

# RESEARCH

## IN ACTION

## XXIII



NEW TRENDS IN BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

## Memorias del Congreso de Investigación Research in Action XXIII

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# New Trends in Bilingual Education

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The proceedings of Research in Action XXIII: New Trends in Bilingual Education offer a particularly lucid view of a moment of transition in the study and practice of bilingual education. They are not merely the record of an academic gathering, nor simply the compilation of a set of conference papers. Read as a whole, they shape a space of intellectual exchange in which significant conceptual, pedagogical, and ethical-political shifts come into view. Their value lies precisely there: in showing how bilingual education is increasingly moving beyond a narrow concern with the transmission and assessment of linguistic competence to emerge instead as a field where language intersects with subjectivity, culture, memory, inclusion, justice, teacher education, and institutional responsibility.

In this volume, the so-called “new trends” do not present themselves as a catalogue of methodological innovations or as evidence of terminological renewal. Their novelty is of a different kind. It resides, above all, in the transformation of the questions that now organize the field. The challenge is no longer simply to determine which strategy might be most effective for the teaching of an additional language, but rather to examine the very conditions that make such learning possible: which subjects are recognized within its frameworks of intelligibility, which linguistic and semiotic repertoires are legitimized or subordinated, which forms of experience are regarded as pedagogically meaningful, which relations of power run through the curriculum, and what kind of teacher is required in educational settings marked by heterogeneity, inequality, and demands for recognition. In this sense, the significance of these proceedings lies not only in the knowledge they gather, but also in the conceptual language they bring to bear on a field in transformation.

A first major thread running through the volume is the critique of monolingual ideologies that continue to shape language education in profound ways. In “English only? Un moment... ici on apprend tres langues,” Micán-Castiblanco presents a pedagogical experience with preservice teachers in which translanguaging, intercomprehension, and linguistic biographies function at once as analytic framework and formative practice. The importance of this work lies not only in its description of an innovative educational experience, but also in the broader assumptions it calls into question. It unsettles models of teacher education based on the compartmentalization of

languages, the rigid separation of disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, and the persistent belief that teaching depends on the preservation of stable linguistic boundaries. What Micán-Castiblanco's contribution makes clear is that recognizing students' plurilingual repertoires is not a tactical adjustment of method, but an epistemological decision: it requires acknowledging that meaning is not generated within sealed linguistic compartments and that teacher education is impoverished when it reproduces, without reflection, forms of segmentation alien to the lived experience of those who learn and teach.

Closely connected to this decentering of monolingualism, "Textile Text and Global Literacies to Open Doors for Language Learning and Intercultural Understandings," by Castro-Garcés and Gómez-Vargas, moves the discussion toward another decisive threshold: multiliteracies and the critique of the alphabetic reduction of language. Their work brings together textile texts, life histories, quipus, multimodal materials, and global literacies in order to open language learning to forms of meaning-making that exceed written verbal language. The significance of this contribution lies in the fact that it does not merely diversify teaching resources; it redefines the very status of reading and writing by conceiving them as processes distributed across body, materiality, memory, image, voice, territory, and experience. If Micán-Castiblanco questions the rigid separation of languages, Castro-Garcés and Gómez-Vargas question the hierarchy traditionally granted to certain semiotic modes over others within school culture. Taken together, these works compel us to rethink language pedagogy through an expanded notion of repertoire: one that is not solely linguistic, but also cultural, material, affective, and historical.

A second area of particular depth is constituted by reflections on the education of deaf learners and the teaching of English within bilingual and multimodal frameworks. In "First Language - Second Language - Foreign Language Triangulation in Teaching English to the Deaf," Moraes examines the relationship among sign language, second language, and foreign language, thereby introducing a crucial question about the limits of the implicit definitions of bilingualism that still circulate in the field. This work does more than defend the feasibility of teaching English to deaf students; it seeks to dismantle the assumptions on the basis of which that possibility has historically been denied or diminished. In doing so, the discussion moves away from the marginal adaptation of methodologies designed for hearing subjects and toward the formulation of a language pedagogy that takes seriously the multimodality, accessibility, and semiotic specificity of deaf trajectories. In the same vein, "The Impact of Genre-Based Language Education on the Written English Proficiency of Bilingual Deaf Learners in Recife, Brazil" further explores the value of genre-based instruction for strengthening written English among bilingual deaf learners. Its emphasis on genres, visual supports, and the articulation among Portuguese, English, and Brazilian

Sign Language suggests that the issue is not how to adapt a pre-existing model to a supposedly exceptional population, but how to revise the very categories of language, learning, and competence when confronted with communicative trajectories that exceed the tacitly normative subject of the field.

A third set of contributions brings into focus the relationships among language, gender, sexuality, race, and teacher identity. In “Creating Educational Videos About Gender and Sexual Diversity for a BA in Bilingualism,” Andrade Pinzón places sexual and gender diversity within the domain of pedagogical mediation, and this is especially significant. The article does not merely assert the relevance of the topic or advocate for its abstract inclusion in the curriculum; rather, it concentrates on the production of concrete materials capable of intervening in initial teacher education and of opening spaces for recognition, information, and the prevention of discrimination. In a more autobiographical and self-inscriptive register, Álvarez Contreras, in “ALE in the Unbeknownst Borderland: A Queer Gender Identities Construction Rhapsody”; Hurtado Ramírez, in “Latinx Language Teachers’ Acuerpada Teaching Narratives on Gender Construction in Cross-Cultural Contexts”; and Ortiz Gomez, in “I am a Black Female English Preservice Teacher. An Autoethnographic Perspective on Teacher Education,” move the discussion toward the embodied experience of queer, racialized subjects situated at the margins of normative teacher hood. What is most consequential in this body of work is not only that it renders visible underrepresented experiences, but that it raises a more demanding question: under what conditions has the field of language education produced its legitimate figures of teacher, speaker, and researcher? These contributions do not simply add new topics to the conversation; they alter the very regime of visibility and legitimacy through which the teaching profession has long been imagined.

The proceedings acquire particular force wherever bilingual education enters into dialogue with critical pedagogies, interculturality, and historically grounded readings of context. In “Approaching English Language Teaching to Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice,” Alarcón-Camacho and Castañeda-Trujillo connect critical pedagogy and social justice in the education of future English teachers, insisting that language teaching cannot be conceived as a neutral or decontextualized operation. Language appears there as inseparable from the realities of communities and from the need to engage those realities with critical pedagogical responsibility. Likewise, in “Bilingual Education in Mozambique: Intertwist Between Colonialities and Monovalent Culture,” Cadir and Moraes situate bilingualism within a historical and political fabric marked by coloniality and monovalent culture. The importance of this work is considerable, for it compels readers to abandon any celebratory understanding of bilingualism as inherently

emancipatory. What it reveals instead is that language and educational policies may reproduce historical hierarchies even while invoking diversity as a guiding principle. This critical insight resonates with other contributions in the volume, including “Bilingual Education and Critical Pedagogies Relatedness to Latin American Local Realities,” “Teaching Anglophone Culture Through Critical History and Interculturality,” and “SIGLA: A Critical Intercultural Pedagogical Experience Through Carnival,” all of which reinscribe language teaching within contexts shaped by historicity, symbolic conflict, and cultural situatedness.

Within this same horizon, Sanabria Salinas, Vidal Nossa, and Pérez Rubiano, in “Raising EFL Pre-Service Teachers’ Intercultural Awareness Through Peace-Building Pedagogy and Pedagogical Materials from Comisión de la Verdad,” offer a particularly meaningful articulation among intercultural teacher education, peace-building pedagogy, and materials produced by Colombia’s Truth Commission. The strength of this work lies in its demonstration that language education can become a space of mediation among memory, empathy, listening, and the ethical formation of future teachers. Language thus ceases to be a merely technical object of instruction and becomes, instead, a means of critically approaching history and the wounds inscribed in context. In a related yet distinct direction, “Exploración de círculos restaurativos y construcción de empatía a través de la Pedagogía para la Paz en una Institución Educativa de Soacha” expands the horizon of the volume even further. Although it does not belong strictly to the traditional field of language pedagogy, its inclusion is intellectually revealing because it demonstrates that the concerns of the field cannot be separated from coexistence, conflict mediation, and the reconstruction of social bonds. Bilingual education appears here linked to broader processes of citizenship, peace, and relational formation, resisting any narrow conception of language as a merely instrumental skill.

Another visible thread in the book is the concern with research education and teacher education as structural, rather than secondary, dimensions of bilingual education. “A Documentary Study: Tracing Research Skill Teaching in Undergraduate Program” examines the teaching of research skills in undergraduate programs and, in doing so, raises a question that is rarely explored with sufficient rigor: how research itself is taught within the very programs that later demand it from their graduates. This issue is far from minor, for it reminds us that there can be no robust professional field without stable practices for question formulation, literature review, methodological design, and academic argumentation. In a complementary direction, “The Impact of Pre-Service Teacher Program in Centro Cultural Colombo Americano - Cali,” by Díaz and Sandoval, emphasizes the importance of institutional pathways of support and practical teacher education, while “Narrative Analysis of Language and Content-Driven Teachers’ Beliefs and

Attitudes Towards the Implementation of CLIL in Primary School” makes clear that curricular change is never implemented in a technical vacuum, but always through the beliefs, dispositions, resistances, and interpretive frameworks of those who teach. Taken together, these works allow for a significant conclusion: innovation in bilingual education does not simply mean diversifying methodologies; it also requires examining the professional and institutional cultures that enable transformation—or prevent it.

