachers' professional development and practice (Buendía & Macías, 2019; Rauf & McCallum, 2020). The citations come from researchers both in Colombia and elsewhere. Based on personal communication with fellow teacher educators in Colombia, this paper has also been used in undergraduate and graduate language teaching programs, specifically to revise syllabuses for language assessment courses or as content in them.

More recently, I defined LAL as follows (Giraldo, 2020, p. 190):

> In essence, LAL represents the different levels of knowledge, skills, and principles required to engage in language assessment, either from a development perspective (i.e., designing and evaluating language assessments) or from a knowledge perspective, that is, understanding and using scores from assessments to make decisions about people's language ability.

The choice of the words, *different levels*, *engage in*, and *perspective* is deliberate. A group of teachers may need to evaluate whether the introduction of a new test in a school is appropriate. For this task, they will resort to specific arguments (in favor or against) which revolve around either knowledge, skills, or principles in LAL. A student may utilize his/her LAL to argue that a final score on an assignment is fair or unfair (for an example of LAL with young learners, see Butler, Peng, & Lee, 2021). A language tester will need a specific LAL repertoire to develop a reading test for an academic context. Thus, LAL is multidimensional, purpose-driven, and highly context-sensitive (Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Scarino, 2013; Yan, Zhang, & Fan, 2018).

When I started my career in language testing and assessment, my view of the matter was operational: I designed tests for different purposes and once the test was read and used, language assessment finished with a score. However, once I delved more deeply into the theoretical and practical implications of language assessment, my view expanded. In other words, to me language assessment is no longer just a test and a score; I fully embrace LAL at large and as defined in this section of the paper: knowledge, skills, and principles. I also

understand language assessment as a key source of feedback for improving learning, its ultimate goal (Bachman & Damböck, 2018).

Fortunately, my view is also present in scholarly work in Colombia. A look at papers in Colombian journals suggests that empirical and conceptual discussions have looked at language assessment mostly from a formative lens; the papers indicate that formative assessment contributes to student learning and positive changes in teaching. In the case of LAL literature in Colombia, authors such as López and Bernal (2009) and Herrera and Macías (2015) have rightfully argued how education in assessment is needed for language teachers. This is a call I joined in 2018 (Giraldo, 2018), and I hope that other Colombian academics further discuss and provide empirical information as to what LAL means in Colombia. Some examples of Colombian authors feeding LAL include Jaramillo and Gil's (2019) student-based research on the use of journal writing for learning about language assessment; and Restrepo's (2020) account of how her pre-service teachers heightened their conception of language assessment theory and practice through this same technique. Although studies exist, the field of LAL in Colombia seems nascent. More studies on pre-service and in-service teachers' LAL in the Colombian context should be –and probably will be– welcomed.

Why LAL Should Matter to English Language Teachers and Teacher Educators

With the data teachers collect from assessment instruments and procedures, they make judgements and interpretations of students' language learning. Thus, if language assessment is done poorly –given inadequate levels of LAL–, then the data may fail to really suggest whether students are learning or not. On the contrary, and as suggested in the LAL models above, teachers who exercise their LAL appropriately are in a position to assess professionally, effect positive change, and contribute to a program's success. Appropriate levels of LAL can ultimately lead to benefits for students' language learning and a positive assessment culture (Giraldo, 2020, 2021; Inbar-Lourie, 2008, 2012).

In the empirical research reporting on in-service teacher needs, studies show that these stakeholders did not receive sufficient education in LAL at the pre-service level and –when the studies were conducted– felt underprepared for doing language assessment (Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2019a; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). In a research study currently underway, four student researchers and I asked 30 teachers whether they had taken any courses on language assessment. The following Table 1 shows the results to this question:

From the sample in the table, at least eighteen teachers were probably assessing empirically and without theoretical and practical foundations. This echoes something I found in a study (Giraldo, 2019a): I asked five teachers in a case study how they learned about

Table 1. Number of Teachers who have (not) Studied Language Assessment

ITEM	Yes	No
During your pre-service teacher education or in-service professional development, have you studied, formally or independently, any language testing and assessment theory and practice?	39% *n* = 11.7	61% *n* = 18.3

language testing; their answers ranged from *by doing it* to *teamwork with peers*, but not officially or explicitly.

In relation to the trends in teacher needs, language assessment programs seem to be catering to such needs. In a review of professional development initiatives for LAL (Giraldo, 2021), I show how teachers improve their LAL drastically when engaged in courses on language assessment. Overall, programs lead to sizeable changes in teachers' perception of assessment, an increased awareness of what is involved in designing assessments, and even a principled approach towards assessing students (Arias, Maturana, & Restrepo, 2012; Baker & Riches, 2017; Boyd & Donnarumma, 2018; Giraldo & Murcia, 2019). In my 2021 paper, I argue that teacher needs are the foundation upon which these programs should be planned and implemented; this is what I call the intersection between LAL and teachers' professional development.

In conclusion, teacher educators tasked with language assessment courses should raise pre- and in-service teachers' awareness of LAL because:

1. Teachers have expressly reported the need for education in LAL.
2. Pre-service teacher education needs to explicitly address LAL in their curricula.
3. Teachers use information from assessment to make crucial decisions about student learning.
4. There is clear evidence that programs in LAL foster positive change.
5. Better levels of LAL may lead to a positive culture where assessment is used to do good.

Twenty Years of LAL: Where is the Field Now, especially for Language Teacher Education?

As I commented elsewhere, the first article to discuss LAL, while not explicitly using this acronym, was Brindley's (2001) proposal for professional development for teaching teachers about language testing. Later, Davies (2008) reviewed language testing textbooks to suggest

the three core LAL components: Knowledge, skills, and principles. It was in 2013 that LAL discussions became more prominent in language testing, with a dedicated edition in the specialized journal *Language Testing*.

After this edition, with LAL scholar Inbar-Lourie (2013a) as the special guest editor, there has been a steady increase in empirical and conceptual information. In synthesis, discussions around LAL have pointed to five areas:

1. Drawing the Construct of LAL

This is an ongoing discussion in the field of language testing. Although LAL's major components appear to be of a consensus, exactly what makes up each component is still in progress. Authors, myself included, have offered specifics for all three LAL components (Giraldo, 2018; Inbar-Lourie, 2013b; Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Malone, 2017; Stabler-Havener, 2018; Taylor, 2013); a look at the available descriptions implies that the construct is far from being completely defined. There may be two reasons for this: On the one hand, each stakeholder group (e.g., teachers, administrators, and even parents) will probably require different LAL profiles (Taylor, 2013; Malone, 2017). On the other hand, as Stabler-Havener (2018) shows, there is thus far no authority –namely a council or board in language testing– that can define, at least, the core knowledge base in LAL. I believe that this is not necessarily a negative development: The lack of a top-down definition may ignite further discussion as to what LAL is. For example, in my case study paper (Giraldo, 2019a), two teachers explained that one of the skills they have is to be caring with students in the assessment process. This skill, as I explain in the paper, is not part of current LAL operationalizations.

2. The Stakeholders Involved

Authors have made it clear that language teachers are a key group in the LAL puzzle (Giraldo, 2021; Inbar-Lourie, 2017; Malone, 2017). However, given the impact of assessment in society, other people need to become conversant with language assessment issues (Pill & Harding, 2013; Malone, 2017). For example, in a recent article, Butler et al. (2021) investigated the LAL of young learners studying English as a foreign language in China. The results in this study showed that even these stakeholders can have sophisticated views of language assessment: The children, aged nine to twelve, reported that they wanted to have more communicative and cognitively demanding tasks for language learning; they were also aware that the construct in their assessments was limited to linguistic aspects rather than communication itself. Butler et al.'s fascinating account attests to the need to hear more voices in LAL, as Inbar-Lourie (2017) welcomes. The next point I address connects this call to the LAL of language teachers.

3. *The Need for a Wider Research Agenda in Teachers' LAL*

The main argument in my 2020 paper (Giraldo, 2020a) is that we need to expand research methodologies for LAL, both from procedural and conceptual lenses. Fulcher (2012) rightly pointed out the limitations of using a questionnaire to be analyzed statistically. In his study, he noticed that the participating teachers tended to select as many items as were offered to learn about language testing. After echoing this limitation in my paper, I argue that we –language teacher educators– need to see assessment in context (through interviews or observation protocols, for example) so that we can fully grasp teachers' LAL. We should also look at how professional development programs are taught and what impact they have on teachers, once they utilize their improved LAL. Lastly, LAL research should also focus on teacher uses and misuses of language assessments. This last point, I believe, is necessary because the component of *Principles* in LAL is barely touched upon in LAL initiatives (for example Arias et al., 2012). In short, we need to know about dilemmas and problems that teachers face and that can lead to unethical and unfair practices in assessment (Green, Johnson, Kim, & Pope, 2007).

4. *The Need for Complementary Literacies in Teachers' LAL*

Davies (2008) rightly made it clear that the field of language testing needs to interact with other fields so that it does not fall into isolation. With the unusual developments we have experienced due to COVID-19, technology came to the forefront in teaching, and naturally, assessment. Thus, one complementary literacy that I believe should inform LAL is the technological literacy, more specifically computer and digital literacy (Ng, 2012). Teachers need to use technology efficiently to design, administer, and evaluate assessments online in a way that is fair, transparent, and smooth. Statistical literacy is another field that language teachers need to welcome more. As Brown (2013) explains, teachers may suffer what he calls statistics anxiety. In my own experience teaching pre- and in-service teachers about statistics, the topic is met with apprehension. However, once these stakeholders engage in interpretations rather than the calculations themselves, they start to see the usefulness of statistics, as I argue in Giraldo (2020b).

5. *A Call for More Reports of LAL initiatives*

In Giraldo and Murcia (2019), my colleague and I encourage teacher educators to report on professional development programs for teachers' LAL. The more information we can aggregate from these experiences, the better equipped we are, as teacher educators, to engineer relevant programs for teachers. In my literature review on LAL programs for teachers (Giraldo, forthcoming), I state that, even though the programs I reviewed (n = 14) are few, the trends regarding teaching LAL are clear: Design-based courses primarily allow

teachers to develop skills and utilize knowledge consciously; secondarily, LAL courses may ignite awareness of principles such as transparency and fairness. Thus, we should surely benefit from more reports on initiatives that seek to foster language teachers' LAL.

Given these ongoing issues, it may not be surprising to see further developments in LAL research. For example, as I predict in Giraldo (2021), there may be more reports on LAL, as in my last point above. The main implication of the probable future in LAL dynamics is that we, language teacher educators, need to keep abreast of these developments. This can be done through consulting both specialized language testing journals and more general language teaching journals, e.g., *HOW Journal* or *TESOL Quarterly*. In addition to this major recommendation, in the next section I provide other suggestions for language teacher educators to address LAL in their contexts.

LAL Recommendations for Language Teacher Education

The recommendations below come from the conceptual and empirical research I have conducted in LAL, which is fully described in Giraldo (2018), Giraldo and Murcia (2018; 2019), Giraldo (2019a), Giraldo (2020a), and Giraldo (2021). Furthermore, these recommendations come from my experience as a language teacher educator teaching language assessment to pre- and in-service teachers in the Colombian context. Naturally, the recommendations have my personal biases and, consequently, should be analyzed with specific contexts in mind. What may work in one teacher education setting may not work in another.

At a Conceptual Level

As I express in the ongoing issues above, LAL is still in refinement. Models and frameworks will probably be discussed, empirically validated (for example Kremmel & Harding, 2019), and refined. Thus, language teacher educators in Colombia should track the progress of the construct. For example, the issue of principles in LAL is still unresolved, specifically regarding classroom assessment. Research on this LAL component, and how teachers experience it in their assessment lifeworlds, might provide ideas for LAL training with pre- and in-service teachers. In a related manner, when information in LAL is nascent or lacking, we can resort to the general field of educational assessment; to illustrate, Rassoli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2019) provide an extensive treaty of fairness in classroom assessment. Thus, ideas from papers like this one can –and indeed should– inform LAL. Finally, a recommendation mostly applicable to the Colombian context is to include the *Decreto 1290* (decree 1290) which states the general features of assessment for elementary and high schools in Colombia. In Giraldo and Murcia (2018) we learned that pre-service teachers needed to have this content so language assessment can be studied with the Colombian context of assessment in mind.

At a Methodological Level

The professional development programs for language teachers' LAL that I review in Giraldo (2021; forthcoming) have these methodological features in common:

- Successful programs start from teacher needs. The reports by Baker and Riches (2017) and Giraldo and Murcia (2018) provide evidence that by asking language teachers about their needs, wants, or expectations, appropriate LAL programs can be devised.
- There is an explicit, strong design component: Teachers criticize the design of assessment instruments and then create their own by following rigorous design guidelines.
- Theory is best approached through design, not abstractly. Teacher educators in LAL programs embed concepts and theories of language assessment through the critique and design of instruments. For example, how can a robust rubric enhance the validity of interpretations from a speaking assessment? (Arias et al., 2012)
- The programs with more positively impactful results tend to address LAL at large: Knowledge, skills, and principles. However, as I highlight in the present paper and Giraldo (2020a), the issue of principles in LAL still needs to be informed by further empirical research.

Since more LAL programs may surface in the literature, there will most likely be other ideas that can inform local LAL initiatives. Altogether, the methodological suggestions above can be used to plan, teach, or evaluate language assessment programs for pre- and in-service teachers in Colombia and elsewhere. Whereas the knowledge base for defining the construct of LAL is ongoing (Inbar-Lourie, 2013; Stabler-Havener, 2018), methodological trends for teacher education seem warranted. Specifically in Colombia, I suggest that course discussions on language assessment issues include the decree 1290. In a course I taught for pre-service teachers, reported in Giraldo and Murcia (2019), I could see that they could make connections between LAL and this decree and further contextualize and even criticize language assessment in the Colombian context.

At a Procedural Level

In this last part of the paper, I would like to share five teaching techniques that I have used when teaching pre- and in-service teachers in Colombia. The techniques have helped me to help these stakeholders raise awareness of LAL at large. For a more elaborate treatment of these techniques and other principles, please refer to my book on the LAL of pre-service teachers (Giraldo, in press).

1. ***Use assessment instruments designed by real teachers.*** With the instruments, engage your students in analyzing them from various perspectives. For example, you can ask your students to analyze and speculate on the relative presence of qualities: Validity, reliability, authenticity, practicality, and washback. Alternatively, you can have your students analyze the instrument's items (e.g., a multiple-choice test) or criteria (e.g., a rubric) against design guidelines. My paper (Giraldo, 2019b) includes one example of how this can be done. In it, I explicate why context for language assessment is a key criterion for test critique.
2. ***Emphasize the importance of test specifications.*** In my experience, when teachers write up a document of specifications for an assessment instrument that they want to use, theoretical discussions such as purposes or constructs and design skills converge. Specifications are also key opportunities to have your students review what they have learned up to a certain point in the course. The added benefit is that they should end up being more careful when it comes to drafting and finalizing an assessment.
3. ***Have students conduct small-scale projects.*** With your students, design an interview protocol to be used with a teacher. The protocol can include these three core questions: 'Why do you assess?', 'How do you assess?', and 'What do you assess?' Then, your students can design an assessment instrument for this specific teacher. The project can culminate in a discussion involving you, your students, and the interviewed teacher. This project should remark upon the highly contextual nature of language assessment.
4. ***Instill alternative assessment procedures in the course.*** For instance, after your students design a true-false listening test, you can give them a checklist so they can give feedback to each other's instrument. After the checklist is used, have them talk to each other about how they designed the instrument and provide comments to make each other's instruments better.
5. ***Evaluate the course from different angles.*** In Giraldo and Murcia (2019), we evaluated a language assessment course for pre-service teachers through class observations, interviews, analysis of students' portfolios, and content analysis of their instruments (see Giraldo, in press). The data we collected from these methods contributed to our understanding of what worked and what needed to be improved in the course in question.

Inbar-Lourie (2008, 2012) argues that an assessment culture is needed in language education, one in which assessment for learning is paramount and in which contextual considerations, rather than external forces, inform language learning. This same notion can be

instilled in language assessment courses: Teacher educators in both Colombia and elsewhere need to invite pre- and in-service teachers to understand language testing and assessment as an approach to monitor and improve language education, nothing else. The opposite –that assessment is used to control and to scare or only to produce a number– should be discouraged. In essence, language teacher educators and language teachers themselves should cultivate their LAL so an assessment culture can flourish. The conceptual, methodological, and procedural suggestions in this paper may aid in doing so.

Conclusions

At the start of this paper, I argue that language assessment is an inevitable part of the teaching profession. The call, then, is to provide language teachers with spaces for them to problematize language assessment and, in doing so, cultivate their Language Assessment Literacy. In this paper, I provided a definition of LAL and overviewed areas which are still under discussion. Based on these, I offered and explained recommendations to plan and teach LAL courses. Echoing other authors, I encourage the inclusion of LAL programs starting at the pre-service level. In the meantime, local LAL initiatives should capitalize on in-service teachers' needs and voices as springboards for professional development, especially for those teachers who have received little to no training in language assessment. These efforts should lead to a heightened awareness of what LAL can bring to the teaching table, and, in the end, help teachers to do the inevitable task professionally.

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Comprehending Interculturality and its Future Directions in English Language Teaching and Teacher Education in the Colombian Context

Comprendiendo la Interculturalidad y sus Direcciones Futuras en la Enseñanza del Inglés y la Formación Docente en el Contexto Colombiano

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Abstract

Interculturality has to do with the personal relational aspects of caring about the other. In this sense, interculturality confronts and challenges untruths and stereotypes that deny the existence of diversity. This article aims to provide a comprehensive view of what interculturality means, as well as to contribute to current and future trends in the field of English language teaching and teacher education in Colombia. I present examples of intercultural practices as possibilities to understand and explore interculturality in ELT, and I share a review of studies that have undertaken this complex conception of interculturality.

Keywords: decoloniality, English language teaching, interculturality, intercultural practices

Resumen

La interculturalidad tiene que ver con los aspectos relacionales del cuidado hacia el otro. En este sentido, la interculturalidad confronta y reta las falsedades y los estereotipos que niegan la existencia de la diversidad. Este artículo busca proveer una mirada comprensiva de lo que significa la intercul-

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turalidad y así, intenta contribuir a las direcciones actuales y futuras en relación con la enseñanza del inglés y la formación docente en el contexto colombiano. Se presentan algunas prácticas interculturales como posibilidades para entender y explorar la interculturalidad en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera y se presenta algunos estudios que han considerado esta concepción compleja de interculturalidad.

Palabras clave: interculturalidad, practicas interculturales, decolonialidad, diversidad, enseñanza del inglés

Introduction

In this article, my goal is to conceptualize interculturality from a comprehensive perspective. Interculturality is linked to territories, which is why I argue that the concept should be pluralized. Therefore, we are called to think about interculturalities. This concept also encompasses the need to care about others. Soto (2013) suggested that caring is a genuine love for another that entails "recognizing their talents, their identities and their needs. It also means demonstrating an interest in their families and their communities by interacting frequently with them, attending community events, and becoming in some sense a member of those communities" (p. 35).

I also want to recognize Walsh's (2009) idea that interculturality should be addressed from a critical stance, in which Western ideologies and their systems of oppression, domination, social exclusion, and control are questioned. Based on an idea of critical interculturalities, English language teaching and teacher education in Colombia should focus on promoting spaces that acknowledge intercultural practices that aim at respect and embrace diversity.

Interculturality

From a critical standpoint, interculturality is more interested in achieving coexistence based on mutual respect and equality between different social groups. In that sense, critical interculturality takes a step forward from merely tolerating the other culture. Therefore, interculturality "aims at respect and coexistence between cultures, which allows not only an equal relationship but also mutual learning and enrichment" (Cruz, 2013, p. 55).

A review of Walsh (2009) suggests that interculturality could be approached from three different perspectives: relational, functional, and critical. Relational interculturality accounts for contact between diverse cultures. In this sense, interculturality relates to any kind of interaction between cultural groups. According to Granados-Beltrán (2016) "this view of interculturality remains oblivious to societal structures that maintain inequality within these relations" (p. 175).