The dimension of teacher and student life as situated experience takes on particular force in works that connect language with labor trajectories, forms of subjectivation, and material conditions of existence. In “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Working in Call-Center Jobs: Perspectives from English Philology Student-Employees,” López, Quintero, and Saavedra Corzo examine the experience of English philology students working in call centers, raising a question seldom explored explicitly in educational settings: what economies of language are available to students, and what tensions do they generate among promises of mobility, the exploitation of linguistic competence, and subjective exhaustion? This contribution is especially relevant because it reinscribes the question of language within the terrain of labor conditions and the material insertion of those who are being educated. Read alongside Ortiz Gomez’s autoethnography and Hurtado Ramírez’s embodied narratives, the volume makes evident that the subject of bilingual education is not a decontextualized abstraction, but a figure traversed by class, race, gender, employment, institutionality, and affect.

A further group of contributions focuses on concrete pedagogical practices for the development of communicative, lexical, and expressive competences. “Implementing Authentic Evaluation to Develop Communicative Competencies” foregrounds authentic assessment as a way of shifting language evaluation away from decontextualized performances and toward more meaningful practices of use. “Strengthening Lexical Competence in EFL through In-Class Flip in Preschool and First Grade: An Interest Center Approach” addresses lexical development in early childhood education through a proposal that combines flipped learning and interest centers, demonstrating sensitivity to children’s rhythms and forms of participation. “Developing Learner Autonomy in the Foreign Language Classroom” repositions learner autonomy within a horizon more demanding than the simple delegation of responsibility, reminding us that autonomy is inseparable from pedagogical conditions that enable learners to understand, regulate, and appropriate their own learning processes. The value of this group of works lies in the fact that it shows that the critical density of the volume does not come at the expense of didactics; rather, it compels didactics to reposition itself within broader frameworks of agency, relevance, and meaningfulness.

Within this same sensitivity to the complexity of school experience, “Self-Care Strategies in English Classes for Sixth Graders to Strengthen Executive Functioning Skills at Institución Educativa La Armonía in Mosquera” introduces a particularly suggestive shift: the English class appears linked to self-care and the strengthening of executive functions. What might at first seem peripheral to the field reveals, in fact, an important transformation in the way the language classroom is being conceived. It is no longer understood solely as a space devoted to the cognitive processing of linguistic structures, but also as a setting in which self-regulation, well-being, and socio-emotional support may be cultivated. This is a meaningful shift because it prevents us from sustaining a reduced view of teaching and reinscribes it within a broader understanding of educational experience.

Something similar can be said of the place occupied in the volume by more specifically linguistic and psycholinguistic approaches. “Representation of Semantic Prototypes in English Foreign Language Learners’ Available Lexicon” points to a concern with the semantic organization of the available lexicon of English language learners. Its inclusion is important because it brings balance to the volume: it reminds us that the study of language and of the cognitive processes associated with its learning continues to hold a legitimate and necessary place, so long as it does not become self-enclosed and can be integrated into a broader conversation about education, use, and context. The volume therefore does not replace one set of questions with another; rather, it repositions the classical concerns of the field within a more complex intellectual architecture.

Finally, the inclusion of “ChatGPT as a Peer Correction Tool for Language Learners” introduces an unavoidable discussion about technology and artificial intelligence. The significance of this work lies not merely in its engagement with a recent tool, but in the way it relocates the discussion of AI away from technophilic enthusiasm or reactive rejection and toward a more rigorous question about pedagogical mediation. That the article focuses on ChatGPT as a peer-correction tool is especially meaningful because it situates the debate within the domains of feedback, collaboration, writing, and the formation of judgment. In doing so, the volume makes clear that the technological transformations of the present cannot be understood solely in terms of efficiency or novelty, but must be examined in relation to the pedagogical, ethical, and formative conditions under which such tools may be incorporated without emptying learning of meaning or weakening critical deliberation.

If one steps back from the volume as a whole, it becomes evident that these proceedings are not organized around a single explicit thesis. Even so, they reveal a recognizable intellectual architecture. On the one hand, several works challenge the teaching of languages through logics of purity, separation, and linearity; hence the prominence of translanguaging, intercomprehension,

and plurilingual approaches. On the other hand, numerous contributions resist reducing learning to the manipulation of linguistic structures and instead propose a multimodal, embodied, narrative, and intercultural understanding of meaning. Added to this is the insistence that the field of bilingual education continues to carry historical debts to subjects and experiences that have been marginalized: deaf persons, racialized subjects, queer identities, and preservice teachers whose bodies and trajectories do not fit the tacitly normative profile of the teaching profession. Finally, the volume converges on a proposition of far-reaching significance: that teaching languages is inseparable from educating for coexistence, critique, peace, agency, autonomy, and ethical responsibility.

This architecture also invites a more demanding reading of the title of the conference itself. The “new trends” do not refer merely to new methodological repertoires. In many cases, what is new lies in the transformation of the questions being asked, in the expansion of the subjects who are recognized, in the revision of the ideologies that have long organized the field, and in the incorporation of problems once considered external to language teaching. From this perspective, the value of the book lies not only in what it gathers, but also in what it unsettles. It unsettles the notion of bilingualism when that notion is confronted with deaf multimodality and with the coexistence of sign language, national language, and foreign language. It unsettles the notion of the classroom when it is linked to restorative circles, self-care, memory materials, and textile texts. It unsettles the notion of the teacher when it is rethought through embodied, autoethnographic, racialized, or queer narratives. And it unsettles the very notion of innovation when it moves it away from technicism and restores it to a discussion of justice, recognition, and transformation.

It is true that, as often happens in conference volumes, this book gathers works of diverse kinds: consolidated research, systematizations of experience, pedagogical reflections in progress, and lines of inquiry still under development. Such heterogeneity could, from the perspective of generic uniformity, be read as dispersion. Yet it is fairer to understand it as one of the signs of vitality of a field that remains open. What these proceedings make visible is precisely the possibility of dialogue among different forms of knowledge production. Within them, research, pedagogical design, critical reflection, professional narrative, and systematization coexist without entirely dissolving their differences, and that coexistence constitutes a strength rather than a weakness.

For all these reasons, this book deserves to be read not only as the record of an event, but as a meaningful intellectual testimony to the contemporary directions of bilingual education. Its importance extends well beyond those who participated directly in the conference. Researchers, teacher educators, undergraduate and graduate students, curriculum coordinators, and institutions committed to language education will find here a wide repertoire of problems, shifts, and

possibilities. Not because the volume offers definitive answers, but because it makes visible, with clarity, where the field's most urgent questions are moving. Perhaps that is its principal contribution: to show that bilingual education, when taken seriously, can no longer be detached from inclusion, multimodality, critical interculturality, the ethical education of teachers, the production of peace, the recognition of difference, or the technological challenges that are reconfiguring educational experience.

In sum, *Research in Action XXIII: New Trends in Bilingual Education* offers its readers a set of works that, despite their differing approaches, objects, and scales, converge around a common demand: the need to think language education with greater intellectual complexity and greater public responsibility. This shift is especially necessary at a time when educational institutions are called upon to answer not only for what they teach, but also for the worlds they help to make possible. These proceedings show, with considerable clarity, that the teaching of languages forms part of that task. They also show that, when undertaken rigorously, it ceases to be an auxiliary or merely technical field and emerges instead as a strategic space in which forms of knowledge, coexistence, recognition, and future are contested.

# 1.

## English only? Un moment... ici on apprend tres langues

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### Abstract:

This presentation shares an innovative pedagogical experience carried out during the first academic semester of 2025 in a Licenciatura program at a private university in Bogotá, within a course on methodology and didactics of languages. The course involved 17 student-teachers and explored translanguaging and intercomprehension as both a theoretical framework and classroom practice. Grounded in the work of García and Wei (2014) on translanguaging, Busch (2012) on linguistic repertoires, and Canagarajah (2011) on translingual pedagogy, among others, the experience invited students to create linguistic biographies and reflect critically on their multilingual trajectories. In a classroom where English, French, and Spanish coexisted, students engaged in translingual practices to negotiate meaning, construct knowledge, and reflect upon their language learning processes as future educators. Data was gathered through classroom recordings, students' written reflections, and guided reflective sessions. Findings suggest that recognizing students' full linguistic repertoires fosters multilingual and culturally responsive teaching approaches. The experience also revealed underlying tensions between institutional monolingual norms and the plurilingual realities of both teachers and learners in a classroom. This presentation highlights how teacher education programs can embrace a diversity of linguistic repertoires and promote translanguaging to better prepare future educators for multilingual classrooms and equitable bilingual education practices.