Functional interculturality refers to multicultural-neoliberal discourses, and it is compatible with Western logic. This kind of interculturality promotes cultural encounters based on tolerance. Functional interculturality accommodates cultural plurality according to the values of liberalism, tolerance, and coexistence between cultures. In fact, functional interculturality "denies the rational character of all forms of knowledge that are not based on their epistemological principles and on their methodological rules" (De Sousa Santos, 2010, p. 21).

The third perspective, critical interculturality, refers to "a critical construction of and by people that have suffered a history of subjugation and subordination" (Walsh, 2009, p. 9). Critical interculturality relates to and questions the geopolitics of colonized people. It focuses on diversity and difference, as well as on the way these concepts have been constructed throughout history. Critical interculturality aims at making several types of knowledge visible. In this sense, knowledge can also be pluralized to its form "knowledges" to account for a diversity of thoughts. This is, according to De Sousa Santos' (2010) categorization, an endeavour that promotes the ecology of wisdoms because it is based on the recognition of pluralities and diverse knowledge. Critical interculturality problematizes the notion that unique knowledges and truths coexist and are characterized by the power relationships they were built upon.

Therefore, critical interculturality takes into account that wisdom and knowledge are not singular. On the contrary, different types of knowledge can be relevant to each individual. As a result, critical interculturality is an ethical-political project (Tubino, 2005), whose goal is re-existence and coexistence with others in society in order to transform existing social structures through dialogue.

All in all, I refer to interculturality from a critical perspective in this article. In this sense, interculturality accounts for cultural differences that are shaped by historical processes. Interculturality implies learning from the other as a possibility to grow as a human being. Furthermore, interculturality does not imply harmony; rather, conflict and negotiation can arise as part of the process. Interculturality is perceived as a situated construction, which attempts to comprehend and, eventually, transform realities. It also fights against exotic and primitive ideas during intercultural encounters that might occur when others are seen as "strange" people with "interesting" lives worthy of being observed (this is discussed in more depth in Ramos, 2019).

Critical interculturality also emphasizes the need for "listening, dialogue, a common pursuit, active methodologies, and participation and cooperation techniques" (Besalú, 2002, p. 38). When we listen to and dialogue with the other, critical interculturality helps problematize unequal power relationships, inequities, marginalization of ethnic groups,

racialization, adultcentrism, female subjugation, heterosexism, and political and religious alternatives (Albán, 2008).

Interculturality is dynamic given its constant evolution and negotiation. It recognizes that subjects should establish processes in which they act autonomously and demonstrate their capacities and abilities to develop their own knowledge as suggested in Ramos-Holguín & Peñaloza (2019). That knowledge is conversant with the Territory that the subject belongs to. As such, interculturality is a process where we have to read ourselves and our context from a critical perspective. In this sense, we must learn to first read, at least partially, the processes of subjectivation that have been historically constructed in diverse Territories. I have decided to capitalize the "T" in Territories because I understand that Territory refers to not just a piece of land but signifies the histories and the identities of people who inhabit the land.

As mentioned above, interculturality is linked to the concept of Territories. Territories encompass symbolic, cultural, and economic factors. Mazurek (2015) mentioned that "territories are the portion of the terrestrial surface area appropriated by a social group to ensure that they can reproduce and meet their vital needs" (p. 7). In this sense, territories are much more than a piece of land. In fact, a Territory can be a community, an institution, and even a body.

Territories have a historical construction and are part of people's identities. People have a special connection with the land they inhabit; they co-construct their own identities based on their experiences within their Territories. People are tied to their own Territories, which makes Territories part of who we are as human beings. Moreover, Territories are diverse, a reality which supports the notion of interculturalities given that intercultural practices differ based on the Territories in which they take place.

Under the previous idea of interculturalities, the concept of Territories opposes a technical definition in which land is determined by its extension and agricultural possibilities. Rather, Territories account for the social behaviors of the community that inhabits it. Territories are not geographical spaces but social ones, and it is in these socially diverse spaces that intercultural practices come into play.

Intercultural Practices

Intercultural practices are expressions in which interculturality can be perceived, and they connect to a person's academic and personal lived experiences. Rodriguez, Aristizábal, Achinte, Pérez, Lozada, Guzmán, and Gaviria (2016) developed a research study related to the intercultural experiences of co-existence in four schools located in El Mazizo, Colombia. The authors accounted for intercultural practices related to artistic manifestations, relationships

with others, territories as spaces to construct relationships, and ecology of knowledges. They described the intercultural practices as a rainbow because each institution was different. They also suggested that intercultural practices could be considered from a decolonial perspective as they make marginalized and excluded societies visible.

As such, intercultural practices attempt to contribute to the collective Project known as the decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). The decolonial turn looks to develop a geopolitical perspective in regard to knowledge and specific contexts. Additionally, the decolonial turn echoes the voices of those subjects who have been historically silent.

To provide an example, an indigenous group that uses simple tools, heats their homes with wood fuel, and are horticulturists may be considered primitive or "underdeveloped" from a colonial perspective. However, questions about this assumption merge, such as who says they are underdeveloped? What model of a "developed" culture are we using? Do all cultures have to seek this definition of development?

In terms of the example above, development may be widely accepted as the use of more energy per capita. However, this is a notion that is often linked to an idea of progress. Progress is almost always seen as something desirable by "normal" members of societies. For instance, a person with Western ideologies may think it is better to die of old age if he or she has access to more technology to live longer. Thus, he or she will see this technology as progress. On the other hand, a person who is unaware of his or her age –as is the case with many indigenous groups who measure age differently- may not share the same ideas on progress. Rather, he or she sees life as a passing of stages: child, young adult, adult, and elder. Being an "elder" may come at ages 40 to 45, while death is around age 45 to 50. Additionally, death might not be a tragic event since the person has lived through all of the stages of his or her life in company of his or her children and grandchildren. In other cases, dying of old age may seem undesirable if one is unable to take care of one's self. As mentioned before, the concept of death varies from person to person.

We may assume that everyone wants to die of old age; nonetheless, concepts like death, old age, happiness, and others vary from person to person. Therefore, a singular concept of progress from a Western ideological point of view, as something desired by all human beings, is not necessarily true for all groups. That is why the acknowledgement of diverse intercultural practices might guide us to think and act from a decolonial perspective.

Examples of intercultural practices that might help us, as EFL teachers, act on the decolonial turn include the following: arts, crafts and cultural manifestations; permanent dialogue in pedagogical environments; negotiation of pedagogical agendas; relationships with territories, traditional lands, and nature; and ecology of knowledges.

Arts, Crafts, and Cultural Manifestations

Arts, crafts, and cultural manifestations provide an opportunity to explore and comprehend culture as a field of struggle. From an intercultural perspective, arts, crafts, and cultural manifestations give teachers the possibility to wonder about cultural diversity. Interculturality is seen as a process that displays all cultures as diverse, which means they are different but equally important. What this implies for foreign language education is that interculturality takes place between two or more different people and not only between two different languages.

Permanent Dialogue in Pedagogical Environments and Negotiation of Pedagogical Agendas

The next group of intercultural practices includes permanent dialogue in pedagogical environments and negotiating pedagogical agendas, both of which require the act of listening. The listening act, according to Srader (2015), is effective when "it succeeded in fulfilling the threshold duty of calling the relationship into existence" (p. 100). In other words, permanent dialogue implies the recognition of the other, as well as being able to engage in dialogue and mutual learning. Permanent dialogue helps subjects become aware of their differences, their relationship with others, and their own histories. Interculturality, in this sense, does not dismiss cultures. Instead, from its historicity, interculturality always reconfigures its conveyed forms.

When we accomplish an effective listening act, we, as teachers, can question the pressure to dehumanize and industrialize education. Education deals with human beings and subjectivities that cannot be homogenized and standardized. Thus, curricula must be based on principles that promote humanism and the capacity to appreciate otherness.

According to Aguirre and Ramos (2011), the Colombian classroom "is a mixture of students in the classrooms coming from different backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities and religious beliefs" (Aguirre & Ramos, 2011, p. 170). In this sense, the concept of particularity (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) comes into play. Particularity relates to the need for a pedagogy that is both relevant, sensitive, and negotiated with a particular group. Moreover, particularity would include teachers and learners pursuing specific goals in a particular institutional context embedded in a unique sociocultural milieu. Being part of a particular context means that the community develops specific social skills to participate in that context.

Relationships with Territories, Traditional Lands, and Nature

The next group of intercultural practices known as relationships with territories, traditional lands, and nature can deal with the very nature of students' contexts. For

example, a school's pedagogical projects are a great opportunity to learn about what is important for a specific community. Pedagogical projects in rural institutions can address issues related to agriculture, cattle, and ancestral farming practices. Meanwhile, urban institutions can promote pedagogical projects that look at inner city infrastructure, traffic, and public education.

The relationships with Territories would not be possible without the active participation of teachers and the community. Ramos and Aguirre (2016) stressed the need for teachers to be part of the community they work in/with. The authors suggested that "Teachers must be introduced to the community's relevant ethnographic information in order to smoothly enter into the community, avoiding conflicts that could arise by not having cultural information about the group in question" (Ramos & Aguirre, 2016, p. 215). Researchers like Moll and González (2004) have demonstrated the benefits of getting to know familiar contexts well and then building connections with families and communities. In fact, Brought, Bergmann, and Holt (2006) stated that students feel accepted when their families and communities are connected with the school. Once teachers get to know the community, they can negotiate classroom planning. It is crucial for teachers to comprehend the students' and community's cultural expectations, so that the students feel that the academic programs are pertinent to them.

Thus, in this sense of intercultural practice, teachers should not work alone. Teachers should work together and create environments to foster humanity and human relationships. In turn, this will allow the community to follow through with proposals which can transform their context.

Ecology of Knowledges

The final intercultural practice, ecology of knowledges, means learning and using students' identities and knowledges in the curriculum, as well as respecting students' families and communities. As educators, we cannot deny that students have experiences that are relevant to the learning process. Students and their communities share memories, religions, feelings, languages, and cultures that give them a unique voice. The recognition of such voices in classroom discourses is not enough to deeply understand the human being's complexities. Rather, recognition must encompass a deep comprehension of experiences and the incorporation of knowledges in the classroom. In Hooks' (1994) words, this concept of recognition agrees with Transgressive Pedagogies, which acknowledge the voice of all the social actors in the educative context. It is my belief that if students' voices are heard, the educative context affirms who students are. Students, in turn, are able to recognize their capacities so that they can develop autonomy.

Undertaking the Complexities of Interculturality

My comprehension of interculturality has been shaped and reshaped by and with diverse social actors from different academic communities. I have had the opportunity to take part in studies and research articles that have considered interculturality as a possibility to echo other voices. All these teachers and researchers feel the pressure that comes with inequality and standardization in their contexts. The following research reports account for the authors' humility, readiness to learn, and openness to recognize and value diversity in education.

In terms of echoing the voice of women through narratives, we acknowledge Rallon and Peñaloza-Rallon (2021); Ramos-Holguín and Peñaloza-Rallón (2020); Vásquez-Guarnizo, Chía-Rios, and Tobar-Gómez (2020); Peñaloza-Rallón (2019); and Barbosa (2018). These authors have found significant links between gender, beliefs, and academic success or failure. These researchers have also spent time thinking about their own identities and how they play a vital role in their work with their students.

In another review of interculturality and research, we find that rurality is a key concept that ties in with learning about Territories and the people who inhabit them, as seen in the works of Ramos, Aguirre, and Pita (2021); Ramos, Aguirre, and Torres (2018); and Ramos, Aguirre, and Torres (2016). Most of these studies conclude that there is still a need to learn from the diversity of Territories, as they are connected to specific cultural practices that shape students´ beliefs. The previous authors also emphasized the need to provide a more integrative and balanced view of the term rurality.

The exploration of identities is another area that has dealt with the comprehensive understanding of interculturality. Cuervo (2020); Ramos and Torres (2019); Ramos, Aguirre, and Torres (2018); Fajardo (2018); Pita (2019); Triana (2019) and Vasquez (2019) have worked on situated research studies in which participants' voices and identities are acknowledged. These researchers suggested that some of the issues that teachers encounter when working with students of diverse backgrounds may begin with their own lack of experience with diversity.

Conclusions

Having looked at interculturality as part of a human being's life and the possibilities of understanding the complexities of interculturality in ELT through intercultural practice, I wish to focus on a few final remarks for English language teacher educators in the Colombian context.

Perhaps the only way to understand the process students are going through is to have gone through the process oneself. If one wants to comprehend students' realities, one needs to walk their path or, at least, to listen to their voices carefully.

As educators, it is our responsibility to expand our notion of diversity. In any classroom, students are diverse in terms of their social class, abilities, sexual orientation, etc. Thus, the course content should reflect who the participants are. Educators should address their students' milieu (cultural and socioeconomic realities) and view it as a rich resource for the curriculum. This means that content should be derived from the students' diversity and be included in the classroom.

In other words, students need to be treated and acknowledged as subjects not as objects. As teachers, we are called upon to fight against the coloniality of knowledge, which prioritizes Euro-American knowledges. Meanwhile, other kinds of knowledges, such as indigenous and farmers' knowledges have been vanished. It is our responsibility to become involved in "ways of knowing which are alternative to occidental hegemony" (Alvarado, 2015, p. 110).

In the case of foreign language programs, cultural symbols, language rules, and norms are reproduced. Likewise, social relations are accepted as natural, normal, unquestioned, and correct. As it is, these practices can be considered as a passive, accepted logic of domination. Nevertheless, a deep analysis of the implications of culture can be an alternative form of knowledge, which moves us away from hegemonic forms of control.

Thus, if we are to take into account the intercultural dimension, curricula cannot be the same in each country, city, or even grade level. Materials need to be culture specific. Despite the challenges in implementing the previous, I also see an array of opportunities for foreign language teaching programs, such as becoming involved with the community in the teaching/learning process, selecting teaching materials that are negotiated with the academic community, and accounting for the particularities of the context. This might help us overcome the coloniality of being that, according to Ramos and Peñaloza-Rallón (2020),

> is focused on the distinction between superior and inferior human beings based on their race. Certain groups of people can be considered objects, or they can constitute the invalidity of existence. In other words, they can be invisible or naturalized as objects or sub-humans. (p. 20)

Finally, some questions we can ask ourselves as intercultural beings/teachers are: Are we considering what students already know from home, community, and school? Do we understand local communities and links? Do we talk to students, parents or family members, and community members? Do we plan community-based learning activities? Do we provide opportunities for parents or families to participate in classroom activities? Do we draw on students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll & González, 2004)? Do we support collaborative work among parents, communities, and schools in shaping educational programs together?

Do we foster shared experiences that recognize diversity? Do we invite community members to share expertise related to the topic of the class? Do we make connections with students' lives out of school? Do we interact in ways that respect students' cultural norms that may be different from the teacher's, such as wait time, eye contact, and turn taking? Do we provide opportunities for students to interact with one another? Do we deeply comprehend our students' realities? Do we avoid superficial cultural understandings? Are we sympathetic to our students' realities? Do we feel free to see, listen, touch, and be touched by others?

Clearly, the path to teach from an intercultural perspective is a long one for both pre-service and in-service teaching programs. Incorporating interculturality in teacher education programs will greatly depend on the students, their life experiences, and the teacher-educators that they will encounter along the way.

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Culture and Interculture: What are We Talking about? Challenges for the ELT Community

Cultura e Intercultura: ¿De Qué Estamos Hablando? Retos para la Comunidad de ELT

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Abstract

Talking about culture in the field of teaching foreign languages is not a new topic, but talking about interculture and interculturality is a subject that is now gaining a lot of interest in the field of ELT. Especially in the last two decades we have witnessed the growth of publications in this regard. We find all kinds of publications, but we are still having seeing the same fundamental questions that become relevant in these times of change: what we teach, who we teach it to, why we teach it, and how we teach it. These questions have always been relevant for language teachers, but today they have become even more meaningful since we are living in different times, times marked by unexpected political changes, strong economic pressures, and an unreasonable need to homogenize and standardize all the processes of teaching and learning. We must think collectively from new (postmodern) paradigms, empower ourselves, and begin to change our pedagogical practices. The aim of this paper is to share reflections on what foreign language teaching should be and how we should be thinking about culture and interculturality in our classrooms. This is an invitation to think about the need to interculturalize the teaching of the foreign language.

Keywords: culture, interculturality, intercultural approach, language teaching, language learning

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Resumen

Hablar de cultura en el campo de la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera no es un tema nuevo, pero hablar de la intercultura y la interculturalidad es un tema que está cobrando mucho interés en el campo del ELT. Especialmente en las dos últimas décadas hemos sido testigos del crecimiento en publicaciones en este sentido. Encontramos todo tipo de publicaciones, pero aún no nos hacemos las preguntas fundamentales que cobran mucha relevancia en estos tiempos de cambio: qué enseñamos, a quién lo enseñamos, para qué lo enseñamos y cómo lo enseñamos. Estas preguntas han sido relevantes para el profesor de lenguas, pero hoy cobran sentido ya que nos encontramos viviendo tiempos diferentes, tiempos marcados por cambios políticos inesperados, fuertes presiones económicas y una necesidad desmesurada por homogenizar y estandarizar todos los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras. Debemos como colectivo pensarnos desde nuevos paradigmas (postmodernos), empoderarnos y empezar a cambiar nuestras prácticas pedagógicas. El objetivo de este documento es compartir reflexiones en torno a lo que debería ser una enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras en estos momentos, a cómo deberíamos estar pensando la cultura y la interculturalidad en nuestros salones de clase. La invitación es a pensar en la necesidad de interculturalizar la enseñanza de la lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: cultura, interculturalidad, enfoque intercultural, enseñanza de lengua, aprendizaje de lengua

Introduction

I am so happy to have received the invitation to participate in HOW's 25-years Special Issue. For me it is a privilege to be able to share with all the members of our beloved ASOCOPI (The Colombian English Language Teachers Association) and with the entire academic community ideas and thoughts related to the new trends of English Language Teaching (ELT henceforth) as well as the critical and relevant aspects of Language Teaching and Teacher Education. These thoughts are deep-rooted in my experience and my research interests as a teacher educator for more than 30 years.

Mainly, I will refer to two aspects that have raised issues in our congresses and which have led to an increase in publications, mostly in the last decade. These topics concern culture and interculturality and whether they can be taught in the ELT classroom or if they can be taken as approaches to plan the teaching of foreign languages. To understand these concepts, I will first refer a little to what has happened in my life as a language teacher, how I understood culture and how I approached it. Then I will review two epistemological paradigms to better understand how the concept of culture has changed throughout history around the world and to mention the importance of positioning the intercultural approach as a way of teaching foreign languages and culture.

Let us first consider how my view about culture has evolved as my professional growth has taken place. Back in the late 80s when I started to study languages as my chosen major in Universidad del Tolima, it was an exciting experience because I was training to be a language

teacher, particularly an English teacher. What a great challenge. Being honest, I did not have a good command of this language. I was a student who came from rural and public schools. When I started my university studies, my knowledge of English as a foreign language was very rustic and did not exceed a small repertoire of English language words. At first, every language class was a nightmare. I had to learn lists of words and learn some dialogues to be acted out in front of the class. The good thing was, I was passionate about linguistics and literature. This helped me a lot in the sense of being curious about languages (being a language analyst) and sensitive to understanding aesthetically the different ways of being in the world (the realm of literature).

As I advanced in my academic career, I attended English courses in literature and culture. Unfortunately, those courses only referred to concrete encyclopedic and factual knowledge about culture, either North American or British. That was the first problem I faced, to link the concept of culture to a nation or country. This narrow and misplaced view of culture brought about serious consequences of stereotyping and minimizing any culture. It completely disregarded the cultural capital of the collective groups, and what it comprises and means, to a simple idea of referring to culture as a product or an end.

As I said, my interests in linguistics and language teaching shaped my views about culture. As a student of languages at that time, we talked about the importance of teaching culture because we believed that language was part of culture and culture was represented by that language. In that sense, it was important to study how any community or particular social group used a language. In the research studies we carried out, we started to differentiate the respective groups of language users and what they produced in terms of language patterns and their cultural heritage (literature, music, food, and some others). As a result, the years passed but the conceptualization of culture still remained the same provoking the consolidation and reinforcement of inappropriate social representations of culture. A remark that emerges then is how we, students, teachers, and language users, construct our own social representations of culture e.g., whether we are culture consumers or culture producers. Culture is something external to the individual or we are embedded in it.