**Keywords:** *Intercomprehension, Linguistic biography, Linguistic repertoire, Pedagogical experience, Pre-service teachers, Translanguaging.*

### 1. Introduction

According to the *Ethnologue* portal, the linguistic diversity of today's world is made up of more than 7,000 languages distributed among approximately 8 billion people. However, according to Harrison (2016), there is an unequal proportion between the number of languages and the number of speakers those languages have. In this regard, for example, the 83 most widely spoken languages are used by 4.5 billion speakers, while 3,586 of the smallest languages are spoken by only 8 million people. This situation, of course, calls the attention of linguists, language teachers, and society at large, so that strategies and mechanisms can be collectively constructed to value linguistic diversity.

In the Colombian context, the *Portal de Lenguas* of the Caro and Cuervo Institute states that the country has more than 65 native languages, including indigenous languages, two creole languages, the Romani language, Colombian Sign Language, in addition to Spanish, the hegemonic language and a colonial legacy. Although it is not possible here to explain deeply into the reflections on the risk of extinction faced not only by these languages but also by their speakers, it is worth remembering that it is the responsibility of both governmental institutions and citizens at large to reflect on the richness of linguistic diversity and the actions being taken to teach, preserve, and recover them.

Now, in the context of language teaching, Melo-Pfeifer, Araujo, and Santos (2011) argue that, among other things, some false ideas have persisted regarding how languages are or can be taught: 1. The languages we know are those we learn at school / in institutions. 2. Foreign languages (FL) are learned separately or in a linear fashion. 3. Learning a language means learning to handle all skills simultaneously. 4. False friends are an obstacle to learning a FL. 5. Successful communication only occurs through a common language shared by all speakers. 6. A FL teacher is exclusively a teacher of one language. 7. Language teachers should avoid the intrusion of other languages in the classroom. 8. Promoting other languages in my classroom endangers the future of my discipline. 9. The language curriculum makes no room for intercomprehension 10. Intercomprehensive approaches aim to replace the ones we usually use in the FL classroom.

It is common to find monolingual perspectives on foreign language education in programs aimed at educating future language teachers or professionals in foreign languages. For instance, *English only* or *French only* policies are often extended and replicated throughout the students' entire educational trajectory. In this context, it is not unusual to encounter course sequences labeled as English 1, 2, 3, 4; Elementary French, Basic French, Intermediate French, and so on.

Moreover, most foreign language education centers continue to reproduce the myth of monolingualism by promoting language instruction in one language or another in a linear fashion and from approaches that may be against (consciously or unconsciously) the recognition of learners' linguistic repertoires and biographical trajectories. Such practices also hinder the possibility of conceptualizing language teaching and learning from pluralistic or multilingual perspectives.

This report of an academic presentation shares an innovative pedagogical experience carried out during the first academic semester of 2025 with 17 student-teachers at a Licenciatura program at a private university in Bogotá, within a course on methodology and didactics of languages claiming that despite the multilingual realities of Colombian classrooms and the plurilingual backgrounds of future language teachers, teacher education programs often remain

bound to monolingual paradigms, particularly privileging English. This disconnect limits the development of pedagogies that acknowledge and enhance students' full linguistic repertoires. Thus, there is a need to explore how translanguaging and intercomprehension can challenge these norms and foster more inclusive, culturally responsive teaching practices in pre-service teacher education.

The key questions that guided this reflection were: 1. How do pre-service teachers perceive and engage with their own multilingual trajectories in a translingual classroom environment? 2. What roles do translanguaging and intercomprehension play in shaping the pedagogical reflections and practices of future language educators? 3. What tensions emerge between institutional monolingual expectations and the plurilingual practices fostered in the classroom? In addition to that, the objectives of this pedagogical implementation were: 1. To explore how linguistic biographies help pre-service teachers reflect on their multilingual identities. 2. To discuss the impact of translanguaging and intercomprehension on pre-service teachers' understanding of language pedagogy. 3. To identify tensions and opportunities in implementing plurilingual practices within traditionally monolingual teacher education contexts.

## **2 Theoretical framework.**

### **2.1 Intercomprehension and translanguaging**

On the one hand, a Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches (FREPA) (Candelier, 2010) suggests that pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures refer to didactic approaches which use teaching / learning activities involving at least more than one variety of languages or cultures which includes a wider reflection upon the multilingual and multicultural competence promoted by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages. These approaches are language awareness, integrated didactic approaches, intercomprehension between related languages, and intercultural approaches.

As presented by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, the intercomprehension between related languages is an approach in which learners work with two or more languages from the same language family (e.g., Romance, Germanic, Slavic), leveraging a language they already know (their mother tongue, a language of instruction, or a previously learned language) (Escudé & Janin, 2010). The approach emphasizes receptive skills, particularly reading and listening, as learners use their knowledge of one language to understand another. While primarily focused on comprehension, it can also support productive skills. This approach gained momentum in the late 1990s, particularly among adult learners and university students in Romance, Germanic, and Slavic-speaking countries, often with the support of the European Union. However, its implementation in school settings has remained limited even if there have been some interesting

experiences such as the one reported by Calvo & Muñoz (2019) aimed at intercomprehension as a tool for educational integration in the South American space.

On the other hand, as García & Wei (2014) propose, translinguaging refers to the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds (...). A translinguaging lens posits that ‘bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively’” (p.22). In a nutshell, translinguaging is a discursive and semiotic practice whereby speakers utilize their entire linguistic repertoire in a fluid and dynamic manner, beyond traditional boundaries of separate languages. Unlike static notions of language separation, translinguaging involves the purposeful and creative use of multiple language features to make meaning, facilitate understanding, and engage socially and cognitively.

Reflecting upon translinguaging in the classroom, Canagarajah (2011) states it is a dynamic, socially situated practice where multilingual learners creatively blend languages to co-construct meaning, challenging monolingual norms and language hierarchies. It is not simply a natural competence but a teachable skill that benefits from deliberate pedagogical strategies, including critical feedback that respects students’ voices and identities. Despite biases against mixing languages in writing, translinguaging plays a relevant role in both oral and written communication, enabling deeper engagement and meaning making. Effective translinguaging pedagogy calls for teachers to embrace multilingual practices, support students in negotiating language choices, and critically reflect on their own language ideologies to foster inclusive and empowering learning environments.

On a similar line on thought within the educational context, Ortega (2019) points out that transitioning from traditional language teaching to a plurilingual approach presents several challenges, including overcoming entrenched monolingual and colonial ideologies that prioritize English at the expense of other languages, and restructuring teacher education programs to incorporate translinguaging methodologies. Resistance may also arise from institutional policies and attitudes that favor English-only policies, making it difficult to create pedagogical spaces that value students’ multiple languages and cultures. Additionally, logistical difficulties related to curriculum reform and assessment practices can impede this shift. Therefore, fostering a more inclusive and socially just language education requires addressing systemic policies and transforming teacher and student attitudes towards multilingualism

## **2.2 Linguistic repertoires and biographies**

First, Busch (2012) suggests that the linguistic repertoire was conceptualized by John Gumperz as the full set of accepted ways of formulating messages within a speech community, is

was understood not as a fixed set of languages or codes but as a dynamic, holistic space encompassing all linguistic resources available to a speaker. This repertoire evolves through interaction and is shaped by social norms, grammatical rules, and situational contexts, but also by biographical and historical dimensions. Drawing on poststructuralist approaches, the repertoire includes embodied memories, desires, and traces of hegemonic discourses, making it a heteroglossic and contingent space of potentialities to which speakers creatively revert in specific situations. Thus, linguistic choices are not merely socially determined but also reflect personal experiences, emotions, and the power of language ideologies that can include or exclude speakers.

Second, Arismendi & Colorado (2023) state that a linguistic biography is a tool that captures an individual's language learning experiences and cultural encounters throughout their life, emphasizing how their linguistic repertoire develops across time (diachrony) and in specific social contexts (synchrony). It goes beyond mere vocabulary or grammar to embody a person's unique vision of the world, identity, emotions, and history intertwined with languages they speak or have learned. Linguistic biographies encourage learners and teachers to reflect on their personal and professional journeys, making their complex, heterogeneous plurilingual identities visible.

In the context of teacher education, linguistic biographies play an important role in fostering reflexivity and critical awareness about plurilingualism and interculturality among future language teachers. By engaging with their own and peers' linguistic stories, pre-service teachers develop an understanding of language diversity, the emotional and social dimensions of language learning, and the importance of connecting theory with practice. This reflective practice enables them to embrace and promote inclusive, culturally responsive teaching approaches that value the varied linguistic paths of their students, particularly in contexts like Colombia where such tools have been scarcely used.

### **2.3 Critical language awareness**

Critical language awareness, as explored by Hawkins & Norton (2009), involves understanding language not just as a neutral means of communication but as a social practice embedded with power relations and ideologies that can marginalize certain groups. It encompasses recognizing how language policies, classroom interactions, and teaching materials can reproduce inequalities and critically examining these to empower both teachers and learners. This awareness encourages teachers to question dominant linguistic norms, consider learners' diverse linguistic and cultural identities, and adopt pedagogies that promote social justice and challenge systemic inequalities in education.