To sum up, language and culture were unfortunately seen as '*ends'* which were related to a specific community placed in a physical setting and with its specific material achievements -artefacts- which represented the community's social patrimony and symbolic capital that served to perpetuate relationships of power and domination. They distinguished insiders from outsiders and transmitted information only about the people of the target country. In this respect, language teaching, according to Kramsch (1993), "has usually ignored the fact that a large part of what we call culture is a social construct, the product of self and other perceptions" (p. 205).

In fact, as years passed, I was inclined to study linguistics (theoretical and descriptive); my view about culture was influenced by this discipline that let me talk about communities of speech and the importance of them within a culture. I realized that language was part of the symbolic world of culture. Thanks to language we can represent and apprehend the world. Language allows us to be *in* the world (being seeing and heard). Language is the vehicle that mobilizes cultural and social groups; it is the social glue that joins the individual to the community and the tool that allows us to maintain the intersubjective relationships and allows us to live together. As such, culture was understood as the ways of people, the ways of being in the world and that is why we can talk about cultures (in the plural). Having those ideas in mind, I understood that I had broadened that concept of language and culture. But at the end, it was the same thing; those concepts were restricted to a specific discipline. Culture is polysemic and implies different perspectives to be understood. Maybe that was the idea that encouraged me to study social sciences more deeply.

Nowadays, I am much concerned about the importance of the social sciences in ELT. I have seen that my view about culture was absolutely limited in every sense. What I mean is that the narrow conceptualization of culture was governed by the way I approached it. I tried to look for a right definition of culture based on a specific discipline (linguistics, sociology, anthropology, etc.) but culture was more than that. Then, what is the critical standpoint? The answer is simple; the problem is not how to conceptualize the object, but how to approach it. The approach has to do with the epistemological perspective that we take, with the positionings that we adopt. This influences the way of conceptualizing the object (Rico-Troncoso, 2012).

Basically, I am going to refer to the latest two big approaches that language teachers have gone through over the last two centuries: modernism and postmodernism. These two approaches have influenced everything and particularly the way culture has been defined. Let me summarize the main characteristics of these two approaches:

Modernism: (XVII y XVIII) the basis is rationale. Centrality turned around the importance of science (Harvey, 1989a).

- The enlightenment project of modernity based on a positivist approach to knowledge. It was believed that there was only one answer to any question. And it was followed by the belief in absolute truths, and rational planning under standardized conditions of knowledge and production as well as the emergence of nation-states.
- Culture was initially seen as part of civilization from an ethnographic sense which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other capabilities acquired as part of being a member of a society.
- Cultural anthropologists defined culture as a "collection of traits, to one which emphasizes pattern and configuration" (Hall & Reed, 1990).

- Culture was viewed as an embedded-in patterns system. It is "the way of life of a people" which entails learnt behavior patterns, attitudes, and material things (Geertz, 1975).

From my perspective, the problem with modernism is that we, as language teachers, tend to package everything. We are looking to label things and people. We attempt to classify people, behaviors, and patterns. Under these circumstances, culture can be perfectly taught as content or as another aspect of language. From the modern perspective, culture is a notion which some specialists can have access to, and study it fragmentally.

Postmodernism: (XIX century – present) the basis is a general suspicion of reason and a strong position for sensitivity (Harvey, 1989b). The postmodern thought has been strongly influenced by prominent thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida, among others.

- The postmodern shift would be characterized by a profound revolution in the structure of feeling.
- The central cornerstone is plurality instead of unity.
- Postmodernism made a shift in distinguishing the set of assumptions, experiences, and propositions to promote sensibility, practices, and discourse formations.
- In the frame of this contemporary trend, culture is seen as involving a number of interrelated complex systems that may include an individual's mental representations of language and culture as a complex social system.
- The discussion turns around the perspectives on culture as a product, as discourse, as practice, and as ideology (Baker, 2015).
- Culture is viewed as collectively constructed through intersubjective relationships.

This approach views culture as a combination of complex systems based on the mental depictions individuals have about language as well as their perception of it as an intricate system constructed within and through discourse. Culture is viewed as collectively constructed through the intersubjective interactions. It is an evolving dynamic system of interactions and should be defined from a multidisciplinary perspective (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009).

With postmodernism language teachers and teacher educators have advanced with the conceptualization of culture. Nevertheless, from my perspective, the language teaching context is still defined by the modernist view. In the field of language teaching, teachers are still concerned about the analogy of the iceberg when defining culture. We infer from the iceberg analogy that there are two views through which culture has been understood. Bennett (1998) distinguishes them as '*the upper-case Culture'* and '*the Lower-case culture'*. The former is related to kinds of things included in area studies or history courses: literature, drama, fine

arts, classical music, etc. The study of these areas constitutes much of the curriculum in both international and multicultural education. The latter refers to the psychological features that define a group of people –*their everyday thinking and behavior*-rather than to the 'institutions' that they have created. With this perspective, culture is the "learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people "(Bennett, 1998, p. 3). The distinction has been called more in academic terms as 'objective culture' and 'subjective culture' respectively. The debate is not whether these definitions are right or wrong; rather, the point is to divide culture in such a way. Culture should not be viewed as separated or compartmentalized. Unquestionably, this analogy does not contribute to understanding what culture is or means.

Of interest here is that lots of attempts have been made to define the concept of culture, and perhaps to elaborate an appropriate definition is not easy. What one can say from all definitions given about culture is that most of them come to the same conclusion; culture is the symbolic representation of the everyday life of a group. In everyday life, we refer to rituals of interaction, the styles of living, and the objects used by a group (or artefacts). Furthermore, culture enables the interpretation of social life; thus, it provides orientation for actions and behavior. In this regard, culture is seen as a dynamic process of change.

As a symbolic system, the interpretations of culture could be ambiguous and could result in confusion or conflict when encountering representatives from different groups or cultures. For that reason, Patterson (as cited in Fennes & Hapgood, 1997) states that "culture is an identifiable complex of meanings, symbols, values and norms that are shared consciously or unconsciously by a group of people" (p. 15). According to these ideas, a more refined approach about culture is taken by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)[2] (1997) at the University of Birmingham (UK) which states that:

> Culture of a group or class includes the special and distinct lifestyle of this group or class. The meanings, the values and ideas as they are reflected in the institutions, in the social relationships, in systems of beliefs, in customs and traditions, in the use of objects, and in material life. Culture is the specific shape in which this material and this social organisation is expressed. Culture includes 'maps of meanings' which make these things understandable for its members. These 'maps of meanings' are not carried in one's brain. They are represented in the forms of the social organisation and relationships through which the individual becomes a 'social individual'. Culture is the way through which the relationships of a group are structured and shaped; but it is also the way they are experienced, understood and interpreted. (p. 15)

[2] The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was led by Stuart Hall. A Jamaican-British academic, writer, and cultural-studies pioneer, who was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1932, and died in London in 2014. Hall joined the CCCS at Birmingham University in 1964. He took over from Hoggart as director of the Centre in 1968, and remained there until 1979.

Culture and Language Teaching: Bridging the Gaps

So far, I have dealt with the concept of culture but I have made little mention of how it is seen in the field of language teaching. When language teachers are asked about what culture means to them, some of them answer merely by listing subjects such as literature, arts, history and geography. These subjects are placed under the umbrella term 'civilization' or 'big C' culture as opposed to the category of 'little c' culture (Lázár et al., 2007). There are some others that can refer to the embedded-pattern system behaviors of a group. The definitions of culture, according to Lázár (2007), suggest that the cultural elements to be included in language teaching cover much more than the traditional list of compulsory facts about the civilization of one or two of the target cultures. It also includes "information about beliefs, customs, social practices, values and behavior" (Lázár et al., 2007, p. 8). Again, this is a very reductionist view of culture.

In a similar vein, Holliday states that within Applied Linguistics (AL) and Intercultural Communication (IC), many researchers regard culture as "a preference for certain patterns of communicative behaviour" (Holliday et al., 2010, p. 61). This is related more to the functionalist view of language teaching where culture is seen as,

> Background and resource, and where the human subject is only seen in his/her role of executor of functions. In other words, culture is viewed as behaviour (i.e. 'X' people don't smile in public), or as fixed values and beliefs, separated from social interaction and socio-political realities (i.e. 'X' culture values the elderly). (Holliday et al., 2010, pp. 61-62)

Such reductionism has been characteristic of AL and IC where ethnicities and cultural identities have been reduced to lists of linguistic and interactional elements that can be used in the communicative situations.

In language teaching, culture is a process that both includes and excludes; as Kramsch (1998) asserts: "culture always entails the exercise of power and control" (p. 8). I can see in language teaching how this relationship of power is exercised when we see the *hegemonic* effects of the dominant culture --the target culture-- towards the minority culture (the in-group culture that functions as the majority). It is clear that in language teaching, the dominant perspective has been the 'adaptive system' which has to do with the idea of "relating communities to their ecological settings" (Paulston, 2005, p. 278). What Paulston states is that culture should not be understood under the adaptive system due to its very superficial level of understanding. She mentions that there is another paradigm which offers a more realistic definition of culture. This new paradigm includes the ideational theories in which, according to Keesing (as cited in Paulston, 2005, p. 278), culture can be interpreted from three systems, either as (a) a cognitive system as inferred ideational codes lying behind the realm of observable events, or as (b) a structural system where cultures are viewed as

shared symbolic systems that are cumulative creations of mind. Keesing seeks to discover in the structuring of cultural domains --myth, art, kinship, language-- the principles of mind that generate these cultural elaborations; and, culture as (c) a symbolic system of shared symbols of meanings. Here culture is an identifiable complex of meanings, symbols, values and norms that are shared consciously or unconsciously by a group of people.

Up to here, I have to think that culture in language teaching, by its very nature, is associated with social groups (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). It is true that culture is not a monolithic entity that can be packed or easily defined. Definitions of culture usually coincide in four of the main characteristics:

- Culture is manifested through regularities, some of which are more explicit than others (embedded-in pattern system).
- Culture is associated with social groups, but individuals within those groups may portray variations (culture as ways of life of a people – Hall & Reed, 1990).
- Culture affects people's behavior and interpretations of behavior (culture as ideology). Halliday et al. (2004), based on the theory of social action, views culture as a constructed social practice in which it is the result of a negotiated process.
- Culture is acquired and/or constructed through interaction with others (culture as discourse). Kramsch (2001) talks about discourse communities and how their shared stories make the members part of a social group which not only shares a language but also the topics they chose to talk about, the way they present information, and the style with which they interact.

As a conclusion, from a postmodernist approach, I entirely believe that language teachers have to theorize and problematize the concept of culture in the field of ELT. We are culture and culture is part of us. It is not external. My suggestion is to overcome the dichotomies of the 'big C' and 'small c', and to be much more open minded in viewing culture as a discourse, as an ideology, and as a practice. In other words, culture is the way of being in the world. It is the way of exercising our condition as individuals and social human beings; hence, that is why culture is a social practice, is the result of a negotiated process, and is in a permanent construction and change.

What it is clear is that the new tendency of language teaching should be based on the four teaching needs (Kramsch, 1993): (1) The intercultural sphere need (by this, we mean that we are not alone in the world, we are surrounded by cultures), (2) the need to approach culture as an intercultural process (which means that for understanding a culture, we need to adopt an intercultural approach), (3) the culture as a differential process (it means that culture cannot be packaged and homogenized in the same way), and (4) the need of crossing disciplinary boundaries (that is, that culture needs to be understood under different perspectives).

HOW

The conception of culture and the role of culture have impacted language teachers in the sense of being aware of what culture embraces: self-awareness, the ability to look at himself/herself as an outsider, the skill to be a cultural mediator and cultural prod, the talent to evaluate different viewpoints, the aptitude to read the cultural contexts and to avoid bias related to others' identities (Rico, 2018). Perhaps the challenge is how to bring all these aspects to the language classroom. What I propose is to work on the sources of culture and take a critical perspective to decolonize the different meanings of culture. In the following graph, I suggest a route that needs more developments in our ELT context.

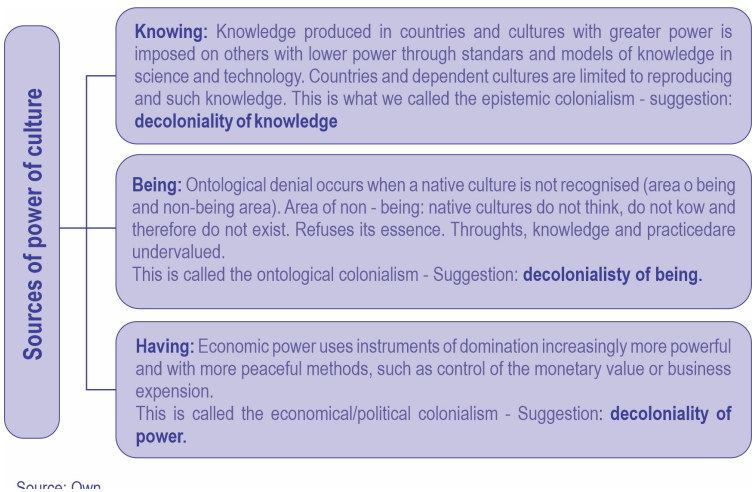

Figure 1. Sources of power of culture.

Certainly, in language teaching, culture should not be related to any language or any nation. Language users do not need to be native or non-native speakers of any language (on the contrary, this modernist idea is used to discriminate against groups and reinforce the supremacy of other cultures). From a postmodernist perspective, we avoid this colonized discourse of knowing, being, and having. We prefer to talk about language users and cultural producers. Culture is not a content that one can teach or something that one can learn. Culture is there with us; we need to comprehend it and interact with/within it. Definitely, I am convinced that in our classrooms, we need to work on developing students' competences for being good ethnographers. Students should take the role of comparative ethnographers who observe the world in a critical manner by creating their own hypotheses and sharing their experiences with others. We undeniably need to develop the intercultural approach in our language classrooms.

The Intercultural Approach in ELT: Towards a New Challenge

I am convinced that teaching and learning a language is not just developing skills or competences that allow learners to be effective in communicative processes. Teaching and learning a language means understanding that as social human beings we interact with each other, we understand that the other person by nature is different and depicts different ways of doing, knowing, and being in the world. Perhaps if we are aware of this fact, we will have already made significant progress in the processes of social interaction. These kinds of approaches are what we need to understand in the field of ELT. It is not necessary to be a sociologist or anthropologist or even linguist to understand that what is required is a completely different approach to teaching and learning a foreign language: the intercultural approach. What I suggest is that we need to change the paradigm of seeing culture as a "product". Culture is a means by which we signify and build our identities. Languages as culture are very complex processes that are related to other aspects of the individual, the society, politics, ideology, and so on. Additionally, we need to know that when people interact in a language which is foreign to at least one of them, the shared meanings and values they convey by language cannot be taken for granted.

We cannot continue to think that the best language learner is one who is very close to mastering the grammar and vocabulary that a native speaker possesses. The objective of language teaching should no longer be defined only in terms of acquiring communicative competence in a foreign language as I mentioned before. Teachers now have a responsibility to develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC henceforth) (Rico, 2018). Facing the ICC requires special characteristics. According to Sercu et al., (2005), these characteristics and competences have been identified as a desire to be part of the foreign culture, self-awareness, and the ability to look from the outside; the ability to act as a cultural mediator; the ability to assess the views of others; the ability to consciously employ cultural learning skills and to read the cultural context; and, lastly, understanding the fact that individuals cannot be reduced to their collective identities.

Language teachers should begin to take seriously the concept of a language as a means of communication and interaction with people from other cultures. It is known that in learning another language, students are exposed to one or more social groups and their cultural practices – and inevitably learn something from these cultures (Byram & Fleming, 1998). Therefore, any effort made in order to develop intercultural communicative competence should not be underestimated. Clearly, in the light of all these approaches, having clarity on what is challenging in the contexts of teaching a foreign language is important. Thus, the question arises about the type of approach that should be privileged in the teaching of a foreign language. Risager (1998, as cited in Rico 2018, p. 87) makes a wonderful distinction

of different approaches: a monocultural approach, a multicultural approach, an intercultural approach, and a transcultural approach.

The Monocultural Approach

It is based on the concept of a single culture, associated with specific people, a specific language and normally with a specific territory. This approach focuses on the culture of the country or countries where the language is spoken (target countries). It has also been called "the foreign language approach". It does not focus on the learner´s country or on the relationship between the target countries and that of the learner or any other. This approach has been the dominant paradigm in teaching foreign languages in Western countries since the last century. Today, it has been called into question, above all, because it is based on the concept of a dominant culture.

Multicultural Approach

This approach is based on the fact that many cultures can coexist within the boundaries of one of these and within the same society or state. For some groups in a society, the 'national' or standard/official language is their mother tongue; for others it is the second language; or for others it is a foreign language. This approach focuses on the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the target country or countries. It also focuses on the country's ethnic and linguistic diversity of the learners and their migration relations (Risager, 1998). Kramsch (1998) states that the term 'multicultural' is frequently used in two ways. In a social sense, it indicates the coexistence of people from many backgrounds and ethnicities such as in 'multicultural societies'. And in an individual sense, this term characterizes people belonging to various discourse communities and those who therefore have the linguistic resources and social strategies to join and identify with various cultures and with various ways to use the language (Kramsch, 1998).

Intercultural Approach

It is based on the concept that different cultures are structurally related to each other. Therefore, this concept encompasses the encounter of cultures, including attempts to deal with, understand and recognize the differences between them. From this approach, teaching can be characterized by attitudes of cultural relativism and a desire to assume a non-ethnocentric perspective of the cultures involved. Here the target language is taught as if it were the students' mother tongue; however, "the objective is to develop intercultural and communicative competence, a competence that allows the learner to function as a mediator between two cultures" (Risager, 1998, pp. 244-245). Kramsch (1998) states that the term 'intercultural' usually refers to the encounter of two cultures or two languages crossing

political boundaries of nations or states. This term also refers to communication between people from different ethnic, social, and gender cultures within the boundaries of the same national/official language. Therefore, intercultural communication is associated with matters of bilingualism and biculturalism (Kramsch, 1998).

The Transcultural Approach

This approach has, as a starting point, the intertwined nature of cultures as a common condition for everyone. Cultures are being permeated into changing combinations depending on migration and tourism, global communication systems for the masses and private communication, economic interdependence, and the globalization of goods production. The extensive use of whichever of a number of languages as the *lingua franca* is one of the expressions of an internationalized world. The transcultural approach focuses on the lives of individuals and groups in contexts characterized by, more or less, their cultural and linguistic complexities. Here the target language is used but in such a way that learners are also aware that other languages are used.

Final Remarks and Conclusions

Definitely, we need to broaden the concept of culture via considering a multidisciplinary perspective. Culture cannot be packed in compartments or seen under just one specific field of study. My suggestion is to adopt a real postmodernist approach to language and culture (post-structuralist view). Making a change in our teaching methods is necessary. In my point of view, language teachers do not need more of the communicative approach. They do not need to continue to express meaning in a vacuum. Today, language and the teaching of foreign language is embedded and is part of the individual, the context, the society, and the culture. My suggestion is to adopt an intercultural approach in ELT.

Adopting an intercultural approach will mean that our classrooms will become ideal scenarios or laboratories to conduct cultural studies, develop intercultural competences and interpersonal skills that will allow us to accept and live with the differences in intercultural groups. In other words, as Sercu (2006) and Peña-Dix (2018) suggest, we need to interculturalize foreign language education. In particular, Sercu (2006) suggests that, "The main objective of foreign language education is no longer defined strictly in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence. Teachers are now required to teach intercultural communicative competence" (p. 55). In fact, in an investigation carried out in Spain, Sercu et al., (2004) explored the EFL secondary school teachers' perceptions of their culture-teaching practice and their role as mediators of language and culture in the foreign language class. Further research that was part of a larger comparative study in seven countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Mexico, Spain, and Sweden) found the importance of the

integration of language and culture in the language classroom. No teachers admitted to dealing exclusively with language and excluding culture from the foreign language class; on the contrary, teachers were aware of the role that culture plays in their foreign language class and were willing to interculturalize foreign language education.