According to Samacá Bohórquez (2012), awareness-raising and reflection are essential processes in pre-service teacher education programs. These programs aim to support a continuum

of teacher preparation, starting from initial training (pre-service) and continuing through in-service courses. Awareness-raising practices are intended to help pre-service teachers develop a conscious understanding of the principles underlying second language teaching and the practical techniques teachers can use in various lesson types. This process encourages teacher candidates to explore their perceptions and thoughts about teaching as a concept, promoting reflective teaching as a starting point for deeper pedagogical insight and growth.

### 3. Methodology

*English only? Un moment... ici on apprend tres langues* did not emerge as a research project but rather as a pedagogical experience in a B. Ed. in foreign languages classroom where English, French, and Spanish coexist as both languages of instruction and of learning. In the context of a private University, students were used to have pedagogy classes divided in two modules: one in English and one in French taught by two teachers respectively. So far, the learning goals of each course have been achieved through the years but there was a perception of having two classes in one and of isolating content that could have been intertwined as learners were using and studying English and French simultaneously.

Bearing this in mind, two teachers with the support of some members of the academic staff of the *Licenciatura* decided to guide a class embracing the linguistic biographies and repertoires of its participants to negotiate meaning, construct knowledge, and reflect upon the language learning processes of students as future educators from a translingual and intercomprehensive perspective. The experience began in January 2025, and it would be finished by mid-June of the same year. 17 pre-service language teachers participated in two sessions of two hours each in 18 weeks of class.

Considering teaching scenarios as a possible space to foster reflection on praxis, it is possible to link this pedagogical experience to certain methodological considerations of research. This experience is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm, which values the subjective experiences and meaning-making processes of participants. Rooted in interpretivist epistemologies, it enables an in-depth exploration of how individuals engage with language, identity, and pedagogy in context.

It also follows an interpretive case study design, which focuses on understanding a specific, bounded phenomenon—in this case, a pedagogical intervention in a foreign language teacher education program. This design allows the researcher to explore participants' perspectives and meaning-making processes as they engage with translanguaging and intercomprehension. By contextualizing learning within real-life educational settings, the case study approach supports an

analysis of how pedagogical innovation interacts with teacher identity, language ideologies, and institutional structures.

The data collection was supported by some qualitative instruments that enable a closer look to participants' experiences. Linguistic biographies elicit personal narratives that surface participants' language histories and ideologies. Classroom recordings capture real-time interactions and translanguaging practices. Written pieces reflect participants' evolving pedagogical thinking and critical awareness. Finally, reflective sessions provide collaborative spaces for metacognitive engagement and dialogue, allowing participants to articulate and rethink their understandings of language and teaching.

Each class was an opportunity to collectively think-read-make sense. Students were encouraged to use their linguistic repertoires at the time of writing and sharing, as well as when solving tasks and engaging in discussions. Thus, Spanish, English, French (and even some other languages students know) circulated in the classroom and were used without any type of banning or monolingual ideological imposition. At the time of writing these lines, the full experiences were not finished, so preliminary findings and insights are discussed in the next section.

#### 4. Findings

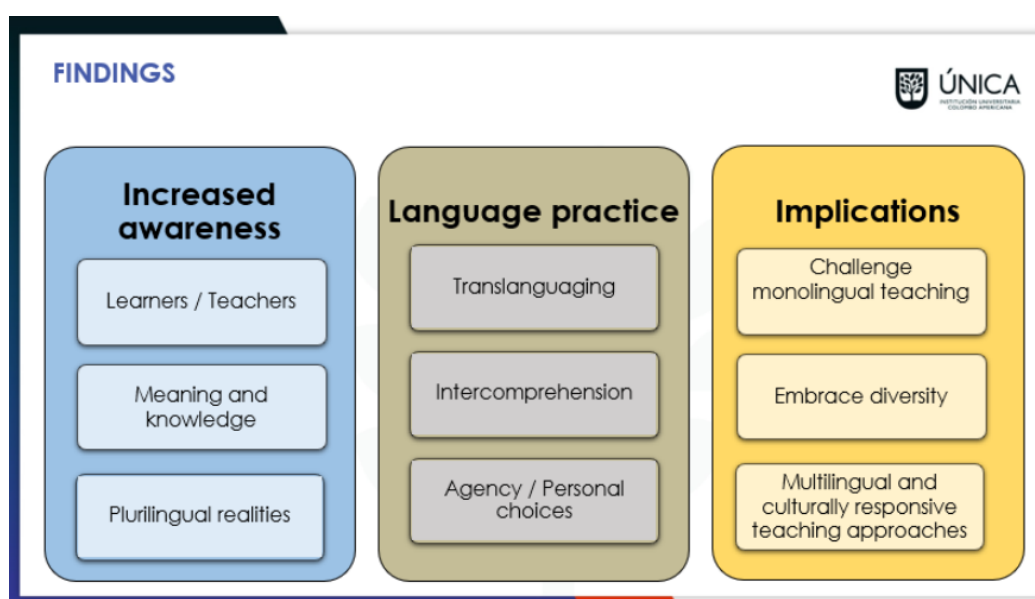
Even if the pedagogical experience has not been fully systematized, it is possible to share some preliminary findings. First, the linguistic biographies of pre-service teachers are diverse and can even go beyond the languages they are learning (English and French). For instance, they say “Chaque langue que j’ai rencontrée est entrée dans ma vie d’une manière particulière, que ce soit par les livres, les vidéos, les rêves, les rencontres ou le silence” (MF, lb), “además, aprendí el francés, el chino, el uitoto en la Universidad” (YA, lb), “English was a subject at school at first, but around fifth grade, it became a ‘escape’ for myself” (N, lb), “my relationship with those languages is like amor/odio parce que quand je quiero falar na inglês eu mixe des autres langues comme le français” (CC, lb). As can be seen, their personal histories and stories matter. If teachers unveil and listen to the linguistic biographies of their students, it is possible to go beyond the mandates of teaching just one or another language. As was presented earlier, teachers are not expected to master all the languages, but they (we) are encouraged to increase awareness and construct meaning and language in plurilingual realities.

Second, students have positive views on living a translingual and intercomprehensive experience in the classroom. As they point out, “nosotros debemos ser versátiles al momento de enseñar, je m’explique, si nous voulons changer des structures que sont déjà fixes on doit appliquer des utiles pédagogiques différents comme translanguaging and intercomprehension where the student can nurture the different bases that they have”(CA, wr), “un ejemplo es el uso de diversas

lenguas para poder expresar opiniones sin restricción de solo poder hablar o expresarnos en inglés, francés o español” (LE, wr), “it really boosts the process of SLA by challenging the brains of teachers and students getting them used to use their full linguistic repertoire” (MB, wr), “nos permite como profesores ‘jugar’ con otros conocimientos o lenguajes a la hora de una clase, que puede servir como una cucharadita de curiosidad para que los alumnos busquen mejorar o aprender cosas nuevas” (NL, wr). There are many more extracts that show the impact of the pedagogical experience and how it not only challenges the way we teach and learn a language but also the implications of this practice within the institutional scenario. Aspects related to assessment, curricula organization, interculturality, among others, can be enriched through language practices that are multilingual and embrace diversity.

Third, my experience as a languages educator and linguist has also been engaging and interesting. The possibilities to question and rethink the way I learned and how we teach are relevant to push forward the reflections in languages teaching. Besides that, recognizing myself as a multilingual speaker who can also challenge monolingual ideologies or conventional ways of doing enriched my reflection upon practice and the myriads of possibilities reflective practice can bring into reality. I do encourage the community to join efforts and continue working on language practices from more pluralistic and diverse considerations. All in all, this pedagogical experience has been a possibility to question monolingual ideologies by stopping for a bit and recognizing that in the context of a B. Ed. students are learning diverse languages and teachers also have plurilingual trajectories and experiences. Figure 1 summarizes part of these preliminary findings as presented in the oral report.

**Figure 1.** Preliminary findings.



Own elaboration

## 5. Conclusions

This pedagogical experience emphasized the potential of integrating translanguaging and intercomprehension into foreign language teacher education. When pre-service teachers are invited to engage critically with their own linguistic resources and to reflect on multilingual pedagogical strategies, their perceptions of language use and teaching can be enriched. These experiences challenge traditional monolingual assumptions, fostering a more dynamic and inclusive understanding of language as socially situated and relational.

Furthermore, the recognition of linguistic repertoires tools using tools such as linguistic biographies and engaging discussions not only acknowledges the diverse identities of future teachers but also gives them opportunities to design more socially responsive and inclusive teaching practices. By looking at learners' complex language experiences, teacher educators can encourage pedagogical stances that resist deficit discourses and instead affirm linguistic diversity.

Finally, this experience makes a call for institutional change. Teacher education programs can revise their curricula to align with the multilingual realities of contemporary classrooms. This involves moving beyond monolingual policies and linear language models toward a more plural and flexible orientation to language education. Without structural adjustments, the potential of pedagogical innovations like translanguaging and intercomprehension will remain limited to isolated experiences rather than informing systemic change in language teacher preparation aiming at equitable bilingual/multilingual education practices.

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## 2.