The great challenge for teachers in Colombia and Latin America is not to fall into the trap of using interculturality only as a touch-up speech to promote inclusion or be aware of the existence of differences. It is clear that in many cases the intercultural discourses are used to hide—with rhetorical strategies—the existent political, economic, and social discriminations. In this sense, the true intentions are hidden (Zarate, 2014).

It is in the dialogue between cultures that frictions occur and unpredicted behaviors emerge. As long as we are not competent to deal with differences and diversity, we homogenize and standardize everything and everyone (this idea promotes the cultural homogenization). If human beings lose their personal and cultural identity, they also lose their being, essence, and relevance (Zarate, 2014).

Finally, it is the interaction between cultures, exchange and communication, through which the individual recognizes and accepts the reciprocity of the culture of the other. None of the cultural relationship is egalitarian. If interculturality means egalitarian relationships, it would be easy to understand the balance of power between knowledge, being, and having of both cultures; generally, this does not take place because of the sources of power of culture mentioned in Figure 1 above. We have to be very careful since interculturality as discourse has been used by dominant groups as a mechanism to assimilate the minority cultures. My invitation is to think about the nature and development of the bilingual programs or the intercultural bilingual education programs in our country.

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Emergence and Development of a Research Area in Language Education Policies: Our Contribution to Setting the Grounds for a Local Perspective on Policymaking

Surgimiento y Desarrollo de un Área de Investigación en Políticas Educativas del Lenguaje: Nuestra Contribución a la Definición de unas Bases para una Perspectiva Local acerca de la Formulación de Políticas

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Abstract

This article presents our narration of the emergence and development of a research area about the teaching and learning of the English language in Colombia and the creation of a research group named Critical Studies of Colombian Education Policies. The narration includes a description of the bilingual education policy in Colombia and a literature review of how the themes *Different Shades of the Colombian National Plan of Bilingualism* and *Theoretical and Practical Concerns over Bilingualism* have been

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addressed by authors of local journals, such as How, Profile, Íkala, and Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, in the issues published from 2008 to 2020. The description and literature review link the life stories of our growth as teachers and researchers as related to the research area and research group mentioned above. A final part of the narration refers to our contributions to the ELT field in Colombia through the following two themes: *Dimensions of Language Policies: A Political Discourse Perspective* and *Making Teachers' Agency Relevant: Bottom-up Approaches to the Study of Language Education Policies*.

Keywords: bilingualism, bilingual education, Colombia, ELT, language policies, political discourse

Resumen

Este artículo presenta nuestra narración del surgimiento y desarrollo de un área de investigación sobre la enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma inglés en Colombia y la creación de un grupo de investigación denominado Estudios Críticos de Políticas Educativas Colombianas. La narración incluye una descripción de la política de educación bilingüe en Colombia y una revisión de la literatura de cómo los temas *Diferentes Matices del Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo de Colombia* y *Preocupaciones Teóricas y Prácticas acerca del Bilingüismo* han sido abordados por autores de revistas locales, como How, Profile, Íkala y Revista Colombiana de Lingüística Aplicada, en los números publicados entre 2008 y 2020. La descripción y revisión de la literatura se vincula con las historias de vida de nuestro crecimiento como docentes e investigadores en relación con el área de investigación y grupo de investigación mencionado anteriormente. Una parte final de la narración se refiere a nuestras contribuciones al campo de ELT en Colombia a través de los siguientes temas *Dimensiones de las Políticas Lingüísticas: Una Perspectiva del Discurso Político* y *Haciendo Relevante la Agencia de los Docentes: Enfoques Bottom-Up para el Estudio de las Políticas Educativas del Lenguaje*.

Palabras clave: bilingüismo, Colombia, educación bilingüe, ELT, discurso político, políticas lingüísticas

Introduction

Policymaking has typically been considered a job of political science with a focus on technocratic top-down decisions and actions. The feelings and thoughts of actors other than decision makers have seldom represented significance in the formulation of public policies. This has been the case of language education policies. It has prompted research agendas with a critical spirit that acknowledges what language teachers have to say and do about programs, plans, and projects that make up policies. Thus, we present here an account of the emergence and development of a research area about language education policies, with special emphasis on the teaching and learning of the English language in the Colombian context.

The contents of this text show firstly, a brief description of the beginnings of the research area that studies public language education policies. Secondly, the themes *Different Shades of the Colombian National Plan of Bilingualism* and *Theoretical and Practical Concerns over Bilingualism* are discussed as the result of a review of research and reflection articles published in the Colombian journals: How, Profile, Íkala, and Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal,

in the period from 2008 to 2020. Thirdly, this manuscript includes our two life stories that relate to our growth as teacher researchers, along with the research area mentioned above, and as the creators of the research group Critical Studies of Colombian Education Policies. Fourthly, the themes *Dimensions of Language Policies: A Political Discourse Perspective* and *Making Teachers' Agency Relevant: Bottom-up Approaches to the Study of Language Education Policies* condense our contributions to the ELT field in Colombia. Finally, concluding remarks close the article.

Milestones of the Beginnings of a Research Area

We would like to start by mentioning a number of milestones that indicate the origin of the research area in question. The analysis of public policies begins to be structured as a discipline, with several theoretical and methodological perspectives, in the mid-twentieth century in contexts other than Colombia (Cuervo, 2010). In Colombia, public policy analysis initially entered the academic agenda in the mid-90s in the context of the 1991 National Constitution. It is a fact that public policies related to language education in Colombia began to be regulated from Article 10 of that Constitution, in which Spanish is presented as the official language in every place of Colombia while local and ethnic languages are official in their own territories, without yet referring to what would later be called foreign languages. Thus, in 1994, the General Law of Education, or Law 115, appears, and in its Article 21, it orders that educational institutions offer the teaching of a foreign language beginning with the primary school level. The term foreign language, for the Ministry of National Education (MEN by its acronym in Spanish), was conceived as synonymous with the English language because, among other things, the conception of bilingualism for the MEN was equivalent to speaking English, not another foreign language. In fact, this concept of bilingualism would later cause controversy and begin to generate criticism from scholars in Colombian universities. In 1999, the MEN issued the "Curriculum Guidelines for Foreign Languages" which kept the concept of English as being the foreign language. In 2004, what was called the "National Bilingualism Program" was launched along with the publication of Guide #22 "Basic Standards of Foreign Language Skills: English" in 2006 with the guidance of the British Council. In 2010, this program was renamed "Program to Strengthen the Development of Skills in Foreign Languages" which later had, in 2013, a strong regulatory support with the issuing of the Bilingualism Law or Law 1651. In 2015, the name changed to "National Program of English: Colombia Very Well!" which is the one that is currently valid. Despite the different denominations of the program, we will always refer to it as the National Bilingualism Program or PNB (by its acronym in Spanish). Simultaneously, with the consolidation of government practices related to bilingualism in Colombia, research agendas have been emerging that have questioned those practices because they are influenced by external factors associated with agreements or impositions, not necessarily linked to education, and based on a neoliberal demand for economic growth to obtain international recognition (Nussbaum, 2012). Those factors occur unidirectionally and are based, among other things, on a desirable "optimum", i.e., standardization.

The fortunate emergence of research agendas proposed by Colombian teachers as a valid and transformative alternative constitutes an initial emphasis that evolves from the instrumental to the critical in academic works that explore cultural, social, and political issues, within which the theme of educational and linguistic policies is dealt with from a local perspective (cf. Álvarez, 2009; Cárdenas, 2004; Cortés, Cárdenas, & Nieto, 2013). Those agendas have been forging a pluralistic critical community of public policy analysis in different university centers. The challenge of that community has been to understand the reality of political, social, and institutional contexts and to adjust its theoretical models and analysis methodologies to the requirement to move from the adoption of official discourses to the questioning of them.

In the face of this, a critical attitude has been necessary. It is imperative to assign Colombian educational institutions and their actors the central role of knowledge generators. Knowledge that has taken the form of participation in academic forums (for example, ASOCOPI) of publications prepared by Colombian teacher-researchers for Colombian educators, such as in the case of the Colombian journals: How, Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, Íkala, and Profile. In a review of the research or reflection articles in those journals in relation to the large category of educational and linguistic policies, in the period from 2008 to 2020, we found that the following two macro themes stand out, under the recurrence criteria: (1) Different Shades of the PNB and (2) Theoretical and Practical Concerns over Bilingualism.

Different Shades of the PNB

The shades that are found within this macro theme are standardization; policymakers' construction of teachers; the teaching and learning of the English language for indigenous populations; and neoliberal ideology in ELT in Colombia.

Standardization

This topic is associated with the implementation of the parameters set up by the Common European Framework of Reference to decide distinct levels of ability in English language proficiency through courses and tests that use uniform patterns of mass application. Standardization is seen as problematic because, for example, for authors such as Sánchez and Obando (2008), standardization should not be the only factor for the effectiveness of PNB and, further, that mainly academic aspects that account for the process, not only the product, of learning processes should be considered. On the other hand, González (2009) argues that the need for certification supplied by models of teacher professional development, such as the In-Service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) and the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) can represent standardization and inequity due to ignorance of local realities.

Policymakers' Construction of Teachers

The image of teachers in education policy in general is that of clerks similar to those of a factory. Quintero Polo and Guerrero Nieto (2013) argue that the guidelines of the PNB hide a tendency to delegate to teachers the responsibility of the implementation and realization of official agendas, which leads one to think of situations where teachers are forming a group of docile workers in the service of faceless agents or foreigners who occupy the realities of their students and their environments. According to Gómez-Vásquez and Guerrero Nieto (2018), this reality ignores the professional subjectivities of teachers as authorities within their classrooms, as teachers see themselves as adequate and capable professionals when it comes to their knowledge. This knowledge includes not only knowing about the topic they teach, but also knowing who their students are, what their needs are, and how best to serve them.

Teaching and Learning the English Language for Indigenous Populations

For the MEN, English or bilingualism represents capital and as such for them it is worthy of investment, promotion and incentives; contrary to what happens with the Colombian indigenous languages. Usma, Ortiz, and Gutierrez (2018) imply and further assert that despite the fact that in 1991, in the Colombian Constitution, indigenous communities and minority groups were recognized as legitimate Colombian citizens and their languages as official in indigenous territories, the requirement to demonstrate a level of proficiency in the English language for entry or exit of university programs blocks the opportunity for members of indigenous populations to access tertiary education.

Neoliberal Ideology in ELT in Colombia

The PNB is still in force because of the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism. This is explained by Hurie (2018), who assures that although there has been a lot of criticism from Colombian scholars, the PNB, influenced by impositions on a demand for economic growth (such as foreign intervention implicit in free trade agreements) (Valencia, 2013), finds legitimacy in neoliberalism.

Theoretical and Practical Concerns over Bilingualism

After an analysis of the articles found in the journals mentioned above, we found two trends: In search of a definition of bilingualism and implementing bilingualism in real settings.

In Search of a Definition of Bilingualism

There is an interest in trying to define and understand what bilingualism is in the context of the PNB. The first reference we found within the four Colombian journals was the one by Guerrero (2008) in which she set out to uncover the hidden meanings of bilingualism in the handbook "Basic Standards of Foreign Language Skills: English". By conducting critical discourse analysis, Guerrero (2008) found that bilingualism has been constructed within this document as basically related to speaking English. With this very same aim, another group of scholars has published research reports that explore the views on bilingualism of different members of the school community. Lastra (2009) conducted a focus-groups study to uncover the understandings of bilingualism in her school community. She found that there was a strong relationship between bilingualism and a high number of English classes at school. In this same line of thought, Camargo (2018) and Benavides-Jimenez and Mora-Acosta (2019) attempt to bring to the surface the ways in which teachers understand or define bilingualism. Also, there is yet another set of research which is more of a theoretical nature, but which intends to approach the problem of defining bilingualism, as found by Guerrero (2010) and Miranda Montenegro (2012). This account of articles allows us to see that there is still an interest in trying to define and understand what bilingualism is.

Implementing Bilingualism in Real Settings

In this trend, we grouped the research studies that deal with different takes concerning the actual implementation of the PNB in real settings. Here we found three articles whose goal is to show how to implement CLIL, which in some contexts has come to be equated as the norm to teach content in English. The first piece in this regard is the one by Rodríguez Bonces (2012) that presents a critical exploration of how CLIL is being implemented and proffers four elements needed to achieve bilingualism in Colombian schools. Mancipe Triviño and Ramírez Valenzuela (2019) report on using CLIL to teach natural science in a bilingual school in Colombia. McDougald and Pissarello (2020) conducted a teacher training course on CLIL and concluded that teachers found similarities between CLIL and bilingualism.

In a different take, we found three other research studies that documented experiences in the implementation of bilingual practices in the classroom. Leon and Calderon (2010) conducted a study with teachers of three schools for deaf children, who were bilingual in sign language and written language. The results show the struggles teachers face to teach arithmetic in this bilingual context. Miranda and Echeverry (2010) examined the impact that school infrastructure might have in the implementation (and success) of the bilingual program in some private schools in Cali (Colombia). Ordoñez (2011) shares the results of implementing a bilingual syllabus in a private school and as part of her results, offers the concept of Education for Bilingualism as a counter concept for Bilingual Education. These

studies allow us to see that Colombian scholars are interested in trying out strategies, either ready-made (like CLIL) or self-generated (as the other studies reported here) to try to achieve the goals of the Ministry of Education.

After the account of the origin and development of the research area of the study of language education policies, we deem it important to weave our own life stories as to how we have grown as researchers and mingle with other colleagues in the creation of a research group named Critical Studies of Colombian Education Policies (ESTUPOLI by its acronym in Spanish).

Carmen Helena's Life Story: All Roads Lead to Rome

Prior to creating this line of research, the authors of this article had been engaged in other research projects that, together, we either published or presented at national conferences. The first one was a small-scale study in which we explored the role of two in-service teachers in the development of their undergraduate students' literacy dimensions (Guerrero & Quintero, 2004). Shortly after this, I obtained a Fulbright scholarship to pursue my Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. Right before leaving for the United States, the debate about the implementation of the PNB was really heated and had divided the community of ELT in Colombia between those who fully supported this plan and those who had serious questions about its design. Once I started my doctoral studies, my initial interest was still focused on teacher education. But being aware of the discussions that were taking place in Colombia about the PNB, I switched my interest towards the exploration of some elements of this plan. I decided to undertake a critical discourse analysis of one of the documents produced within the framework of this policy in order to analyze in depth what it meant for Colombia to be "bilingual". As a result of this work, I published a number of articles and gave several talks in Colombia and in other countries. Writing my doctoral dissertation taught me many things about language policies but, more importantly, about the inequities they have brought to many Colombians throughout history.

Upon my return to Colombia, Alvaro and I developed another research project together (Quintero & Guerrero, 2010) in which we aimed at analyzing how a group of student-teachers, enrolled in our classes, made sense of some principles of critical pedagogy while conducting their teaching practicum. This study opened a window into the relevance of listening to teachers' voices regarding education and external aspects that have an incidence in what happens in the classroom; we are aware that many macro-structures intersect not only with teachers practices within the scope of their teaching but also in their personal doings as well. These experiences, plus the interest in language policies infused in me through my doctoral work and the conversations held with teachers enrolled in the master's programs in which I taught (in various public and private universities), set the grounds that led Alvaro

and I to create the research group Critical Studies of Colombian Education Policies whose main interest would be to listen to teachers' conceptions, ideas, fears, positions, among other concerns, in regard to educational policies.

Since then, we have conducted several studies in which we have tried to map out how teachers appropriate, adapt, resist, make sense of, or deal with educational policies. As the result of those studies, we have published a book (Guerrero & Quintero, 2016), articles (Quintero Polo & Guerrero Nieto, 2013; Guerrero & Quintero, 2021), and have given several national and international talks. This research group has welcomed master students who are interested in working in the same epistemological horizon and their theses have enriched the ways in which we inform our field of study.

Álvaro's Life Story: A Transition to a Social and Critical Outlook as regards the Colombian English Language Policies

In my growth as a professional of, first, English language teaching and, later, of language teacher education, my ideas, beliefs, and practices have been changing. At first, I thought that teaching English was an innocent activity that consisted simply of making linguistic structures known through drilling. Then, as a teacher educator, I naively fell into the "training" models that emphasized the *know-how* (Giroux, 1988) of teaching. They became trendy due to some public policies; for instance, Woodward (1991) or Richards and Lockhart's (1994) models claimed to be reflective and persisted in achieving the "ideal instructor" in technical terms. Aware of the fact that the so-called reflective models failed to lead teachers to create their own voice about their own practice and the factors that controlled them, I encouraged novice teachers' studies to account for educational transformations and situated pedagogical knowledge (Piñeros & Quintero, 2006). This contrasted with traditional training models in which others decided what teachers should do and know (González, Montoya, & Sierra, 2002).

The above routed me to a conception of education as a social practice that demanded problematization beyond the conventional. I also became interested in addressing such a discrepancy between the technical and the human nature of teachers' self-as-teachers and their language pedagogical practices (Quintero, 2012, 2014, 2016). That problematization implied looking beyond the language classroom from a discursive perspective for studying power exertion on teachers' personal, academic, and professional identities. That was how a major issue that subjugated Colombian teachers arose, that of the Colombian English language policies that forced a view of the English language as neutral through some standards and made teachers and students invisible (Guerrero & Quintero, 2009). Consequently, a need to vindicate what teachers had to say and do about themselves and the external factors such as public policies surfaced. Thus, our research needed to be emancipatory and to consider

alternative methods for data collection and analysis (e.g., Quintero Polo & Guerrero Nieto, 2013; Guerrero & Quintero, 2016). With this initiative as well as not wanting to remain as mere spectators of the Colombian education system, we founded the research group ESTUPOLI.

As the activities of our new research group evolved, new needs appeared. For instance, the field of public policy analysis posed a personal interest that moved me to examine several agendas of elite groups and their tendency to maintain the status quo through political rhetoric that managed to support the powerful by undermining the interests of those who had no power. This was also a major motivation for two further activities: creating an under/graduate course named Political Discourse and Colombian Education, and doing a doctoral dissertation titled Political Discourse in Colombian Education: Study of Power Relations in the Program *La Revolución Educativa* of the Colombian Ministry of Education in the Presidential Period 2002-2010 (Quintero, 2019). Both activities had in common the intention to understand how (political) discourse was created by society, but in turn how (political) discourse created and reconfigured itself through the exercise of symbolic power. The focus was on those in power and their dominant ideologies (van Dijk, 1997) or their discourse and its persuasive function that sought to change the minds of recipients in a way that seemed consistent with their beliefs, intentions, and purposes.

In what follows, our contributions to the ELT field in Colombia will be described and explained under two main themes: (1) Dimensions of Language Policies: A Political Discourse Perspective, and (2) Making Teachers' Agency Relevant: Bottom-up Approaches to the Study of Language Education Policies.

Dimensions of Language Policies: A Political Discourse Perspective

Our research efforts to analyze the Colombian English language policy have opted for an argumentative and interpretive approach. This has been so in order to challenge public policy definitions with an emphasis on the perspective of leaders rather than the perspective of beneficiaries or those affected by government practices. In relation to it, in the field of public policy analysis, attention has been paid to the leaders' works and not to their rhetoric. Consequently, our research initiatives have questioned the fact that the actions of leaders perpetuate a hierarchical model and divert the attention that should be paid to what actors other than government representatives say and do with those actions that regulate their social, cultural, and economic practices. Lasswell (1959) argues that leaders belong to the elite and their rhetoric – words, gestures, codes, symbols, signs, or images – covers up the ideology of an established regime; in other words, the rhetoric or discourse of leaders takes on forms and functions. In terms of forms, we can mention the statements, stories,

or texts that can be grouped into categories of discourse. In terms of functions, we can name inducing, convincing, and legitimizing, among others. Regarding language education policy, our studies prioritize the analysis of how power is resisted or distributed rather than how power is exercised; different from a political tendency that shows, based on test results, the effectiveness of decisions and actions of policymakers, it became possible for us to study political discourse from an alternative approach that brings together an argumentative approach with critical discourse analysis (CDA).

The articulation between power and discourse in language policy analysis corresponds to the political and ideological dimensions in the Colombian education system. We have studied it on the basis of our understanding that critical analysis of social practice (i.e., discourse)—associated with education—focuses on language as a cultural instrument that, in turn, is a mediator of power and privilege relationships in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge (Gee, 1999), and that in the making of public policies, there are relations of power. Normative elements of people's practices that imply the execution of political power of some over others, either in a practical and concrete way or in an abstract and subtle way, denote asymmetry among social actors.

The above statements have demanded from us research alternatives that focus on hybrid designs of an argumentative approach and a critical approach to the study of domination relations from a perspective that is in favor of dominated groups (i.e., English language teachers). This involves taking on non-neutral positions for the examination of the construction, distribution, and consumption of a political discourse that reproduces inequalities among social actors and that goes against the education of sensitive and critical human beings. All this indicates that to analyze political discourse is to engage in social analysis (van Dijk, 2009); in other words, the discursive reproduction of power must be studied not as the power of a person but, rather, as a power that is a constituent part of the power of a social organization.

Making Teachers' Agency Relevant: Bottom-up Approaches to the Study of Language Education Policies

Our work as members of the ELT community in Colombia, but specially as teacher educators and as researchers, has provided us with rich opportunities to know, first hand, what teachers have to say and do in regard to policymaking, policy implementation, and ways in which policies can be subverted and/or resisted. In the same line of thought, we have learned from teachers' own voices how policies have intersected with their identities, their subjectivities, and their professional beings at large.

The conversations we have had with teachers along these years, either as participants in our research projects or as graduate and undergraduate students have unveiled for us the multiple dimensions in which they face educational policies. We have seen that many of them are actively engaged in the different events in which the *Secretaria de Educación del Distrito* presents their new policies. To these meetings they bring proposals, make contributions, give ideas that, in their own words, are rarely taken into account; but despite this, they keep on attending, keep on hoping that someday their voices will be heard. We could also give evidence that teachers do really care about their students, they put them first and give prevalence to their human dimension (Quintero Polo & Guerrero Nieto, 2013; Guerrero & Quintero, 2016, 2021). For teachers, students are not numbers or codes, they are human beings with stories, fears, and dreams. Being a teacher, for them, spans beyond the classroom and beyond the school. They try their best to equip their students to be able to face life, to make good decisions, to fly far and become the better versions of themselves. In the same line of thought, teachers do not blindly follow teaching methodologies but base their practices on their academic preparation as well as on their professional experience. They encompass what Kumaravadivelu (2003) calls situated practice i.e., they are able to pick and choose what is offered by state mandates and adapt the best they can to their own contexts (Guerrero & Quintero, 2021).

In a detour, we have also researched how language (and other educational) polices have intersected with teachers' identities and subjectivities. This has made us understand that in fact, the way policies are brought to the schools do play an influence in the way teachers construct themselves as professionals. In Quintero Polo & Guerrero Nieto (2013), we conducted a study to explore the intersection between educational policies and teachers' identities and found that in fact teachers had what we called "oscillating identities" meaning that their identities were influenced by policies and constructed intersubjectively. The interest for the intersection between language policies and teachers' subjectivity was the core of a research study conducted from 2016 to 2018 in which we were able to characterize how teachers shaped and reshaped their subjectivities as the result of their interaction with covert or overt language policies that could also be national or institutional (Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero-Nieto, 2018).

Being in close contact with teachers has been an enormous privilege for us because it has opened a window into the multilayered ways in which teachers interact with policies, make sense of them, translate them into actual teaching practices and make them work. To us, exploring the issue of language/educational policies from a bottom-up perspective might be one of the most relevant contributions we bring to the ELT field in Colombia, particularly because we have tried to listen carefully to teachers' voices to turn them up, as Aldana (2021) would say.

Concluding Remarks

The analysis of public policies of language education has emerged and continues to develop as a research area, but its insertion in government discourse is still incipient, unequal, and ambiguous. The dissonant voices have not been heard and the PNB has gone ahead under different names but with pretty much the same content. To the extent that the studies of this area have a relationship with public entities through direct works, dissemination of their works or consultancies, we hope that the voices of teacher researchers will radiate throughout the government work.

In the meantime, as teacher educators and as researchers we have devoted a great deal of our careers toward unearthing teachers' perspectives, concerns, ideas, doings, practices, beliefs, and so on to serve as amplifiers of their ways of dealing with educational and language policies. Along this path, we have inspired and been inspired by other colleagues, teachers, and students aiming at promoting a bottom-up approach as regards the study of language policy hoping that at some point these voices and the official ones will meet mid-way.

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On the Professional Development of English Teachers in Colombia and the Historical Interplay with Language Education Policies

Sobre el Desarrollo Profesional de los Docentes de Inglés en Colombia y la Relación Histórica con las Políticas Lingüísticas Educativas

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Abstract

The professional development of English teachers is a significant area in language teaching and learning, as well as in teacher education. On the one hand, at least in theory, professional development initiatives respond to the teachers' changing needs. On the other hand, it reflects the beliefs that different educational authorities and stakeholders have about English uses and education. In this self-study, I consider the professional development of English teachers in Colombia and its tight connection to the language education policies of the country. Following a chronological approach, I present the findings as landmarks that have contributed to my reflections and research around professional development and language education policies. Discussing the findings, I show how the discourses and decisions about teachers' continuing learning represent certain views of language, second language acquisition, English language teaching and learning, and teachers as professionals. This self-study addresses some of the concepts that illuminate the discourses that have shaped English teachers' professional development. Focusing primarily on the development of the National Program of Bilingualism, I underscore the power of these concepts over the major decisions made at the local and school levels. In the analysis of the past and present of teachers' professional development in Colombia, I conclude on the necessity

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of maintaining critical scholarly work to contribute to the construction of local knowledge for future reflection.

Keywords: colonialism, language education policies, National Program of Bilingualism, native-speakerism, self-study, teachers' professional development

Resumen

El desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés es un área importante en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de la lengua, al igual que en la formación de docentes. De un lado, al menos en teoría, las iniciativas de desarrollo profesional responden a las necesidades cambiantes de los docentes. Del otro, reflejan las creencias que diferentes autoridades y actores educativos tienen sobre los usos del inglés y la educación en lenguas. En este autoestudio, trato la estrecha relación entre el desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés en Colombia y las políticas lingüísticas educativas del país. Siguiendo una perspectiva cronológica, presento los hallazgos como referentes que han contribuido a mis reflexiones e investigaciones sobre el desarrollo profesional y las políticas lingüísticas educativas. En la discusión de los hallazgos, demuestro cómo los discursos y las decisiones sobre el aprendizaje permanente de los profesores representan ciertas visiones de la lengua, de la adquisición de segundas lenguas, de la enseñanza del inglés y su aprendizaje, y de los docentes como profesionales. Este autoestudio trata algunas de las bases teóricas que inspiran los discursos que han definido el desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés. Enfocándome principalmente en el Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo, resalto el poder de dichos conceptos sobre las principales decisiones que se toman a nivel local y en las escuelas. En el análisis del pasado y del presente del desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés en Colombia, concluyo con la necesidad de mantener una academia crítica que contribuya a la creación de conocimiento local para futuras reflexiones.

Palabras clave: autoestudio, colonialismo, desarrollo profesional docente, hablante-nativismo, políticas lingüísticas educativas, Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo

Introduction

This article reports the findings of a personal history self-study (Samaras, 2002; Sampras et al., 2004) in which I analyze my academic journey in studying the needs, programs, and outcomes of the professional development (PD) of Colombian teachers of English in its connection to language education policies. Although some people may conceive them as separate areas, they do not work independently. Under the growing universal set of areas in Applied Linguistics, language learning and teaching, teachers' development, language policies, the study of contexts and discourses, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), among other fields, share their interest as a language-centered problem-solving enterprise (Grabe, 2010). The interconnection is more evident as teacher education and English language teaching (ELT) tend to focus more on learning than on methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), and SLA research underscores the role of contexts on individuals (for example, Firth & Wagner, 2007; Ortega, 2009). To respond to the invitation from the journal HOW, I self-analyze my

contributions to the field of English language teaching (ELT) in Colombia. The self-study uses a chronological analysis of my teaching and research career. I cover two decades of English teachers' PD and its connection to language education policies. For the readers of this article, I clarify that the references about language policies in the country come primarily after the launching of Bilingual Colombia in the 2000s.

The paper follows this structure: First, I refer to the concepts of teachers' PD and language education policies, the two broader areas in the study. Then, I describe the methodology that I used in the self-study. Later, I present the findings as landmarks in my own PD studying and researching the two topics. The discussion includes elaborations on other academic areas that have enriched my interest. I support the analysis through the connection to national and international references. To conclude, in the analysis of the past and present of teachers' PD in Colombia, I claim the need to maintain critical scholarship on language education policies. My aim is contributing to the construction of local knowledge for future reflections and action on English teachers' career learning. Regulations, discourses, and curricular decisions made by the governments have always affected English teachers' PD and will continue to do so.

Conceptual Framework

In this section, I develop the concepts of teachers' PD and language education policies as the primary concepts that frame this self-study. I situate the concepts in the framework of transformative pedagogy, as I believe that it leads to praxis. As Farren (2016) summarizes it, transformative pedagogy "has a moral as well as a social commitment to bringing about personal and social transformations by making connections between teaching and learning and living" (p. 192).

Teachers' Professional Development

As many authors say, defining teachers' PD is difficult, but all agree that it is continual and requires teachers' motivation and agency (Díaz-Maggioli, 2004). Díaz-Maggioli (2003) sustains that through PD "educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs" (p. 5). It may include "a range of activities – formal (accredited) and informal (nonaccredited) – which meet the thinking, feeling, acting, life, context and change purposes of teachers along their teaching careers" (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 12). Postholm (2012) adds that schools play a primary role in PD when teachers observe and reflect on their teaching through collaborative tasks with colleagues.

Understanding English teachers' PD includes considering how the professional and personal lives of teachers concur in their learning experiences in their in-service trajectories

(Fessler & Christensen, 1992). Teachers learn from personal and collective experiences in the classrooms and in society. Freeman (2006) summarizes a number of principles for teacher education and career-long learning: teachers have a learning process; teachers learn in and from situations of practice; teachers and students have different -but interrelated- experiences in classrooms; what teachers know and do influences -but does not cause- students to learn; and teacher training and development are vehicles for teacher learning.

Teachers' PD does not exist in a vacuum. Cochran-Smith (2006) contributes to expanding the notion of teachers' growth in the intricate connection between policy, politics, teacher education, and professional development. In the same vein, Sachs (2007) relates teachers' PD to policies and politics. About this connection, she states that,

> Clearly, the continuing professional development of teachers is important to maintain and sustain a competent teaching profession. Moreover, at different times it serves different purposes and masters and hence is a political activity. The politics of curriculum content, pedagogy, and relationships within schools can all be sites of struggle, which should not be underestimated. (p. 18)

Sachs (2007) defines PD as a possibility for reimagining oneself and the profession through collective and autonomous inquiry that leads to transformation and change.

Teachers' PD as a space for new dimensions of the self takes distance from a deficit model. Wallace (2009) defines that perspective as an explanation of educational problems as the individual's responsibility. Usually, they are explained as lack of effort and commitment rather than as the result of the socio-economic conditions or the educational system, which affect the individual. In the deficit model, teachers have an enormous responsibility of educational problems. If learners have some poor academic performance, English teachers are to blame. Therefore, educational authorities see professional development programs (PDP) as the solution because they change the individual teachers' behavior or provide them with certain skills.

A primary consequence of analyzing PD from a deficit model is interpreting differences as a deficiency and denying the possibilities of diversity (Harry & Klingner, 2007). This lens is particularly evident for the PDP that focus on imported approaches for the development of English teachers' language proficiency and teaching methodologies. This leads to the imposition of certain language varieties, forms, and uses and pre-conceived ELT packages (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Below, I address specifically how the teachers' language proficiency and use of ELT methodologies have represented a major component of PD initiatives.

Language Education and Language Education Policies

Theories of language policies and language education policies have shaped ELT as they provide elements for the understanding of macro decisions that affect students, teachers, schools, and classrooms. Spolsky (2017) defines language policy as a field and as a "document

produced in the course of language management" (p. 5). It encompasses three interrelated components: One, practices, or community language behaviors; two, beliefs and ideologies, meaning desirable language behavior; and three, management, that is how stakeholders influence language practices and beliefs in a community. Shohamy (2006) sees language policies as imposed mechanism that shapes the uses of languages in communities. She defines language education policies as "the mechanism used to create de facto language practices in educational institutions" (p. 76). Johnson (2013) adds another aspect changing the concept to educational language policy. He underscores the dynamicity and multilayered condition of language policies in schools and outside schools "that impact language use in classrooms and schools" (p. 54). Analysis of language policies and language education policies associate English to imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and colonialism (Pennycook, 1998). I refer below to the National Program of Bilingualism (NPB) as a language education policy that has imposed certain practices in schools, in teacher education, and in teachers' professional development.

Methodology

In the analysis of my academic interest in English teachers' PD and language education policies, I drew on historical self-study as the methodology. As Samaras (2002) and Samaras et al. (2004) state, self-studies help us understand and renew our identity, and support our interpretation of the reality. Dinkleman (2003) underscores the power of self-studies in promoting reflection that leads to reflective teaching. Samaras et al. (2004) find historical self-studies beneficial because it allows educators "to reconstruct significant life events to inform them of their professional identity formation and to help them make meaning of their pedagogy and the connections of their practice to theory" (p. 906). In a local study, Clavijo and Ramírez (2018) recommend self-studies as a way to transform English teachers' professional identities and trajectories.

Data collection included as primary sources a timeline of my professional career, retrospective notes about my work as a researcher and professor, and a meta-analysis of my publications. I complemented the analysis discussing them in relation to the work of other local scholars, and through documentary analysis of some official communications and publications about these two areas. I focused on official documents produced after the launching of the NPB in the early 2000s. Data analysis followed a grounded theory approach as I coded the data though constant analysis to construct the categories (Glasser 1998; Saldaña, 2016).

Findings and Discussion

The historical self-study analysis of my work on English teachers' PD and language education policies allowed me to identify five landmarks in my career as a teacher educator

and researcher. Each landmark favored my understanding of the two topics in my scholarly work. Around each landmark, I elaborate on the relationship of the macro discourses about teachers' PD and language education policies in their connection to theoretical approaches to language, second language acquisition, English language teaching and learning, and teachers as professionals.

The Evolution of PD in my Professional Career

Although my pre-service education at Universidad de Antioquia did not include research as a major component (Zambrano Leal, 2012), I was aware of the need to grow professionally after graduation. I was a student-teacher who worked at a school in the mornings and took classes at the university in the afternoons and evenings. The basic instruction on how to conduct classroom research motivated me to put into practice what I learned as if I had a long practicum training that lasted various years. An important piece of knowledge I received through the example of some professors came under the necessity of being a committed professional, a reflective practitioner and an agent of change (Schön, 1986). I also realized that I needed to improve my English language proficiency and keep updated in the use of English language teaching (ELT) methodologies. A primary question was how I could keep learning in my ELT career.

The First Landmark: My Doctoral Research

My interest in exploring why some English teachers seemed to lose their language skills while others maintained them or improved them in their professional career became more evident in my doctoral training. I proposed the first study in TESOL that involved the language attrition of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNEST). I collected the data in Colombia and compared the linguistic trajectories of a group of teachers from public and private schools in their proficiency and use of English inside and outside the classrooms (González, 1995). Colombian pre-service students served as the comparison group to determine language attrition or retention of English teachers in both settings (Weltens & Cohen, 1989).

I demonstrated that English teachers in public schools experienced language attrition, while private school teachers maintained their language proficiency after graduating from the teacher education program. Public school teachers experienced conditions that were unsupportive of their English language practice, had limited access to teaching materials, and did not have access to other speakers. On the contrary, teachers in private schools and language centers reported increasing, or at least maintained their language skills after university graduation.

At the time, mainstream SLA research, and consequently, language proficiency, focused mainly on the individual differences in language learning and the dichotomy native-nonnative

speakers (Ortega, 2009). The ideal native speaker was the model to imitate in English language learning and teaching in cognitive approaches in SLA (for example, O'Malley & Uhl Chamot, 1990, among others). The individual characteristics that favored or hindered the acquisition of a second language were a primary component of teacher education and professional development (for example, Oxford, 1990; Ellis, 1994, among many).

Nonnative speakers were considered from a deficiency and incomplete stand, defined in comparison to the native speaker. Teachers had the challenge to compensate for that lack of knowledge through remedial linguistic or methodological training, as various authors demonstrate it in Blyth (2003). This was more evident for the oral production of English language learners (Flege & Fletcher, 1992; Flege & Eefting, 1988).

Although my study was eminently linguistic and quantitative, I found evidence of how school and social contexts played a role in the attrition or retention of English among local teachers (Gardner et al., 1985, 1987). The findings were in alignment with studies that highlighted the role of social contexts (De Bot & Weltens, 1995; Gardner et al., 1985, 1987; Weltens & Grendel, 1993).

The literature on the types of PDP available to Colombian teachers before the NPB is scarce. Ramos Acosta (2019) states that in the 1980s English teachers relied on "short courses or workshops taught by experts that selected some content to transmit it as the only formula for the successful teaching of the language" (p. 64). Later, the 1994 General Law of Education defined the route for teacher education by introducing two significant articles "the acquisition of conversation and reading elements in at least a foreign language" for elementary education, and for high school, "comprehension and the capacity to communicate in a foreign language" (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1996, p. 8). Zambrano (2012) states that, after the promulgation of that law, the terms "*capacitación*"[2] and "*formación*" became evident in the field.

After the General Law of Education, the PDP available stressed the use of updated methodologies and the teachers' language skills in English, responding to the principles of "teacher training" (Freeman, 1989; James, 2001). The PDP responded to what Ur (1997) shows: imposed agendas, externally determined and assessed, designed by experts, isolated, and focused on the mastery of professional skills. One example of this view is Restrepo (1995). For Antioquia, the PPD stressed the importance of providing teachers with teaching methodologies, creating a space for language practice, and training them on cultural aspects of the countries where the foreign languages came from. In Neiva, Vanegas Rubio and Zambrano Castillo (1996) proposed a training program for elementary school teachers based

[2] Some possible translations into English are "training or qualification". Although the term is controversial, it is still in use.

on the acquisition of basic English communication skills, ELT methodologies and assessment for elementary education, and children's socio-affective-linguistic development. The authors reported that "the majority of elementary teachers … only have their high school English instruction, which they assess as not very good" (p. 40). Quintero and Guerrero (2013) provide a current analysis of English teachers in elementary education in the country.

A significant contribution to the PD of teachers was the Colombian Framework for English, known as the COFE project. Developed in collaboration with Thames Valley University, the project began in 1991 and lasted until 1997. It influenced a generation of teacher educators and English teachers with an academic and critical stand on the profession. Rubiano et al. (2000) reported as the major achievements the improvement of the language component in pre-service programs, new approaches to the teaching practicum, the development of research in the field, and the acquisition of teaching resources and specialized professional literature.

The Second Landmark: Studying the Professional Needs of English Teachers

In the early 2000s, I led a study that explored the topics and strategies that English teachers in Medellín identified as key components of their PD (González et al., 2001, 2002). Findings showed how English teachers sought to maintaining their language proficiency as a major motivation to participate in PDP. Then, they also looked for the expansion and update of their teaching methodologies in response to the changes in their students' needs. English teachers also expressed their desire to be acquainted with educational theories beyond pedagogy and linguistics to face their daily challenges in complex social contexts. Finally, they were eager to have spaces to share what they learned with their peers, and if possible, to receive monetary compensation or recognition for their work in the PDP.

The study confirmed how limited the opportunities for PD were at the time. The primary source of in-service teachers' learning was the local ELT conference, and the sporadic publishing companies' teacher training sessions. The participants identified pursuing graduate studies as a powerful way to grow professionally; yet, programs were scarce, expensive, and theoretically or research oriented. Finally, English teachers claimed the urgency to propose PDP that responded to the particularities of their settings and included their voices in the design (González, 2003).

These findings also showed that PDP available at the time reproduced the deficit model in education (Wallace, 2009) in which teachers required intervention to "fix" their limitations, mainly in English proficiency and ELT methodologies. In an analysis of PD in Colombia, Buendía and Macías (2019) point out that teachers' claims of many years ago still seem to

be unresolved. The authors emphasize the absence of a critical approach to teachers' PD in the country.