# Textile text and global literacies to open doors for language learning and intercultural understandings.

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### Abstract

Language learning as a meaning-making experience is a process that embraces diversity and local knowledge, bringing intercultural possibilities (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) to foreign language learners. The goal of this presentation is to share a pedagogical experience developed with a group of in-service teachers as part of a professional development workshop. The focal point was the writing and reading of participants' life stories, through the weaving of threads represented in khipus (Salomon, 2004), and communicating in English. Inspired by a collection of poems by Castro-Garcés (2013), which recounts part of the author's life and cultural heritage, participants' sensitivity was awakened. These poems, contrasted with global stories, coming from diverse parts of the world, show how languages and stories connect us with others (Kramsch, 2013). Through interaction with textile materials, a possibility for knowledge exchange opened up, allowing participants to perceive reading and writing as acts that transcend the alphabetic code. This experience represented the memories of all of us who wove messages together and became part of the multiple ways of communicating in a world charged with personal and collective meanings. All in all, it portrayed a powerful way of promoting language learning while developing intercultural understandings.

**Keywords:** *Textile text, global literacies, intercultural understandings, language learning, teachers' professional development*

### Introduction

Teachers' professional development as an ongoing and enriching experience is a unique communication landscape which welcomes diverse forms of communication and interaction. In this way, the search for pedagogical strategies that offer possibilities (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) of information exchange and professional growth found its way in a collaborative space designed by teachers for teachers and nurtured by texts diversity; a multiliteracies approach made up a pedagogical alternative that offered multiple ways of creating texts and approaching them. Thus, global literacy and textile texts mobilized contextualized and meaningful teaching and learning endeavors.

This reflection is the result of a pedagogical experience developed with a group of professors of different education programs as part of an ongoing seminar that encourages teachers' development and collaborative work. An interdisciplinary group, in which each colleague had the opportunity to lead a set of sessions each semester in order to share their pedagogical practice and contribute to the common knowledge of all the professors who are part of the Academic Programs we serve, strengthen teamwork and learn from each other. The purpose of the sessions we led was to reflect on the pedagogical possibilities achieved from a multiliteracies perspective in foreign language teaching and learning processes. The reflection began with the participants' own perceptions of language learning, which were articulated with notions of textile texts and global literacies.

The approach was the writing and reading of participants' life stories through the weaving of threads in various languages, with a particular focus on English. A poetry book (Castro-Garcés, 2013), published by one of the professors leading the session, was presented, as an example of a personal narrative and to encourage the retelling of the others' participants' stories. Additionally, the concept of global literacies (Short, 2016) was introduced through examples of digital texts that originate in different parts of the world to illustrate how we all have wonderful stories to tell which are oftentimes interwoven as part of the social fabric we inhabit.

Afterwards, we introduced alphabetic and non-alphabetic practices through textile texts, which allowed participants to develop manual skills while connecting with the individuality of their stories. Each participant used textile materials to write about important moments in their own lives, drawing on their prior knowledge, or connecting with the ideas of others. At the same time, they explored English as a language, through which they orally expressed their experiences. They also shared their stories by explaining colors, shapes, and their relationship with textiles, as they reflected on the importance of telling stories in first person (Adichie, 2009) as a possibility to embrace their own identity. Through interaction with textile materials, we provided an alternative for knowledge exchange, allowing them to perceive reading and writing as acts that transcend the alphabetic code. These materials represented the memories of all those who wove messages, which, at the same time, became part of the multiple ways of reading and writing in a world charged with personal and collective meanings.

It is essential to note that text and textile share the same etymological root, *textere*, which refers to weaving, braiding, and interlacing. These actions become relevant when reflecting on who, where, how, and why we write, as well as the elements used to do so. In the field of education, they are integrated from a pedagogical perspective that promotes foreign language learning. Textile texts constitute an opportunity to break stereotypes, to teach and learn, and, in particular, to read

and write about the world (Freire, 1987). From this perspective, they become a key tool for exploring global literacies, which respond to a text and context from the particular to the global. Following, we conceptualize global literacies and multiliteracies, analyze the role of textile texts in the deconstruction of stereotypes through multimodality, and education, and close with a pedagogical reflection of this experience.

### **Literature review**

In this section, we present the main concepts and academic publications that align to this reflection paper, including global literacies in multiliteracies; textile texts: stereotypes, multimodality, and education; and the discussion through a reflection of our pedagogical experiences.

### **Global literacies in multiliteracies**

The reflection generated by the pedagogical experience referred to in this article allowed us to consolidate the close relationship between textile texts and global literacies, as both enable an experience of reading and writing about the world from the perspective of each one of the participants. Textile texts and global literacies not only embrace personal and collective stories at a given moment in time, in varied contexts, diverse cultures, and life experiences, but also intertwine stories with threads and words that represent the relevance of recognizing multiple forms of literacy; that is, multiliteracies. In the words of Losada and Suaza, multiliteracies “represent a shift in the educational paradigm, as it no longer considers education as a transfer of knowledge or content but as a continuous construction of knowledge derived from diverse resources in diverse contexts” (2018, p. 15). Thus, language learning is not to be conceived as a utilitarian or translation act, but as a process that involves the human being in all its complexity.

In the search for strategies for developing linguistic, communicative, and intercultural skills, global literacies offer texts that share stories with intercultural sensitivity to achieve a better understanding of the individuals who embody them. According to Short, global literacies include “any text written in a global context outside the reader’s global location” (2016, p.5); this allows the development of understandings that connect and transcend our local perspectives to global realities that connect with the local again. These connections materialize when, through a variety of texts, stories of people from other contexts who live realities comparable to our own are brought into the classroom. Even from distant realities, these stories allow readers to live new experiences that bridge gaps in space and time, while opening paths to greater linguistic and intercultural sensitivity.

On the other hand, a multiliteracies perspective implies a pedagogical approach to literacy (New London Group, 1996) that offers possibilities for a more inclusive cultural, linguistic,

communicative and technological diversity in the classroom, through diverse modes of communication (Kress, 2010) that go beyond alphabetic literacy and that consider diverse semiotic systems (Kalantzis and Cope 2008). Cope and Kalantzis (2000) expand this view by presenting multiliteracies under two important premises: “the multiplicity of channels and means of communication, and the growing prominence of cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 5). They proposed alternative ways in which a multiliteracies pedagogy could adapt to the changing contexts and realities of today’s students, through empowerment and critical decision-making. Cope and Kalantzis argue that mere literacy remains focused solely on language, whereas a pedagogy of multiliteracies, in contrast, focuses on modes of representation that differ by culture and context and have specific cognitive, cultural, and social effects (2000, p.5). This concept broadens our view to include multiple languages that offer as many ways of reading and writing as there are ways of understanding the world.

In addressing the question of the “what” of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, the New London Group (1996) proposes a metalanguage based on the concept of “design,” which integrates linguistic, auditory, spatial, gestural, visual, and multimodal aspects. This design corresponds to the creation of meaning that emerges from the interaction among the aforementioned modes and connects directly with our way of studying and understanding these communicative and pedagogical acts because, as teachers, we create multiple designs that adapt to our students’ circumstances, crafting spaces for communication that emanate pedagogical principles that lead to their intercultural enrichment. Following we introduce various examples of how these alternative pedagogical processes contribute to the construction of meaningful learning spaces through intercultural experiences.

Palpacuer Lee (2018), on the one hand, engages practicing teachers in the active design of texts and art through a pedagogy of multiliteracies and the development of a project at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The purpose was to explore pedagogical pathways through encounters with art in the museum as teachers walked, talked, designed, and learned together. The author suggests that “in teacher education classes, teachers should be encouraged to collectively engage with multimodal texts and make interdisciplinary, embodied, and intercultural connections” (2018, p. 135). Participants enacted language, discovered subjectivities, and experienced multiple designs in a physical semiotic space. As Palpacuer Lee noted, “in the process, connections were made among texts, among texts and participants as readers/viewers and learners” (2018, p. 146).

Michelson and Dupuy (2014), on the other hand, implemented a multiliteracies-based approach in a language class to “foster students’ intersemiotic awareness through global simulation” (p. 21). The authors framed their work within the concept of design (The New London

Group, 1996) to support students' meaning making through the knowledge processes. These practices have a dual purpose: "A pedagogy of multiliteracies has been adopted as both a curriculum reform project and an instructional technique" (1996, p. 25), facilitating its use in both the planning and implementation of classroom tasks that foster linguistic and intercultural awareness.

In addition, the New London Group (1996) emphasize that "multiliteracies overcome the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how to negotiate the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society, which is central to the pragmatics of students' work, civic, and private lives" (p. 60). Furthermore, social semiotics play a vital role in the world of machine learning, as it offers an approach to communication that seeks to understand how people interact through various media in particular social settings.

Michelson and Álvarez Valencia (2016) assert that "social semiotics delves into how meanings are created and structured in communication processes and recognize that semiotic acts and products are constituted and shaped through historical, cultural, and social uses of signs" (p. 2). An essential aspect of this social semiotic theory is the principle that modes of communication offer semiotic options or resources that are historically specific, socially, and culturally shared for communication (Kress, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001).

The conscious use of texts in educational processes continues to be a challenge for our teaching practices. However, these practices are part of a pedagogy that seeks to transcend the possibilities of multimodal reading and writing. It is about opening doors to life stories that allow for the generation of knowledge and motivate our students in contextualized language learning, which becomes a means for developing intercultural awareness.

### **Textile texts: Stereotypes, multimodality, and education**

This section will address textile texts from three perspectives: stereotypes, multimodality in reading and writing, and their relationship to the field of education.

Every day, we interact with textile practices from a feminine perspective in the domestic field (Ágreda, 2020). However, new interpretations are emerging and fostering academic discussions about what lies behind the stories related to textiles. We are interested in exploring this perspective as a powerful opportunity to put positions, beliefs, and perspectives into play. As women surrounded by experiences in embroidery, weaving, and sewing and challenged by the academic world, we have asked ourselves: who should or can embroider, weave, or spin? What is the relationship between textiles and text? What connection exists between textile practices and the field of education?

Textile practices have faced different stereotypes and disjunctions throughout history. At different times, they have been understood as a feminine or feminized labor, characteristic of the intimacy of the home, and as decorative elements related to the shelter and protection assigned to the female side. Reflection on stereotypes is fueled by the dilemma between classifying embroidery as art or craft (Parker, 2010). In our practices, we choose to break stereotypes about who should or can use threads and needles and what can be communicated through them.

We start from the premise that textiles –embroidery, weaving, clothing– communicate. Whoever writes them –creates them– assigns them meaning and context. These textile texts are of academic interest to us, as they correspond to global literacies and represent a multimodal text that is embraced by a pedagogy of multiliteracies. With this in mind, we refer to textile texts that can be created by people who wish to communicate. Parker, regarding painting and embroidery, emphasizes that “masculine and feminine symbols share the same space and establish a political point, the demand for equality, not androgyny” (2010, p. 199). Therefore, no text will be superior to another; on the contrary, all foster the expression of a meaningful message, regardless of the gender of the creator.

The text, whether individual or collective, reflected in a material like fabric, communicates a situated message that carries with it the person who created it and has meaning in and of itself. Creative spaces are not exclusive to women at home; they are also developed in classrooms and are part of the multiple ways of reading and writing the world. These practices constitute a pedagogical possibility for teaching a language and for affirming the unique expressions of ethnic communities like ours. We are moving toward a pedagogical perspective that goes beyond the use of fabric as a metaphor to understand it as a “practice of knowledge, and of knowledge as fabric” (Pérez-Bustos 2016, p. 168), which invites us to rethink how knowledge is constructed in the academic field.

So, what is the relationship between text and textile? We refer to the textile text as a possibility of reading and writing that transcends the alphabetic code and constitutes a multimodal process. In Barthes’s words,

*Text* etymologically means *fabric*, it is, in the work, what gives rise to the guarantee of the written thing, of which it combines the functions of safeguard: on the one hand, the stability and permanence of the inscription, intended to correct the fragility and imprecision of memory; and, on the other, the legality of the letter, an irrefutable, indelible trace, in our opinion, of the meaning that the author of the work has intentionally placed on it (1973, p. 137).

This concept draws attention to two fundamental issues: the mark and the letter. The mark, whether pencil or wool, constitutes that which survives and allows for rereading; it is the medium

that records the message in history, while the letter is the stitch that, along with other elements, transmits the message imbued in the object. Textile text allows for writing and reading from its own materiality, accompanied by colors, shapes, and stitches that tell a contextualized story. Those who embroider or weave write, and what they produce is read by others or by themselves at other times. This creation is the fruit of their own lives, their perceptions, and their experiences, which constitute a localized history.

An emblematic example of textile text is the quipus, which are systems of knots, colors, and levels used by some Native American societies. To a lesser extent, they are still in use. Quipus are not necessarily translated into conventional language; they are in themselves a particular alphanumeric system. In this regard, Salomon (2004), citing Urton, state that quipus “could represent a total of 1,536 ‘signs,’ of seven bits each, which is comparable to the range of characters that a modern Mandarin reader handles; translated into alphanumeric codes, it allows for storytelling and the preservation of history” (2007, p. 186). The materiality and meaning of a textile text allow it to be understood as a global literacy text.

The multimodal characteristic of textile texts is manifested in the diverse modes they employ to communicate. Likewise, Kress refers to multimodality as “the different modes, that is, the different discrete semiotic resources that satisfy functional theoretical requirements, possess different potentials for producing meaning” (2009, p. 125). The resources that represent the production of meaning in textile texts range from the materiality of the thread, the fabric, the needles, the thicknesses, and the colors to the most frequently involved senses, such as touch and vision. These modes represent more than aesthetics; they are carriers of the message. In this context, modes can be considered transcription technologies that allow us to represent the world (Kress, 2009). In this sense, the choice of one or more modes to convey a message becomes relevant. These choices are made from an individual perspective and are combined with the social motivations surrounding the creator.

Finally, it is important to reveal the relationship between multimodal textile texts and the field of education from a pedagogical perspective of multimodality that alludes to the teaching and learning of English. These types of texts are closely related to our culture. Among the Nasa people, for example, “the shapes that *kwentanderas* (weavers) represent mean the life and journey of the Nasa people, from birth until they transcend to the other space of Mother Earth” (CRIC, 2021). For the Misak people, the use of the loom demonstrates the millennia-long permanence of their custom: “Men weave the *tampalkuari* for women, and women make the *ruanas* for men” (Tunubalá & Muelas, 2008, p. 76). This proximity creates the possibility of learning a language from

representations of nearby languages, using everyday textile materials and gestures. These practices offer the opportunity to express stories independent of the formal use of language.

This approach to a language can be achieved from a participant-centered perspective, taking into account their context, their stories, and their daily lives; elements that develop in the classroom and beyond. This allows us to rethink homogenizing pedagogical practices and one-way messages from teachers to students, and to undertake initiatives that involve multiple modes of communication, where interaction goes beyond the traditional emphasis on linguistic exchange to pursue “a strong and detailed contextualized attention to communication and nonverbal systems” (Van Leeuwen, 2017, p. 5).

### **Discussion: Reflecting upon our pedagogical experiences**

This experience developed in a Pedagogy Department with professors of diverse education programs revealed multiple stories that became the starting point of this reflection article. The desire to learn about each other’s stories began with our own experiences, which emerged unwittingly among interwoven verses. As a space opened for getting to know others, we did so from their sensibilities and logic, from their subjective experiences (Kramsch, 2013), which connected with the experiences of others. Reading and writing processes based on multiliteracies constitute a pedagogical strategy that took into account the social and cultural fabric of each person involved in this process. In this way, approximating the pedagogical possibilities achieved from a multiliteracies perspective gave rise to a reflection that began with our own conceptions and connected with textile texts and global literacies.

In addition to breaking the paradigm of the difficulty of communicating in a foreign language like English, a pedagogy of multiliteracies, mediated by textile texts and global literacies, fostered moments of sharing multiple stories and provided opportunities for expression in diverse ways that transcended gender, ethnicity, and mode. This space allowed us to understand that the development of pedagogical processes based on multiliteracies, global literacies, and textile texts required knowing one’s own story to embrace collective stories, told from each person’s place of enunciation, a starting point that ranges from interiority to exteriority. For this reason, all the linguistic and non-linguistic forms we use to communicate have a place in the space-time of a culture, each one important for each territory. These forms are a fundamental part of diverse worldviews, even if some predominant cultures consider them less prevalent and prestigious.

Languages conjugate, unite, distance, alienate, and segregate in a field of harmony, like thoughts in words and their voices, because they are both sounds and silences at the same time. Multiple modes emerge when they facilitate communication processes in an environment that embraces different disciplinary fields and ways of reading and writing the world. Writing and

reading involve memory processes that refer to the experiences of each person's life story and constitute the beginning of the diverse ways of writing and reading collective realities and stories, starting from personal and family stories, towards vital projections of personal transformation.

Subversive forms of writing, born from sensitive languages, begin from each person's place of enunciation, from their life stories, experiences, and thoughts, with the inescapable purpose of healing the wounds of historical imprints. These subversive forms are multimodal par excellence and originate in global literacies by representing a message rooted in a specific context.

Text, like weaving, emerges from life with a sensitivity that opens new plural horizons through intercultural encounters and dialogues shaped by threads of charm, passion, and wisdom from life itself. Language, as a tool of communication, transcends the alphabetic code by connecting with multiple languages, breaking down linguistic barriers and opening the way for new learning. In turn, weaving and oral expression showed us other ways of narrating and connecting with our surroundings. To this end, this space for professional development allowed for reflections on our teaching practice and showed the desire to continue understanding these languages and the lives of those around us.

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### 3.