The Evolution of Language Education Policies in my Professional Career

The Third Landmark: The Launching and Development of the NPB

This was the first connection that I made between PD and language policies. Taking part in the preliminary stages of the formulation of the national English standards (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006b) allowed me to develop a critical view of the process. At the time, I became a member of the board of directors of the Colombian Association of Teachers of English (ASOCOPI, in Spanish). Thanks to the collective reflection in a national study on the university-based PD opportunities for English teachers, the research team gained more awareness of the connection between the policy discourses and the views of teachers' education and professional growth. We demonstrated how most PDP in the country responded more to interests of coverage over continuity and quality (Álvarez et al., 2011). Additionally, the study revealed the open view of teachers' PD from a deficit perspective, as clearly stated in Cely (2007) and Hernández (2007). To contend the top-down approaches to professional development, the research group insisted on the need of a bottom-up, democratic, and reflective framework that could support the creation of local knowledge (Cárdenas et al., 2010).

Various local and national events became spaces for interesting discussions and reflections. The 2005-2010 quinquennium was of particular importance in my understanding and analysis of the PD of Colombian English teachers. The work of colleagues from various universities represented an opportunity for consolidating and making internationally visible local knowledge around language policies and PD (Agray Vargas, 2008; Ayala & Álvarez, 2005; Cárdenas, 2006; Kostina & Hernández, 2007; Hernández & Faustino, 2006; Guerrero, 2008, 2010; Sánchez & Obando, 2008; Usma, 2009; among others). Although critical voices seemed to be predominant in the academic literature on the NPB, especially that coming from public universities, others openly advocated for the way the NPB was designed and implemented (Angarita Trujillo & Arias Castilla, 2010; Cely, 2007; Hernández, 2007). Other scholars proposed intermediate analysis of the policy (de Mejía, 2004, 2007; Herazo et al., 2012, for example).

In González (2007, 2009a, 2009b), I analyzed critically the NPB's views of English teachers' PD and teacher education. Generalizing a view of teachers, and revealing a deficit approach (Wallace, 2009) from decision makers, Colombian English teachers appeared as

incompetent professionals with limited language proficiency and inadequate methodologies (Guerrero, 2010). The Ministry of Education (MoE) announced as a primary solution the adoption of international certifications such as the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) and the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) (González, 2009b). The TKT was mentioned as the best alternative to measure the teachers' use of ELT methodologies (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006b). It was also recommended as a primary axis in the curriculum in English teachers' pre-service education. The ICELT became the holy grail of PDP for in-service English teachers. The British Council selected a group of teacher educators that, using a cascade model, committed to replicate it creating various cohorts of trainees (Angarita Trujillo & Arias Castilla, 2010). Granados (2015), Gómez Sará (2017), Le Gal (2018), and Valencia (2013) agree with the analysis in González (2009a). It is undeniable that the PD of English teachers and teacher education became a profitable business that has benefited foreign agencies, publishing, and testing companies since the beginning of the NPB (González, 2007; Usma, 2009; Valencia, 2013).

The Fourth Landmark: My Participation in the Creation of the Master's Program in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning at Universidad de Antioquia

Working with colleagues that pursued their doctoral degrees in the United States in institutions that had a critical perspective in Applied Linguistics and Education provided me with new insights on the connection of teachers' work and language policies (Shohamy, 2009). Through a study on the implementation of the NPB in the State of Antioquia, the research team gained a deep understanding of the English teachers' needs and how different stakeholders understood professional development. The different voices allowed us to comprehend the gap between the policy intentions and the real implementation of the NPB (Correa & González, 2016; Correa & Usma, 2013; Correa, Usma, & Montoya, 2014).

As part of the research line in PD to which I affiliated in the mater's program, I led a study on how English teachers understood and appropriated the NPB in urban schools in five municipalities of the Metropolitan Area of Medellín. Through the voices of the teachers, I identified the complexity of the discourses of the policy at the macro, meso, and micro level because they shaped ELT and learning (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016), teacher education and teachers' professional development (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2013). I found more elements of the imposition of the agendas (González, 2015) and traces of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006, Llurda, 2005) in a number of the PDP. I refer to this issue below.

Findings of the study reflect Day's (2005) appraisal about teachers' motivation and commitment as key components in professional growth. However, for teachers "both their working contexts and their personal values and circumstances" (p. 111) shape them. Data

showed that although individual agency is determinant, it is not enough. The influence of the working conditions and circumstances limit the teachers' room for action and reaction. Those challenges have not received enough consideration in many PDP proposals in Colombia (Alvarez et al., 2011; Chaves & Guapacha, 2016). As Agray Vargas (2008) stated it, there is an open contradiction in the language education policies. On the one hand, policies stress the necessity of having reflective, critical, and committed teachers; but on the other hand, "the actions promoted to qualify the foreign language teacher head to following unique teaching, learning, assessment, and teacher education models designed, piloted, and implemented without considering the socio-economic, political, and cultural context" (Agray Vargas, 2008, p. 355).

The Fifth Landmark: Working with International Colleagues

Research conducted at Universidad de Antioquia and in Colombia on the topic of language policies and teachers' PD from a critical stand allowed me to connect it to wider perspectives on the uses of English. This learning facilitated the exploration of World Englishes (WE) as a pluralistic approach (Kachru, 1992; Kirkpatrick, 2007). WE stress the value of plurilingual and pluricultural contexts in the definition of English, its uses, its teaching, and learning. One of the primary contributions of WE is the tenet on the value of nonnative speakers of English. The contributions of WE motivated my interest in exploring national sociolinguistic discourses about English (Schneider, 2018). Focusing my research on the Colombian context, I contributed with an update of the seminal work of Vélez-Rendón (2003). González (2020) analyzed the 2010-2020 decade relating the status of English, ELT, and language policies in the Expanding Circle. Teachers' PD and teacher education are part of the review.

Although part of the initial critical issues of the NPB lost the attention of a number of scholars, I maintained my critical view because the different names of the policy maintained a pervasive colonial approach (Pennycook, 1998) through the magnification of the work of foreign agencies and foreign teachers to guarantee the NPB success (for example, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016). A clear expression of the continuity of the NPB colonial practices in professional development, which I described in González (2007), were evident in the formulation of the *Formadores Nativos Extranjeros*[3] (Foreign native [speaker] instructors) strategy. In González and Llurda (2016), we questioned the extension of the concept of NEST to a foreign instructor who had a C1 level of proficiency in the CEFR. That strategy discriminated Colombian teachers who had the demanded profile demanded just because they were not foreigners.

[3] The title is ambiguous in Spanish. To make a grammatical phrase in English, I added the noun "speaker". According to the MoE, hiring native speakers of English was one of the assets of the strategy.

By connecting language policies and WE, I expanded the notion of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006; Llurda, 2005). Through our participation in a study of the discourses of the Latin American press on NNESTs, we found unfortunate practices that reinforced the NESTs as the ideal support for the English policy success. Through the open endorsement of the government, various countries of Latin America used native-speakerism as an academic action (González & Llurda, 2016). The frequent use of foreign scholars, teachers, teacher-training models, and the emphasis on immersion programs abroad perpetuated the superiority of foreign ideas over local approaches (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017; González, 2020). In the same line, MacKenzie (2020) concluded that native-speakerism is present in the ELT job market in the country. Viáfara (2016) concluded the same in his analysis of pre-service teachers, showing the influence of native-speakerism ideologies in teacher education.

Studying native-speakerism allowed me to explore the field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Multilingual speakers who do not have it as a common language but use it as a medium of communication (Seidlhofer, 2006, 2011) define ELF as the use of English. My understanding of ELF gained a different dimension under the influence of some Brazilian scholars. From their ELF perspective, a critical decolonial framework for ELT is an evident contribution as it underscores the ecological perspectives, promotes diverse uses of English, and challenges the power granted to native speakers and centralized theories. They have shown ELF's connection to teacher education and professional development (Duboc, 2018; Duboc & Siqueira, 2020; Gimenez et al., 2018; Siqueira, 2015).

Another important concept from Brazilian scholarship is the open questioning of the preconceived idea of language heterogeneity (Pessoa de Farias, 2015). The author demonstrates how speakers of any language tend to resist language diversity and express preconceived ideas "maintaining discourses that reject the existence of language verities" (p. 463). This position is reinforced in language education policies that stress the value of certain English varieties over others. Pessoa Farias (2015) insists on "the relevance of analyzing, discussing, and questioning the relationships between the practices and representations about a given language community. Based on them, it is possible to unveil the hidden agendas of the language policy" (p. 481).

Despite growing voices on critical perspectives in professional development, the power of the deficit approach is very strong (Harry & Klingner, 2007). Under varied fixed discourses, decolonial concepts such as WE or ELF will take a long time to be part of the PDP that teachers have access to in our country. Studies in the English periphery, such as those by Sikafis (2009, 2014) in Greece, Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015) as well as Sifakis and Bayyurt (2017) in Turkey and Greece, or Gimenez et al. (2018), could enlighten our proposals to professional development. They hold an asset-based approach that considers teachers as competent multilinguals that possess valuable teaching experience and significant knowledge of their contexts.

Conclusions and Limitations

My current understanding of PD and language education policies is the result of the five landmarks I described above. My understandings of PD, and later, of language education policies, responded initially to the theories that dominated the field. Later, through collaborative work with national and international colleagues, I developed the critical stand I currently hold. I have demonstrated through my historical self-study that English teachers' PD should respond to teachers' needs and wider connections to the real uses of the language at the social level. PDP should transcend the deficit model reflected in the national government and societal discourses. They stress individual teachers' responsibility on language learning and teaching, and therefore, on the language policy success.

Language education policies, despite the possible room for agency in their appropriation (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Menken & García, 2010), tend to perpetuate the power of certain English varieties, and therefore, favor tendencies such as native-speakerism. That power is very strong and allows limited space for teachers' action. The last quinquennium 2015-2020 shows the same power of the external policy actors because they have the governments' endorsement, and therefore, inspire credibility on many stakeholders (González & Llurda, 2016; González, 2020).

After this chronology of my work on the PD of English teachers and language education policies, I can state that my primary contribution to the field has been showing how issues of power at the macro and meso levels of the language education policy keep affecting English teachers' work in the country. This has happened mainly in public education where contexts are diverse, and inequity is evident. I have also sustained the need to challenge the colonial perspectives in ELT and PD keeping a critical stand and opening the horizons to conceptual frameworks such as WE and ELF.

As this paper reports a self-study, I am aware of the bias I may have. Some colleagues may not share my academic position as they associate it with a historical-structural approach to language education policies (Tollefson, 2002). Some may claim that I seem to deny the power of agency of policy actors in the policy appropriation process. They may say that my arguments tend to be quite deterministic of the effects of the power issues that I have underscored. Although I believe that teachers and students have the power of innovation, resistance, and contestation, I find it very limited in reality. I usually remember Sherlock Holmes idea that "there is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact".

Responding to HOW journal's question about the impact of my work, I need to be cautious. I cannot deny that holding a tenured position in a public university, acquainted with critical opinions and political debates, works in my favor. At the initial stage of the NPB, I was probably one of the first critical voices of the policy. I dared to say publicly

in different academic spaces what I found questionable, mainly in the role of the British Council. According to Íkala journal metrics, González (2007) has more than 300 national and international citations. González (2009b) and (2015) also have numerous citations on Research Gate and Academia. Maintaining that critical voice has probably made my work visible and subject to criticisms. In González (2020), and some forthcoming papers, I extend the critical lens to the educational language policy because I have seen very little change in the official discourses and the decisions made at national and local levels about ELT and teachers' professional development. However, I keep my spirits high about the future. One day, we will have new directions in the language education policies; therefore, there will be changes in the PD of English teachers.

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Local Identity Studies of Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation in ELT

Estudios Locales de Identidad sobre la Diversidad de Género y la Orientación Sexual en la Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

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Abstract

While it is true that identity studies on the intersection between gender and sexual orientations with language teaching and learning are not new in the local context, the systematization of these studies as a body of knowledge is scarce. This article presents, first of all, a systematization of reference frameworks for this type of studies in historical perspective. Secondly, it presents a reflection on the collective achievements in this field of study. Finally, the article concludes with a brief reflection on potential actions at the research and pedagogical levels.

Keywords: ELT, identity, gender, sexual orientation

Resumen

Si bien es cierto que los estudios identitarios sobre la intersección entre el género y las orientaciones sexuales con la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lenguas no son nuevos en el contexto local, la sistematización de estos estudios como un cuerpo de conocimiento es escasa. Este artículo presenta, en primer lugar, una sistematización de los marcos de referencia para este tipo de estudios en perspectiva histórica. En segundo lugar, presenta una reflexión sobre los logros colectivos en este campo

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de estudio. Finalmente, el artículo culmina con una breve reflexión sobre potenciales acciones a nivel investigativo y pedagógico.

Palabras clave: ELT, identidad, género, orientación sexual

Introduction

This special issue celebrates HOW journal's 25 years of numbered issues. This is an extraordinary moment to trace back what has been achieved by the Colombian Association of Teachers of English –ASOCOPI-- and by Colombian scholarly work around specific English language teaching (ELT) topics and trends. In that line of celebration, the annual ASOCOPI congress and to a certain extent the journal HOW have become the forum wherein the interphase between gender and ELT has been examined. This year, the world also celebrates the 52nd anniversary of the well-known Stonewall riots in New York (USA) that signaled new avenues for understanding non-normative sexualities and genders. "While there is little doubt that the Stonewall riots changed the trajectory of the gay rights movement, it is less clear as to why they gained a worldwide significance" (D'Emilio, 2002, in Varga, Beck, & Thornton, 2019, p. 35). Questioning what has happened locally and what stories have been told are important. This is useful to locate within a broader social panorama research studies which discover, also locally, the connections between gender and ELT.

This paper then briefly describes theoretical frameworks that have been used to account for identity issues related to educational contexts of language teaching and learning. By way of reflection, this is an approach to studies carried out in my line of research that needs to be complemented with other local studies not referenced in this article and that will be considered in a later study. The article ends with the introduction of ideas for a broad research program and potential pedagogical actions. The resulting curricular implications of research about this particular interrelation (e.g., gender and ELT) are likely to generate more questions than answers.

Gender, the LGBTIQ+ Context and Language Learning

Data taken from the 2020 Human Rights Bulletin by *Colombia Diversa* (colombiadiversa.org), the organization that fights for LGBTIQ+ rights in the country, demonstrate that over the last year homicides and feminicides have been committed (around 75); furthermore, threats and intimidations of different forms affected around 24 LGBTIQ+ people. Then, police violence against this community was registered (around 27 cases), and gender misrepresentation and errors in published news about LGTBIQ+ people have resulted in stigmatization. This is the first time that *Colombia Diversa* has introduced a "geostatistical analysis of data showing specific contextual factors that increase the risk of violence against LGBT people".

Although this statistical information is fundamental to understand what is happening, thinking about educational contexts is still necessary, in particular about those in which foreign languages are taught. It seems also necessary to understand gender discrimination and discrimination based on sexual orientation occurring in language classrooms.

Most research papers on gender and language learning begin by making conceptual clarifications as to the difference between sex and gender within the framework of language and its uses. In the white and Western feminist line, there are classic works that begin with a reflection on the relationship between gender and language (Sunderland, 2006; Talbot, 2010; Coates, 2011; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013) explaining this from perspectives of dominance (language supporting patriarchal societies), deficit (women being less sophisticated in terms of language use), and difference (stereotyped uses of language by women and men). There are also works that go beyond this discussion and analyze gender and language from a political and discursive perspective adding ideas of sexuality, such as the works of Butler (2004, 2011, 2015), Cameron (2006), and Cameron and Kulick (2006). Finally, there are works that focus on the intersection of gender and the learning of foreign languages such as German, French, and English. These works include classic feminist authors such as Litosseliti (2006) and Sunderland (1992, 1998, 2000, 2004).

Framing (Gender & LGBTIQ+) Identity(ies) Studies

By way of balance, it is possible to argue that a good part of the above cited works is based on a heterosexist gender perspective that denounces the subordination of women. Nevertheless, the broad background of these works can be found in trends of thought that studies identities comprehensively and that discusses distinguishable epistemological frameworks. For the study of identities and, by extension, of gender and LGBTIQ+ identities, three broad frameworks can be considered: (1) modern, (2) postmodern, and (3) the geopolitics of knowledge.

The Modern Framework

The modern framework for the study of identities essentially seeks explanations based on the establishment of patterns. This perspective calls for the stabilization and generalization of stages that add up one by one to form an identity. Three approaches stand out within this framework. They are the evolutionary approach (Hall, 1904), the phenomenological approach (Taylor, 1992), and the cultural approach (Berger & Luckman, 2008). The evolutionary approach is based on the recapitulation theory that recognizes humanity as universal and inseparable from its natural condition. As a result, identity goes through formative steps that every human being goes through. The phenomenological approach understands identity as a phenomenon that is generalizable to all human beings. Although

identity is based on personal experience, this experience is natural, essential, and inevitable. The cultural approach understands identity manifestations from the relationship between the self and morality. Identity in this framework is defined by shared horizons of meaning that determines what is valuable and good. In other words, identity codes are universally shared. Within this perspective, a series of gender roles are socially differentiated and considered immovable. It also crosses the lines of the medicalized and biological discourse. This is the reason for the identification of oppositions comparing male and female brains, skills or abilities, and also those that are constructed under the idea that women are better at languages compared to men.

The Postmodern Framework

The postmodern framework of identity consists of four main approaches: performative, discursive, technological, and genealogical. The performative approach is based representatively on the scholarly and reflexive work of Butler (2015) and Preciado (2008). To perform is basically to present identity as a dramatic act, like a scene in a play. Goffman (1959, p. 40) argues that "while in the presence of others, the individual infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure." This basically allows affirming that identity as performativity is critical and socially situated. This presents a great challenge to the school system and to the foreign language classroom: a number of performances may be desirable in specific contexts. Hence, the school regulates the way bodies perform their multiple identities. The presentation of the self is often subjected to the gaze of the other, which is why language teachers and students with non-normative genders and sexualities become undesirable in the regulated school system. This corresponds to the idea of gender stabilization that Butler (2015) explores by stating that the "disciplinary production of gender effects a false stabilization of gender in the interest of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain" (p. 172). This leads to the understanding of (gender) identity from a discursive perspective: "if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed in the surface of bodies, then it seems that gender can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (Butler, 2015, p. 174).

From the discursive approach, which favors studies related to the gender identities of foreign language teachers and students with non-normative sexualities, Hall's (2011) contribution is pivotal. Identity has become a catch-all concept that corresponds to modernity. Therefore, Hall (2011) proposes to consider rather the processes of identification. According to the author, "the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed - always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned" (Hall, 2011, p. 2). The author uses the metaphor of suture. A suture is a stich or a row of stiches that join the edges of a wound. Similarly, identity can

be understood as a suture that holds two edges together: the subject and the structure. Thus, the suture is not something permanent but temporary, giving rise to the multiple existence of sutures that unravel over time. If this metaphor is accepted, then identity is evanescent, temporary and not fixed or determined. Hall (2011) argues that he uses the term identity,

> To refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (Hall, 2011, p. 6)

Discursive practices generate discursive formations (Foucault, 2002). Genealogy allows discovering how these discursive formations have been configured over time and have tended to stabilize. This is why, faced with the study of gender and LGBTIQ+ identities of foreign language students and teachers, it is important to recognize how discourses have been appropriated in school contexts. This is achieved by examining educational policies in general, and in particular, sex and gender education policies. The latter have been defended by the conservative extreme right in our country, which has prevented progress in sex education to embrace gender diversity. Just as Hall (2011) uses the metaphor of the suture, Haraway (1985) uses the metaphor of the chimera to reflect on the evanescent nature of identity. A chimera, in the Greek mythological tradition, is constructed by a lion's head, the body of a goat, and the tail of a snake. It is an identity conundrum that resembles a fracture of identity itself, i.e., identity is not monolithic. The chimera in the framework of technology is a cyborg. The cyborg transgresses the Cartesian identity image that individuals are mind and body. In this sense, the cyborg dilutes identity binarism that totalizes discursive images, for example, gender and sexual orientations. The cyborg technological condition that fuses the human and the machine makes identity something chimerical with an unmeasurable sense of hybridity.