## First language - second language - foreign language triangulation in teaching English to the deaf.

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The topic of teaching a foreign language to the deaf has been gaining ground in academic research in recent decades, with a view to “breaking crystals”, that is, undoing crystallized beliefs about this process. This presentation consists of discussions about deaf students and their process of acquiring and learning a foreign language in inclusive educational contexts. This perspective highlights the importance of bilingualism for the education of deaf students since it will take place in an environment where more than one language will be used. Communicative teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) for deaf students has been the subject of discussion in recent years despite skepticism on the part of many researchers. Besides this, the results found in our research (Moraes, 2012), as well as those highlighted in readings carried out, point to a relationship between three languages involved in the EFL classroom attended by deaf students. Therefore, the objective of this presentation is to reflect on the teaching of English to deaf students in inclusive contexts. To achieve our objective, we rely on knowledge from Grosjean (2015), Moraes (2012), Paiva (2014), Sousa (2015), Vygotsky (1976), among others. The presentation will be divided into two sections: (1) important findings in research conducted around the world published in the last five years; (2) effects of pedagogical practices and interactions in English language classes mediated by the first and second languages, in Brazilian Elementary and Secondary Education, based on reports from teachers and sign language translators and interpreters. The methodology is qualitative, using bibliographic research and descriptive-observational research, with the aim of better describing, understanding, and explaining the characteristics of the dynamics of the English classroom attended by deaf students. For data collection and analysis, we worked with the guidance of Triviños (2015) and Bardin (2016). The results contribute to the renewal of social and pedagogical practices of foreign languages, whose need for modification is latent. We hope that, after the results are shared in the event, new discussions on the topic will be raised, contributing to new reflections, research, practices, etc.

**Keywords:** *Triangulation. Teaching. English. Deaf.*

## 1. Introduction

The increasing presence of deaf students in inclusive educational environments has challenged traditional pedagogical models and demanded the reconfiguration of teaching practices, particularly in the realm of language education. Among the most debated and least explored areas is the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) to deaf individuals. For decades, a prevailing assumption in many educational systems has been that deaf students are incapable of successfully learning a foreign language, especially one as phonetically and morphologically distinct as English. Such assumptions, however, have been increasingly questioned by contemporary researchers and educators who advocate for inclusive and multilingual approaches to deaf education (Grosjean, 2015; Moraes, 2012).

The pedagogical implications of including deaf students in mainstream foreign language classrooms are complex. Educators must grapple with a diversity of linguistic backgrounds, communication modes, and cognitive profiles. Consequently, this study seeks to analyze the triangulation of Libras (as L1), Portuguese (as L2), and English (as FL) as it occurs in actual classroom practice, considering the sociolinguistic, cognitive, and cultural aspects involved in such a configuration. By foregrounding the voices of educators, interpreters, and students, we aim to offer grounded insights that inform and improve teaching practices. Furthermore, it is necessary to interrogate the ideologies that underlie traditional models of foreign language instruction and propose alternatives that embrace multimodality, accessibility, and linguistic justice.

In this context, the discussion around language and inclusion becomes inseparable from broader educational goals. Language is not a neutral instrument but a carrier of culture, identity, and power. As such, providing access to multiple languages—including sign language and English—is a matter of both pedagogical quality and human rights. This paper aligns itself with a decolonial perspective that seeks to value linguistic diversity and disrupt normative assumptions about language learning, especially for deaf individuals who have historically been excluded from full participation in language education.<sup>2</sup>

Theoretical Perspectives: Language, Deafness, and Education

### 2.1 Deafness and Linguistic Identity

The transition from viewing deafness as a disability to understanding it as a marker of cultural and linguistic identity has profoundly affected educational paradigms. The Deaf community, with its unique language (sign language) and cultural practices, challenges the deficit view that historically marginalized deaf learners. In Brazil, the recognition of Libras through Law 10.436/2002 and Decree 5.626/2005 marked a significant milestone, legitimizing Libras as the natural language of the deaf and establishing its use in educational settings.

According to Vygotsky (1976), social interaction is fundamental for cognitive development, and language is the principal tool for mediating thought. In the case of deaf individuals, sign language fulfills this mediational role, allowing for the construction of meaning, expression of identity, and participation in social life. Understanding Libras as L1 means acknowledging its foundational role in the academic and social lives of deaf students. Moreover, the recognition of sign languages as full-fledged natural languages with their own grammars, lexicons, and pragmatics (Stokoe, 1960; Liddell, 2003) reinforces the legitimacy of using Libras as the base language in the educational trajectory of deaf learners.

In addition, identity development among deaf students is intimately linked to their linguistic environment. Access to a linguistic community—such as the Deaf community—fosters a sense of belonging and affirmation. Conversely, the denial of such access, particularly through oralist or monolingual educational models, can lead to social exclusion and educational underachievement. This has implications not only for language acquisition but also for emotional well-being and self-esteem.

## **2.2 Bilingualism and Language Acquisition**

The bilingual development of deaf individuals differs significantly from that of hearing individuals due to the modality difference—visual-spatial versus auditory-oral. Grosjean (2015) emphasizes the need to respect bilingual individuals as whole persons, not as two monolinguals in one. In the educational context, this means embracing the full linguistic repertoire of deaf students, including their visual and gestural competencies.

In Brazilian inclusive classrooms, deaf students often face the dual challenge of acquiring written Portuguese (L2) and learning English (FL), typically without full access to in their natural modality. This layered linguistic process requires targeted methodologies that scaffold learning and respect the student's primary language. Researchers like Paiva (2014) and Sousa (2015) advocate for differentiated instruction and the strategic use of visual resources, project-based learning, and technology to bridge linguistic gaps. The multilingual turn in language education (May 2014) offers valuable theoretical tools to frame these challenges as opportunities for innovation and transformation in teaching practices.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, studies suggest that prior knowledge in a first language, especially when that language is fully accessible and developed, can positively influence the acquisition of additional languages. This is particularly true when instructional approaches build upon existing cognitive structures and allow for meaningful cross-linguistic transfer. Therefore, enabling full access to Libras is not only a cultural right but a pedagogical strategy for enhancing second and foreign language acquisition.

### 3. Methodological Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, guided by the need to deeply understand and interpret the complex sociolinguistic and pedagogical processes involved in the teaching of English to deaf students in inclusive settings. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for the exploration of meanings, experiences, and perceptions that are essential for addressing the nuanced realities of language teaching to this population (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994).

#### 3.1 Type of Research

This research is both bibliographic and descriptive-observational in nature. The bibliographic component involves a critical review of national and international literature published in the last five years concerning the teaching of foreign languages to deaf students. Key theoretical and empirical contributions were identified, including studies by Grosjean (2015), Moraes (2012), Paiva (2014), Sousa (2015), and others. These sources were selected based on their relevance, academic rigor, and potential to inform inclusive language teaching practices.

The descriptive-observational component involved the analysis of reports and narratives collected from teachers of English and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), as well as educational interpreters working in elementary and secondary public schools in Brazil. These reports provided insights into classroom dynamics, pedagogical strategies, student responses, and the use of multimodal resources in inclusive English classes.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was structured in two main stages. In the first stage, a detailed literature review was conducted through access to academic databases such as Scielo, CAPES, Google Scholar, and ERIC. The review focused on articles, theses, and dissertations that address deaf education, bilingualism, and foreign language pedagogy.

In the second stage, semi-structured interviews and open questionnaires were used to gather qualitative data from 12 professionals working in inclusive school contexts across four different Brazilian states. The participants included:

- 5 English language teachers with experience teaching deaf students.
- 4 certified Libras-Portuguese educational interpreters.
- 3 pedagogical coordinators who support bilingual inclusion strategies.

All participants signed informed consent forms, and their identities were anonymized in compliance with ethical research standards.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis was guided by principles from Triviños (2015) and Bardin’s (2016) content analysis methodology. The process consisted of three stages:

1. **Pre-analysis:** Organizing and systematizing the collected material, identifying recurring themes and significant narratives.
2. **Material exploration:** Coding the data based on thematic units related to bilingualism, inclusion, pedagogical practices, and linguistic challenges.
3. **Treatment and interpretation:** Interpreting the coded data in light of the theoretical framework, identifying patterns, contradictions, and emerging themes that contribute to the understanding of triangulation in language learning among deaf students.

Through this process, a synthesis was created that integrated insights from literature with the lived experiences of professionals in the field, generating a comprehensive picture of current practices and challenges.

### 3.4 Limitations

This study is limited by its qualitative scope and the relatively small sample size, which may not fully represent the diversity of educational contexts in Brazil. However, the depth of the interviews and the richness of the narratives provide valuable insights for future research and pedagogical intervention. The study also acknowledges that regional differences in the implementation of inclusive education policies may affect the generalizability of some findings.

## 4. Recent Research Findings

Over the last five years, an increasing number of studies have focused on understanding how deaf students interact with foreign languages in multilingual settings. One key finding has been the recognition of the dynamic interplay among L1 (Libras), L2 (Portuguese), and FL (English), where each language plays a unique and contextually dependent role in the learning process. Research has shown that deaf students do not approach language learning in a linear or hierarchical fashion, but rather in a fluid and integrated manner, drawing on their full linguistic repertoire depending on the communicative demands of the task at hand (Grosjean, 2015).

International studies, such as those conducted by Swanwick and Marschark (2016), suggest that effective foreign language learning among deaf students is facilitated when teaching practices consider the students’ linguistic profiles and incorporate strategies that recognize the primacy of sign language as a cognitive foundation. These studies emphasize that linguistic scaffolding from the first language—sign language—can significantly aid the acquisition of written forms of both the second and foreign languages, highlighting the importance of a visual and bilingual pedagogical approach.