In addition, considering queer theories is important and meaningful for all these proposals for queer gender studies relating sexual orientations as well. One example lies in the emergence of global queer theological theories that have been challenging the canonical reading of the scriptures of various religions (Cheng, 2013; Shore-Goss, 2019). All these approaches constitute different frameworks for the study of identities in general, and in particular of gender and LGBTIQ+ identities. However, despite the anti-essentialist character of the approaches of the postmodern framework, the framework of the geopolitics of knowledge puts in dispute all these approaches that disagree from a perspective of historicity.

The Geopolitics of Knowledge

In analyzing how the knowledge that circulates in the Western world has been constituted, Grosfoguel (2013) determined the supremacy of a type of knowledge historically instituted

despite the existence, survival, or annihilation of others. This is what he calls epistemicide. In light of gender and LGBTIQ+, it is worth asking: where do the contemporary understandings of gender, sex, sexual orientation, gay, lesbian, transgender, etc., come from? Perhaps we speak of modern understandings that hinder other types of understandings that have not achieved, for many reasons, a state of universalizing circulation and appropriation. In a nutshell, this is what gives rise to reflections of the decolonial perspective whose origins cannot be explained, for reasons of space, in this brief presentation of interpretative frameworks of identities. However, within this anti-colonial stance, there are possibilities to speak of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007), of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), of knowledge (Lander, 2000) and, of course, of the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2008). It is important to remember that interculturality (Walsh, 2007) is also part of this position.

Regarding gender, within the decolonial framework there has also been colonialism; issues related to modern gender and LGBTIQ+ identities have gone through great struggles against subjection. Part of that history has been constructed by decolonial feminisms within which there are different positions and strands, especially in Latin America.

Some Latin-American Decolonial Feminist Views about Gender

I present below other views on gender issues that could be considered a body of knowledge constituting a decolonial turn on future gender studies about social and cultural contexts and, with emphasis, about educational and foreign language learning contexts.

Segato (2010) introduces the idea of gender genocide. This is due to the fact that there is a supremacy of its conceptualization mainly from white and middle-class perspectives. This would also apply critically to the representativeness of LGBTIQ+ identities. Segato's reflection claims, from the decolonial turn, an epistemological status for the category of gender that is not rooted in Eurocentrism or Anglocentrism. This implies thinking about a multifaceted re-existence of gender. Therefore, the task for applied linguistics to foreign language teaching lies in digging into the history of its own analytical categories, such as gender, in order to conduct inter-epistemic dialogues.

In relation to gender-related epistemological absences, Marcos (2014) puts forward a broad agenda for decolonial feminisms. She includes not only her concern for the marginalization of indigenous groups but also for the climatic and environmental affectation that the action of neoliberal political programs has brought as a consequence. In a lively way, Marcos (2014) points to contemporary processes of dispossession. What happens in contemporary foreign language classrooms is a continuous dispossession of gender. That is, bodies are hollowed out of their gender in favor of the technical teaching of language for communication. This means that in actual pedagogical practice, transmissive foreign language

learning environments are created that forget social identity traits such as gender and sexual orientations. One can learn from indigenous feminisms that life itself is embodied. Thinking of foreign language teaching as an embodied process is something that the discipline should consider carefully.

For Lugones (2008), "categorial naming constructs what it names" (Lugones, 2008, p. 81). Therefore, in thinking about gender, one is constructing specific identities from specific frameworks of understanding. This is why Lugones (2008) calls for thinking about categories such as patriarchy, heterosexuality, and biological dimorphism within contemporary social relations and their roles in the colonial domination of gender. This questions the homogenization and emptiness of some intersections co-opted by modernity that perpetuate the masculine, white and Christian and, in that sense, the hierarchical and patriarchal. Finally, Mendoza (2016) contributes to the understanding of diverse decolonial feminisms where there is the Latin American perspective with various trends and streams as well as feminisms from other latitudes that fight against contemporary colonialisms such as the English and French.

Knowledge Constructed within the Research Interest of (Gender & LGBTIQ+) Identity Studies and ELT

In accepting the invitation to write about my achievements in this field of study, I considered it important to say that this is not a personal accomplishment. Therefore, in this section, where the learning gained is storied, there is an interweaving of not only my personal research but also of the finished research studies that I have advised at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This means that I will move from the personal "I" to the collective "we" using an essayistic style. In this way, the efforts of my students and colleagues who have engaged in the dynamics of trying to comprehend the intersection between gender-diverse identities and the learning and teaching of foreign languages are acknowledged.

The epistemological frameworks presented in the previous sections have oriented, over time, the research work presented in Figures 1 and 2 below. Special reference is made to the postmodern frameworks of identity and in recent years to the decolonial perspective. The learning about the intersection between gender/LGBTIQ+ identities and the context of foreign language learning and teaching are relevant from a local perspective.

A general characterization of the research work conducted over the past two decades shows a strong concern with representations of gender/LGBTIQ+ identities. Gender representations show the heteronormative tension that opposes the masculine to the feminine. For example, textbooks and materials used for teaching seem to be constructed from that discursive dichotomy. This means that genders are represented in traditional

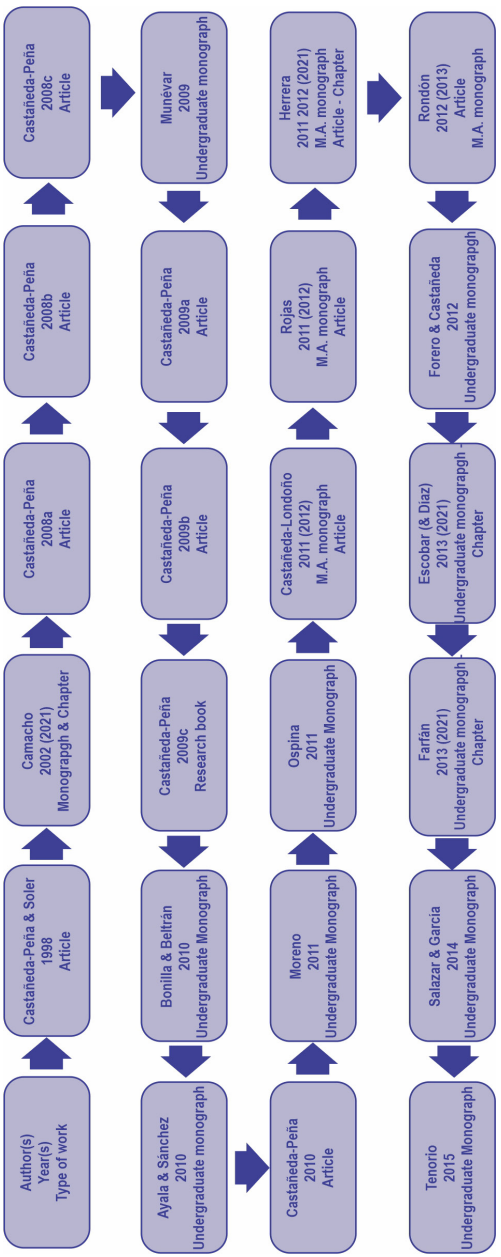

Figure 1. Chronological research studies and academic production on Gender/LGBTIQ+ identities & ELT (1998-2015)

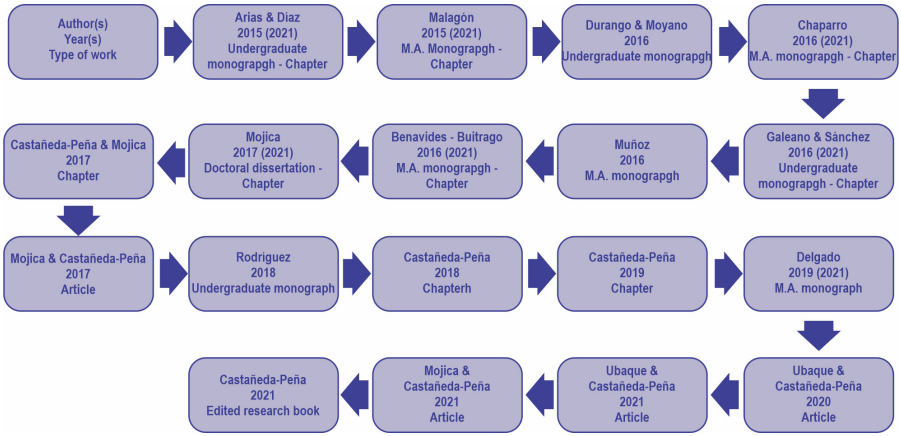

Figure 2. Chronological research studies and academic production on Gender/LGBTIQ+ identities & ELT (2015-2021)

ways perpetuating traditional roles for both men and women. This heteronormative vision conveys an ideology that is harmful to language teachers and students who do not see themselves as identified or represented in the heterosexual school discourse. However, there are traces of rebellion against this heteronormative matrix and there are teaching materials that challenge the binary representation. This opens an important research space where the invitation is to move from investigating representations to investigating what is done with such representations in the language classroom. That is to say, when faced with a gender identity representation, both teachers and students of languages can assume it critically or can resist it in multiple ways.

Representations of LGBTIQ+ identities are less recurrent in foreign language teaching materials; however, they already exist. This can be a positive development. As important as the inclusion of other identities related to diverse sexual orientations is, so is being cautious about it. That inclusion may correspond to universal movements about sexual education with which Colombia's educational policy has aligned. That alignment can impact the thematic curriculum of foreign language programs. Including issues of gender diversity with a universalizing perspective may cause identity itself to be co-opted by modernity. This is an important critique to keep in mind as the identity experience is not necessarily the same for all gender-diverse subjects. Therefore, one can politically and correctly begin to accept

diverse subjects without necessarily understanding their life experiences. Consequently, we can be dealing with the construction of tolerated subjects but co-opted identities.

The ideas presented in classroom materials also translate well to the didactic designs of foreign language classes and the interactions that those designs promote. In the classroom contexts investigated, we can thoroughly demonstrate how an activity designed by the teacher can, probably unintentionally, propose a context of confrontation of the sexes from a heteronormative viewpoint. A classic example is class competitions in which women and men race against each other. Another example is the debates used to defend grammatically and communicatively ideas around a topic. What sometimes goes unnoticed are the ideologies imposed on students via forcing them to defend or oppose specific topics. It is within these activity designs that the classroom environment can be most unhealthy in relation to non-normative genders and sexualities. This can happen in two ways. First, this is when a topic on gender or sex-gender diversity is made explicit in the language class in order to develop reading, writing, speaking or listening activities. That is, the ideologies communicated may be disrespectful of that diversity. The point here is to further examine what both teachers and students do with what is expressed in the classroom interaction. Second, the topic of the class is not necessarily geared to address gender issues, but in the interaction heterosexist ideologies explicitly emerge. This is another moment of apprenticeship that we still need to document further in order to guide the initial education of foreign language teachers or their continuing education.

Consequently, what we have learned is that examining the interface between gender diversity and language learning goes far beyond thinking about what is masculine and what is feminine and their interrelationships. We have learned that we need other epistemological frameworks that allow us to understand not only the masculine and the feminine but also gender diversity and the multiplicity of sexual orientations. At the beginning, we thought that these discursively constructed identities could be apprehended by looking at them from discourses of multiplicity, thinking that moving from the singular to the plural was simply necessary. That is, we argued the need to think not about masculinity but about masculinities. Thinking not about femininity but femininities also became necessary. However, this framework of thought retained a binary perspective that was also important to overcome. This led us to think that these analytical categories of gender diversity were co-opted by a colonial-modern mission. The fundamental task ahead was to decolonize the very epistemology that had guided us in our research work.

This leads us to think not only about the contexts investigated but also about the methodologies used for this purpose. Regarding the contexts, it is clear at this point that language learning cannot be reduced to the intentional pedagogical actions carried out in the language classroom. Language learning experiences do not simply happen in the language classroom; rather, they go much further and remain inked on the skin and are carried in

the body over time. It is this corporeality of gender diversity that manifests itself in both public and private contexts where limits are blurred. Understanding this corporeality makes us step out of the bubble of gender and sexual diversity to try to understand them in an intersectional way. This means that gender diversity and sexual orientation do not operate in isolation. This reality manifests itself in an intersectional way, not as a sum of parts or identity features but as an unimaginable raveling of possibilities and potentialities. Therefore, we could assume intersectionality as a potentiality. Intersectionality, as coined by Crenshaw (1989), operates as a framework of analysis originally used to bring the intersection between "sex" and race out of marginalization. Over time this notion of intersectionality has evolved and other types of intersections have been investigated. Thus, what we perceive is that just as the boundaries of contexts have been blurred, the same should have happened with contemporary analytical categories. This makes us think that being disruptive conceptually and methodologically about hierarchies and oppositions within the knowledge generated in identity studies is necessary. This disruption is paramount to understand differently the intersection of the identities of gender diversity and sexual orientations in the field of foreign language learning and teaching.

In relation to the methodological aspect, we have seen that Latin American feminist positions challenge traditional forms of knowledge. This coincides with the decolonial position that questions the method itself. In particular, and based on a discursive and performative understanding of gender, we have mainly used critical and narrative methodologies. However, in the spirit of continuing to learn, questioning the method is also essential. There is a tendency to queer the method that is based primarily on a careful examination of how methodologies to study race and methodologies to study gender fall into the trap of the heterosexist matrix. Another argument arises from the eagerness of national policies when forced to respond to sexual diversity and that have ended up establishing homonormativity (Sabsay, 2012, 2016), ignoring a more faithful subjective sense of diversity. The intention of this self-criticism is to avoid falling into a colonial logic of both the method and the interpretative framework. Within this debate, it is worthwhile asking ourselves what is the way forward to avoid falling into such a methodological prison. We believe that the first thing to do is to disrupt the knowledge we claim to possess and try to unlearn. A second possible step is to try to find innovative ways to get out of the extractivist logic to obtain data. If the intention is to co-construct knowledge, traditional methods such as interviews, observation, and surveys, among others, deserve to have a multi-significance. The purpose is not to give voice to others or to obtain information from others but rather to learn with others. This intention implies another type of relationality among those who participate in a research process. The question that remains unanswered is how to challenge extractivist logics and how to reach relationships that untie hierarchies. In the same line of thought, both narrative and autobiographical studies need to examine whether the knowledge generated is located

in modern logics. For example, Pazargadi, (2019, p. 142) affirms that "empathetic witnessing […] forms a key element in applying the narrative approach because it uses life stories to increase awareness of counternarratives, enables students to search for identification with others, and promotes their mutual transformation to understand one another." There is a clear invitation to learning to listen to each other rather than claiming that one (the researcher) is giving someone else a voice. Some disruptive methodological proposals in that sense include bricolage (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steimberg, 2011), communal reflection and reciprocal talk (Ortiz & Arias, 2019), as well as the democratic approach (Haber, 2011).

Moving Forward

No matter how difficult the central theme of the research described here is, building together local knowledge in identity studies of gender diversity and sexual orientation, which connects with the teaching and learning of foreign languages and vice versa, is priceless. Arguably, that knowledge could go beyond research findings and beyond the communication of "scientific" knowledge. A practical side is needed to enable pedagogical action by revisiting pedagogies of foreign language teaching and pedagogies of initial and continuing education of language teachers. The critical and decolonial historicization of these language education programs in order to understand the discursive formations around gender diversity and sexual orientations is a pending task to be undertaken for a curricular transformation. In relation to curricular changes and transformations, Beemyn (2014, p. 111) states that "raising questions about how we understand gender-nonconforming people historically allows for a more nuanced analysis of the construction of gender and gender systems over time". In reality, we do not know clearly how modern categories coming from contemporary colonial gender perspectives were inserted into our profession. It is not a question of gender visibility. It is rather a matter of recognizing and welcoming subjectivities that are diverse.

From a language pedagogy perspective, we have been reflecting on ways of acting out educationally that are broad in their formulation and have no pretension of becoming an instructional dogma. In other words, we are not formulating the pedagogical perspective for teaching foreign languages within a gender perspective. We are sharing ideas in the hope of bringing language pedagogy itself out of the closet. These ideas or transformative practices could destabilize the possibility of a fixed pedagogical performance on the part of the language teacher or the language teacher educator. Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2021) describe some of these transformative practices in relation to language teacher education.

LGBTIQ+ Transformative Actions

We insist that these transformation-oriented pedagogical practices are not simply formulas for descriptively developing the act of teaching and learning a foreign language.

Rather, they are a pedagogical resignification of modern terms of gender diversity and sexual orientations stemming from modernity (e.g., LGBTIQ+). The purpose is to suggest pedagogical ways that otherwise welcome diversity in general and that, in one way or another, comprise an ethical attitude. This ethical attitude is a way to avoid the continuing epistemicide of gender and sexual orientations that contemporarily inhabit foreign language classrooms.

Locating – Guaranteeing – Becoming – Transforming - Inviting – Questioning

Locating issues of gender or sexual orientation in the discourses and representations circulating in classrooms can be difficult for some language teachers. However, appropriating this transformative practice could contribute to identifying potential moments of reflection and learning in the school context in general and by extension in the context of language teaching and learning.

Guaranteeing involves creating language learning environments that are healthy for teachers and students who possess non-conforming gender identities. This certainly implies language teachers becoming literate in relation to gender and sexual orientation diversity.

Becoming gender literate. This means not only awareness but also education with respect to the various subjective manifestations of gender and sexual orientations. Therefore, initial and continuing education curricula for language teachers could include, not marginally but centrally, topics, reflections, and pedagogical activities around these diversity issues.

Transforming canonical understandings of gender and sexual orientation identities discursively and within the language curriculum. Permanent reflection plays a pivotal role in this transformative sense. In other words, we move from reflection to practical action.

Inviting guest speakers to offer the opportunity to share pedagogical experiences and reflections on gender diversity and sexual orientations. This transformative pedagogical practice is anchored in the experience of others which, as presented in this article, is growing in the local ELT community. A growing number of Colombian researchers are addressing the interface between gender and foreign language teaching/learning. Their research surely contributes in multiple and multifaceted ways to ELT gender identity and sexual orientation studies in the country. Furthermore, people who can contribute with their empirical experience or from other disciplines may be invited. This knowledge can add enormously to the education of pre-service and in-service teachers in our area of ELT.

Questioning the curriculum in general and the types of content, communication contexts, and activities that are developed in language teacher education courses and language classes is perhaps one of the most pedagogically-relevant and transformative activities. In this sense, cultivating the critical and decolonial mind of teacher educators and pre-service and in-service teachers becomes important. Criticality could focus on understanding the subjectivities present in the classroom from a perspective of gender and sexual orientations that are subjugated by normalized practices of the exercise of power. Decoloniality is present in alert minds capable of distinguishing epistemological positionings related to gender and to the dispossession of diverse sex-gender identities.

Taking into consideration all these things allows us to establish that we are far from understanding many angles of the intersection between language learning and teaching and identity studies that focus on gender diversity and sexual orientations. This is where the "+" symbol of LGBTIQ makes sense, not from a perspective of addition but of intersectionality. This raises further questions that open up local research programs that can be integrated into a national and Latin American research agenda.

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Reconstructing a Personal Story about Being a Teacher Educator and a Researcher

Reconstruyendo una Historia Personal sobre Ser un Educador de Profesores e Investigador

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Abstract

This article presents an autoethnographic exercise focused on exploring my history as a teacher educator and researcher in ELT. With this article, I try to show, starting from my life experiences as a teacher and the different concerns that arose during them, my transformation as a researcher. Likewise, I analyze how these transformations are also derived from working with the pre-service English language teachers belonging to a research seedbed focused on doing autoethnographic research. Similarly, I show how my research work has helped others to establish a context for their research. Finally, the reflections derived from my experiences and what I learned while co-investigating in the research seedbed led me to see that continuing to work on the transformation of ELT education in Colombia is necessary.

Keywords: autoethnography, being a researcher, being a teacher educator, English language teacher education, pre-service English language teachers

Resumen

Este artículo presenta un ejercicio autoetnográfico centrado en explorar mi historia como educador de profesores de inglés e investigador en este mismo contexto. Con este artículo intento mostrar mi transformación como investigador a partir de mis experiencias de vida como docente y las diferentes inquietudes que surgieron durante estas experiencias. Asimismo, analizo cómo estas transformaciones

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se derivan del trabajo con los profesores de inglés en formación pertenecientes a un semillero de investigación enfocado a hacer investigación autoetnográfica. De manera similar, muestro cómo mi trabajo de investigación ha ayudado a otros a establecer un contexto para su investigación. Finalmente, las reflexiones derivadas de mis experiencias y lo aprendido mientras co-investigaba en el semillero de investigación me llevan a ver que es necesario seguir trabajando en la transformación de la educación de los profesores de inglés en Colombia.

Palabras clave: autoetnografía, ser investigador, ser educador de profesores, formación de profesores de inglés, profesores de inglés en formación

Introduction

The initial education of English language teachers in Colombia has undergone key transformations and advances in recent years. As a result, more and more scholars are interested in exploring this field and promoting meaningful changes to the teaching of English and the professional development of pre-service English language teachers (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2021). As a teacher educator, I have focused my work on pre-service English language teachers' experiences and how those experiences enact the construction of their teacher *self*. My growing interest in this topic arose from my own experiences as a pre-service English language teacher and a teacher educator. In these two roles, I have had encounters and disagreements in an academic sense that have led me to ensure that research in this field is not only necessary but imperative in the Colombian context.

I decided to write this article in the form of an autoethnography because I understood that this way of writing allows me to connect my personal *self* with the immersive culture in the context of which I am a part (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011). This autoethnography is a part of the reflective and critical process that I started a few years ago. This process intersects my being as a teacher educator within the context of initial teacher education programs in which those who work in it promote injustices and inequalities, most of the time without noticing it. For example, in Colombia, there is a strong tendency for initial teacher education programs to focus "on transferring a set of predetermined, preselected and presequenced body of knowledge from the teacher educator to the pre-service teacher" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 216). The above results in the fragmentation of knowledge and the imposition of attitudes derived from the native-speaker myth, which generates rejection of those who do not achieve the native-like level of English (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2018). Furthermore, there is a strong tendency to promote the use of decontextualized materials aimed at the colonization of knowledge, power, knowledge, and being (Nuñez-Pardo, 2020). Exploring my own story, interwoven with other people's stories, lets me see the context of initial teacher education from different angles and acknowledge the voices of pre-service English language teachers from their own inquires about their identity and their "*selves*" (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2020).

Since the primary intention of this article is to establish those points of discussion and topics of interest that I have been developing, I will begin by recounting my journey from being a pre-service English language teacher to becoming a teacher educator. The previous to establish the origin of my interest and how those experiences lived in the different contexts have led me to be interested in initial teacher education. Below, I will describe how researching these topics has helped my students, in the undergraduate program, to understand themselves and their contexts. In the same way, I will make a couple of observations about the work of other Colombian researchers in harmony with my topics of interest. Finally, I will present my current ideas and suggestions for the field of English language teacher education and conclusions of this autoethnographic exercise.

Stories that Trigger my Interest in Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Experiences in Initial Teacher Education

The idea of being a teacher had been going around in my head since I was in high school, and I had not considered having a technical or office job. However, a number of personal circumstances led me to study a technical undergraduate program in computer programing. As soon as I finished it, I realized that I did not want to follow that career. In 2000, I enrolled in the initial program for teachers of Spanish and English at Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia, which due to my weak economic conditions became a challenge. At first, my expectations were high regarding what I wanted to learn. I hoped to improve my English proficiency level a lot as I was convinced that only then I would get a good job when I graduated.

In the same way, I had been instructed on how to be efficient as a teacher, preparing my classes, adapting or creating materials, and making assessments that tracked my students' progress. Many of these skills were connected to the provisions of the theories related to language, learning, and teaching conceived by academics from the global North[2]. I did not know it at the time, but I had been the object of colonization of being (in my identity as a teacher and English language speaker), of knowledge (assuming that what was in the books was the only option about teaching), and of power (having been subjected to follow what is established as the correct procedure in English language teaching) (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2007).

[2] In this document, the global North is not understood as a geographical region of the world, but as an on-to-epistemological positioning founded on the white male Eurocentric traditions and knowledge base. This global North has been the dominant tradition for many centuries and has been the author of epistemological oppressions in the global South (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2008; Quijano, 2007).

In 2012, I started my career as a teacher educator. This event was a turning point since I had become involved with educating future teachers. In these first experiences, I had to self-adjust to what the program expected of me. At a private university, the pre-service English teachers are expected to be given a quality education[3]. Still, some of them just hoped to pass the subjects and get a professional degree. Some did not even think about the possibility of being teachers. They only focused on learning languages and carrying out activities other than teaching. This worrying fact made me wonder about the teaching profession and how it was being viewed from the outside, how its students saw it, and if they felt like pre-service teachers. As I have related in a previous paper (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2020), being a tutor in the teaching practicum contributed to my growing concerns. My practices became structured and attached to colonial ways of doing (decontextualized English teaching methods) and being (imaginaries of what it means to be a good teacher), which I was in charge of spreading with others in the teaching practicum. It was then that I started looking for other ways to explore this field and, in 2016, I decided that I should start my Ph.D. studies as an alternative to understanding everything that was worrying me.

Initially, my interest was to develop a critical research project; however, I still had a long way to go before I came to consider myself a critical researcher. My initial idea was to find out how pre-service English language teachers put public policies on bilingualism into practice and reflected on their teaching practicum. As time passed, I immersed myself in the Ph.D. seminars, and new reading assignments, and the discussions around teacher education and the language teacher; these were from perspectives unknown to me until that moment. Theories such as poststructuralism and decoloniality made me understand that I had been limiting myself to reporting on the actions of pre-service English language teachers in their teaching practicum. I needed to restructure my way of conceiving research and how I have approached it to contribute to the visibilization of pre-service English language teachers in their teacher identity construction.

The research carried out together with a colleague led us to understand a little more the feeling of the pre-service English language teachers during their teaching practicum (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernandez, 2018). One of the important points extracted from this work has to do with the difficulties that pre-service teachers may encounter when trying to connect theory with practice. As a result, we realized that they demanded more support and spaces to reflect on and share this reflection. In the same way, we found that ELT education programs should reconsider how they are structuring academic spaces for language teaching and teaching practicum, avoiding the spread of ideologies that promote

[3] In Colombia, the Ministry of National Education (MEN in Spanish) has established the criteria for granting high-quality accreditation to universities or specialties. These criteria respond to a neoliberal policy established in university education with which entering the world university rankings is intended and thus being part of the world market for higher education (Mintz, 2021; Olsen & Peters, 2005).

English as a strategy for entering the globalized world. The results of this study were a trigger for what would be my research interest, understanding the processes of construction of the identity of the pre-service English language teachers, even before they began their university studies.

Intending to go deeper into their perceptions of the process of becoming English language teachers, I conducted another small-scale study (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2019). In that article, I tried to make the voices of the participants stand out more. Among the main findings, I would like to highlight the pre-service English language teachers' position vis-à-vis their profession. Despite not agreeing with many issues happening throughout the course of their major, they expressed hope for the future of the English teaching profession by alluding many times to the principles of critical pedagogy. Furthermore, the pre-service English language teachers felt a great responsibility on their shoulders and a commitment to education with their current and future students. This study meant to review my practices again since another of its findings indicated that teacher educators are also responsible for the transformations that the teaching profession has undergone and the perceptions that society, in general, has had and still has of pre-service English language teachers and English teachers. For this, I had to resort to research methodologies that were not frequently used, which allowed me to establish a horizontal relationship with the pre-service English language teachers. A research methodology with which they felt safe to tell their stories and analyze their context.

Learning and Unlearning from my Story and those of Others

After an exploration and conversations with national and international scholars, I found in autoethnography an alternative to what I had been looking for. I fully understand that autoethnography is an introspective research methodology by which an attempt is made to deeply explain the surrounding culture from lived experiences (Holman Jones et al., 2013; Castañeda-Trujillo, 2020). Additionally, I found in autoethnography a research-oriented pedagogy, which implies the use of autoethnography as an embodied teaching practice through a series of planned activities that lead pre-service English language teachers to investigate their experiences through writings using the tenets of autoethnography (Alexander, 2013; Yazan, 2019). Therefore, I decided to create a research seedbed with pre-service English language teachers interested in understanding themselves as teachers and the contexts in which they work. Working with these pre-service English language teachers and researchers from the research seedbed contributed to my reflection on being a teacher-educator and being a researcher while discovering what made them English teachers.

The constant work and conversations between the different groups that made up the research seedbed were consolidated in collaborative autoethnographic writing. The various

groups took my published work as a basis to make their analysis. Peynado Muleth and Morales Triviño (2021), for example, focused their collaborative autoethnographic writing(s) on finding those experiences that led them to decide to be English teachers. They found that, despite the image they have of the teaching profession, which is not the best for many people, they felt satisfied to be on the path of becoming teachers due to the income and social status granted. In the same sense, Méndez Garzón and Díaz González (2021) oriented their inquiry to explore their *self*, trying to reconstruct who they are from their life stories and connect those through collaborative autoethnography. They found that, although they had different backgrounds, their identities were being formed mainly by the experiences lived within the program, especially in the teaching practicum. Another pre-service English language teacher carried out a solo autoethnographic research in which she explored her being and becoming an English teacher based on her experience in the ELT program (Ramírez Suarez & Castañeda-Trujillo, 2021). In this study, the researcher expressed how her desire to be a teacher was stronger despite the vision that many may have about the teaching profession and the difficulties that she overcame to be a teacher. These difficulties are related to the teaching styles that teacher educators have and may not allow future teachers' full professional development.

In the same fashion, Ariza Quiñones et al., (2021) inquired about their own experiences as pre-service English language teachers in the teaching practicum. Using field diaries and constant reflective encounters, the four members of this group analyzed the contributions of the teaching practicum to the construction of their identity as English teachers in real time. Although the confinement derived from Covid-19 crisis affected their experience during the process, the researchers could finish their analysis. They found that the roles of the supervisor of the teaching practicum and the mentor teacher were fundamental to give meaning to the teaching practicum, especially when they perceived the significant gap between theory and practice. Likewise, the researchers recognized themselves as producers of pedagogical knowledge and emphasized that it was through the process of their autoethnographic writing that they realized this fact (Lesmes & Molina, 2020).

Other researchers took their experiences as au pairs in the United States as the basis for their collaborative autoethnography (for instance, Campos Campos et al., 2021). These researchers found that their experiences were significant for both the positive and the negative. These experiences contributed to their process of becoming teachers of English. For example, as the three researchers from the research seedbed faced discrimination due to their Latin origin and their accent, they reflected on the language policies that demand compliance with specific requirements regarding the use of English. Realizing that the experiences of the three pre-service English teachers (who were also the researchers) were connected to raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015), they reflected on their practices and analyzed the ideologies they had spread as absolute truths within the English classroom until that

moment. Some of these ideologies create gaps between native and non-native speakers, promoting more discrimination and injustices in ELT. This collaborative autoethnographic study led the researchers to think that changing the way of looking at English teaching in Colombia was necessary as well as recognizing themselves as valid speakers of English and avoiding comparisons with other speakers in terms of English variety, whether they are native or not, or come from an English-speaking or non-English speaking country.

I find it necessary to explain my role in the abovementioned studies by the members of the research seedbed. Although the research design of these studies was autoethnography or collaborative autoethnography, a space in which students understood the implications of these methodologies was required. To achieve this, I opened discussion groups based on academic texts related to the critical perspective of education, the narrative turn, and autoethnography as a research method. While the collaborative groups, formed by the members of the seedbed, wrote their stories, we, the members of the seedbed and I, held meetings in which my main role was to guide the conversation about the ethnographic analysis of their experiences. Towards the final part of each study, the collaborative groups decided on the orientation they would give to their study and the structure they would use to write it. Finally, as the research seedbed, we decided to participate in academic events to share what we found and experience the reactions of other pre-service English language teachers, teacher educators, and English teachers. Being part of these studies by the research group members allowed me to understand issues about teacher training (their feelings and thoughts about the training processes carried out in the program) and the research itself (other ways of doing research and seeing the research participants). Before referring to these understandings, I would like to take a look at the research published in Colombia that has considered the work done on pre-service English language teachers in the teaching practicum.

Impact on Other Studies in Colombia

My main research interest is to know and understand what happens within ELT programs directly from the voices of pre-service English teachers. To achieve this purpose, I have resorted to horizontal research methods, such as narrative research and autoethnography. The results of these investigations have also served as a reference for some other researchers interested both in the education of pre-service English teachers and in teaching practicum experiences.

First, Monroy (2020), Bonilla and Samacá (2020) and Buendía-Árias et al., (2020) used the worked developed by Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández (2018) as part of the contextualization of the problem. Monroy (2020) aimed at explaining the importance of listening to the voice of a pre-service English teacher through his reflections on ELT. Monroy contextualized his research using the findings related to pre-service English

teachers' experiences during the teaching practicum. Similarly, Bonilla and Samacá (2020) centered their study on the mentoring process of the teaching practicum and the positions pre-service English teachers assume towards the teaching practicum, stating that the work developed by Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández (2018) contributes toward seeing the importance of the mentors in solving issues related to the teaching practicum. In the same vein, Buendía-Árias et al., (2020) also used that study to frame their research about the configuration of the identity of pre-service English language teachers in a Colombian university; the results obtained in this study show a profile of how these identities have been built from the teaching practicum.

Second, some other authors such as Ubaque-Casallas and Aguirre-Garzón (2020), Montoya-López et al., (2020), and Munar Villamil (2018) have used the research findings of Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernandez (2018) as part of the theoretical framework of their studies. Ubaque-Casallas and Aguirre-Garzón (2020) conducted a narrative study to analyze the epistemologies of pre-service English teachers through lesson planning. In this study, the researchers explained, as part of their theoretical foundation, the relationship between the experiences that arise from the contexts of teaching practice characterized by knowing and doing and of pre-service English teachers. For their part, Montoya-López et al., (2020) sought to reveal the presence of the political agency in the construction of the identity of pre-service English teachers, for which they developed a theoretical framework integrating the findings of some Colombian researchers. One of the theoretical aspects developed has to do with the intersection of the narratives of the pre-service English teachers and their construction of identity within the ELT program. Lastly, Munar Villamil (2018) also focused on understanding the experiences of a pre-service English teacher in the context of a teaching practice, in such a way that the author developed a theoretical framework that would account for the use of narratives created with pre-service English teachers whereby their experiences are analyzed during the teaching practicum.

Third, some researchers have continued in the initial line of research aimed at inquiring about pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum. In the case of Lucero and Roncancio-Castellanos (2019), they concentrated on presenting the reflections and insights of the pre-service English teachers from a narrative written by the authors. Some of the findings indicate the importance of the mentor in the development of her autonomy and professional identity. Likewise, the importance of becoming aware of the emotional aspect of pre-service English teachers is highlighted to reduce their anxiety levels and improve their ability to develop the activities of a teacher in an educational context. Pita-Castro and Castiblanco-Rincón (2021) also carried out an investigation aimed at analyzing the levels of reflection of pre-service English teachers and their influence on the construction of their identity during the teaching practicum. The researchers used some of the works developed in this field (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernandez; Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019)

and thus developed a narrative investigation. The researchers found that the reflection levels are primarily technical and very uncritical due to the different dynamics that are handled within the teaching practicum and the degree of commitment to their own professional development. Also, Lucero and Cortés-Ibañez (2021) continued their exploration of pre-service English teachers in the teaching practicum, but this time they focused on the discursive level. They analyzed conversations in meetings and institutional documents that showed how the teaching practicum is a space in which identity as an English teacher is consolidated. Conversely, the authors point out the importance of thinking about the practicum as a dialogical, reflective, and transforming space where it is possible to recognize oneself, the other, the context, and the knowledges related to teaching English. In this way, pre-service English teachers are conceived as individuals from whom certain things stipulated by the documents and established in the speeches of the initial education program are expected. The research referred to in this paragraph tends to build and elaborate more on the initial education of pre-service English teachers and their construction as teachers during the teaching practicum.

Finally, I want to highlight two articles where pre-service English teachers took on the role of researchers alongside me. The first research paper emphasized the importance of highlighting the context of students within English classes. These students suffer difficult situations from their social realities, and the pedagogical proposal of these two English teachers in training was cathartic (Cortés Rozo et al., 2019). Similarly, Cuervo-Rodríguez and Castañeda-Trujillo (2021) developed an investigation that shows the challenges that two pre-service English teachers with dyslexia had to face while building their identity as English teachers. The two research works are significant since the researchers-pre-service teachers made the proposals, collected the data, and analyze most of the data, oriented by me as their co-researcher.

Be that as it may, what is currently happening in Colombia has shown us as researchers of the seedbed that communities of practice, oriented to inquire from the perspective of pre-service English language teachers, are growing. We need to continue supporting locally-generated knowledge as it shows us the contextualized reality of our ELT programs.

Conclusions and Final Reflections

This autoethnography approach has addressed the exploration of my history as a researcher within the context of ELT programs to understand aspects related to pre-service English language teachers. There is still much to be done in this field, especially if the research with horizontal methodologies is increasingly considered by the academics in Colombia. There is an urgent need to dismantle the imaginary about how to conduct research, not only from teacher educators' perspective but also from pre-service English

language teachers' perspective. However, this is only possible when, from the ELT programs, we, teacher educators and pre-service English teachers, work as a community of practice leaning towards the decolonization[4] of the teaching of English in Colombia, which implies realizing who we really are as researchers, English teachers, and English users. From the work that I have done with the pre-service English language teachers of the research seedbed, I have gained the following insights into ELT programs' research.

First, I have realized the importance of research participants, if I can keep calling them that, in horizontal research methodologies. Research participants are the ones who carry out the research; then, they position themselves as knowing subjects (Vasilachis, 2009). That is, it does not strip them of their knowledge or reduce it to simple data that are interpreted by a third party (the researcher). This practice contributes enormously toward acknowledging the authentic voices of the people involved in the research, which has not been common in traditional research practices. I insist on this gesture/practice because I firmly believe that this fosters the decolonization of being, doing, and knowing in research, which is essential if we intend to promote fundamental changes in ELT in this country.

Regarding my role in this research process, I was an associate researcher, external observer, and a listener of their stories. For this, I established spaces for reflection and discussion focused on the suggestions of Johnson and Golombeck (2018). They emphasize the importance of opening spaces to make sense of experience through theory. At the same time, as a researcher, I was relating the stories I heard with my own story and those of other pre-service English language teachers that I have met throughout my career. In this way, I was making sense of the identity construction processes of the researchers and understanding the ELT context in general. This type of exercise where the other is listened to for their experiences and their feelings helped to transform my own teaching practice. Ultimately, dismantling power relations established by tradition is necessary within teacher education programs.

Another benefit of an autoethnographic work as pedagogy and as a research method is related to the teacher's image. Initially, the pre-service English language teacher-researchers were assumed to be English teachers from an instrumentalized perspective. As a result, they were unaware of the teaching profession's personal, professional, and emotional implications. Additionally, reviewing their processes of being and becoming teachers helped them see how the discourses of ought-to-be were present for a long time within their imaginaries. These discourses formulate a single way of being and doing through decontextualized strategies

[4] Although I recognize that there are other epistemological perspectives that can contribute to the strengthening of the teaching of English in Colombia, my main intention has been to guide my efforts as a researcher and teacher educator towards the reestablishment of what we have been denied by being non-native speakers of English and promote social justice within ELT education (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

and methodologies that make a little contribution to the education of students at schools and other educational institutions. The benefit of this understanding process resides in the transformation of practices, evident in their own autoethnographic writings.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the significance of evaluating the research done in Colombia and accepting that we are producers of valuable knowledge for the ELT, manifested in even different ways than the traditional ones (Castañeda-Londoño, 2021). Furthermore, by acknowledging that, and despite all the theories that we have learned, we can unlearn and relearn to achieve a contextualized and beneficial practice for our students, not only regarding what has to do with learning and teaching the language but also as regards life itself.

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Conference Presentations

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Cabrales Vargas, M., & Cáceres Cabrales, J. A. (2013). La dinámica del currículo y la evolución de la autonomía en el aprendizaje del inglés [The dynamics of curriculum and the evolution of autonomy in learning English as a foreign language]. Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura, *18*(1), 45-60.

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