In Brazil, recent research by Almeida and Santos (2020) examined classrooms in São Paulo and found that the use of Libras as the main language of instruction, paired with written Portuguese as a bridge language, enabled greater access to English vocabulary and grammar structures. This approach allowed deaf students to connect meaningfully with English by building on their conceptual knowledge in Libras and their literacy in Portuguese. Their findings also showed that multimodal materials—such as videos, images, and animations—played a central role in making content accessible and engaging.

Additional studies by Oliveira (2021) and Costa (2022) explored how translanguaging practices in bilingual classrooms support deaf learners. They argue that teachers who adopt flexible language policies and use students' full linguistic repertoire promote deeper comprehension and language retention. Translanguaging, in this context, refers to the strategic use of all available languages to support meaning-making, rather than enforcing rigid language boundaries. These studies underscore the pedagogical value of code-meshing, where elements of Libras, Portuguese, and English coexist in a dynamic classroom environment.

Reports from teachers and interpreters collected during the present study corroborate these findings. Educators note that deaf students often benefit from pre-teaching vocabulary in Libras, contextualizing content through visual aids, and offering translations into written Portuguese before introducing English. These scaffolding steps are seen as essential to ensuring that students can make semantic and syntactic connections across languages.

Furthermore, interpreter feedback suggests that the timing and coordination of interpretations during English instruction greatly influence student comprehension. Interpreters reported that when teachers collaborate closely with them in lesson planning and allow time for conceptual mediation in Libras, students exhibit improved engagement and performance. This highlights the importance of collaborative practices in inclusive classrooms, where interpreters are not merely passive conduits of language but active agents in the pedagogical process.

Another significant trend in recent research is the increasing emphasis on culturally responsive teaching. Studies by Paiva (2019) and Sousa (2020) recommend that foreign language curricula for deaf students integrate culturally relevant content and recognize the cultural identity of the Deaf community. These approaches affirm students' identities and promote more inclusive learning experiences.

In summary, the research landscape over the past five years points toward a paradigm shift in the teaching of EFL to deaf students. It emphasizes the need for triangulated, multimodal, and culturally sensitive teaching strategies that acknowledge and leverage the multilingual realities of

deaf learners. The next section will examine how these research insights are reflected in the day-to-day practices and pedagogical interactions observed in Brazilian classrooms.

## **5. Classroom Practices and Linguistic Mediation**

### **5.1 Interpreters as Co-Educators**

One of the most consistent themes emerging from the data is the multifaceted role of sign language interpreters. Far from being mere conduits of translation, interpreters function as co-educators, cultural brokers, and mediators of meaning. Their presence enables deaf students to access content but also facilitates the linguistic triangulation at the heart of this study.

Teachers reported greater success in reaching deaf students when they collaborated closely with interpreters during lesson planning, adapting activities to incorporate Libras and using visual scaffolding. Interpreters often had to make on-the-fly decisions about how to represent abstract vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammar structures in accessible ways. The interpreter's pedagogical sensitivity and familiarity with the subject matter were cited as decisive factors for classroom success.

### **5.2 Visual and Multimodal Pedagogy**

Given the visual nature of sign language, pedagogical strategies that leverage images, symbols, gestures, and multimedia are particularly effective. Observed practices included:

- Use of realia and props to introduce vocabulary.
- Infographics and mind maps for concept organization.
- Storytelling through signed narratives followed by written exercises in English.
- Bimodal presentation of texts (video in Libras and subtitles in English);
- Games and apps with image-based or interactive activities.

These strategies not only enhance comprehension but also create more inclusive and stimulating learning environments for all students, not just the deaf. Additionally, project-based learning (PBL) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) emerged as promising frameworks for facilitating real communication and meaningful use of English.

### **5.3 Linguistic Scaffolding**

Lessons often moved in a structured sequence: concept introduction in Libras, consolidation in Portuguese, and extension in English. This sequence supported cognitive processing and built upon students' prior knowledge. Translanguaging—intentional shifts between languages—was observed as a common and effective practice, empowering students to use their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning. Examples included comparing grammatical structures between Libras and English or using signs to support memory when writing in English. Students

reported feeling more confident and autonomous when translanguaging was encouraged rather than penalized.

## 6. Reflections and Implications for Inclusive EFL Teaching

The triangulation of Libras, Portuguese, and English reflects a complex but fertile ground for linguistic and educational development. For triangulation to be successful, educators must:

- Understand the sociolinguistic profiles of their students.
- Be open to multimodal and multilingual approaches.
- Engage in continuous professional development regarding bilingual education and deaf culture.
- Promote collaborative teaching with interpreters and inclusion staff.
- Advocate for systemic changes in curriculum and materials.

Institutional support is also vital. Policies that recognize the legitimacy of Libras in all areas of knowledge, curricula that include sign language and deaf culture, and teaching materials tailored for visual learners are all essential for sustained inclusion. Universities and teacher training programs must also update their curricula to include content on the teaching of foreign languages to deaf learners.

Furthermore, inclusive EFL teaching contributes to broader goals of equity and social justice. When deaf students are given the opportunity to learn English within frameworks that respect their language and culture, they gain access to academic, professional, and intercultural opportunities otherwise denied to them. Empowering deaf students with the tools to navigate multiple languages can reshape not only their individual trajectories but the collective vision of education as a right and not a privilege.

## 7. Conclusion

The present study highlights the complexities and specificities involved in teaching English as a foreign language to deaf students in inclusive educational contexts. Drawing upon the triangulation of Libras, Portuguese, and English, the research reinforces the centrality of multilingual pedagogical approaches that are rooted in the linguistic and cultural realities of deaf learners.

First, it is evident that teaching practices need to account for the primary linguistic base of the deaf student, which in most Brazilian cases is Libras. This language is not only a medium of communication but a foundation for cognition and conceptual development. English learning becomes more meaningful and accessible when it is built upon this foundation through visual and multimodal strategies.

Second, the role of Portuguese as a bridge language must be strategically employed rather than imposed. While many deaf students may have varying levels of proficiency in written Portuguese, its function in the EFL classroom can serve to mediate meaning and scaffold understanding when used alongside Libras. Effective practices avoid over-reliance on Portuguese alone and instead cultivate dynamic translanguaging environments that empower students to use all their linguistic resources.

Third, the triangulated relationship among the three languages should not be understood as a simple sequence or hierarchy but as a dynamic interaction that reflects the real-world communicative practices of bilingual and multilingual deaf individuals. Classroom research and interpreter reports confirm that when educators adopt inclusive strategies—such as pre-teaching in Libras, integrating visual resources, and planning collaboratively with interpreter student engagement and comprehension are significantly enhanced.

Furthermore, culturally responsive teaching plays a crucial role in creating a sense of belonging and validation for deaf students. Curricula that reflect Deaf culture, recognize the legitimacy of Libras, and promote identity-affirming practices contribute to student motivation, autonomy, and academic success. These pedagogical practices challenge the historically oralist and exclusionary models of foreign language instruction and propose new avenues rooted in equity and linguistic justice.

Methodologically, the use of qualitative research has proven effective in capturing the nuances of classroom interactions and providing insight into teacher and interpreter perceptions. Nonetheless, future studies may benefit from the inclusion of longitudinal data and more direct student feedback, as well as interdisciplinary approaches that integrate insights from linguistics, education, and Deaf studies.

In conclusion, the teaching of English to deaf students through a triangulated linguistic model is not only possible but essential for promoting genuine inclusion. This approach acknowledges the plural and multimodal nature of human communication, respects the linguistic rights of deaf individuals, and promotes educational practices that are both socially just and pedagogically sound. The findings of this study invite educators, researchers, and policymakers to rethink the frameworks through which we approach language teaching and to design systems that celebrate, rather than marginalize, linguistic diversity.

The work presented here hopes to inspire continued reflection and action toward a more inclusive, equitable, and linguistically respectful approach to teaching foreign languages to deaf students. As the educational field evolves, so must our commitment to practices that dismantle linguistic barriers and affirm the full humanity and potential of every learner.

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## 4. Creating educational videos about gender and sexual diversity for a ba in bilingualism.

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### Introduction

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ+ or just queer) students are becoming more open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The traditional values in the core of Colombian education represent a challenge to be part of a more egalitarian and safe system for students in this community.

The multiple LGBTQ+ protest that happened in the US during the 70's, 80's and 90's (Faderman, 2016) had influenced the movement in Colombia which also fought for legislation and protection in the country (Castillo, 2018). The rights of queer people have been strengthened in different areas. One of these is education. Giving the organization, not only of national groups, but also international, who seek guarantees of queer students to complete their educational process. In 2015 the United Nations proposed sustainable development goals (SDG). A set of different goals set to achieve world peace. Colombia is included in this list of countries committed to the SDGs. Among the goals is SDG 4 dedicated to quality education. Its different points include number 4.5 dedicated to "equity and inclusion" to ensure the opening of marginalized groups to high-quality education (United Nations, 2024).

This point can be combined with SDG 5 dedicated to gender equality. While most of this goal focuses on the equality of women (United Nations, 2024) gender equality also entails the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals. Providing quality education to queer people entails a process of recognition of otherness. To achieve it, international and local campaigns are needed. However, in the case of education, it is necessary for each educational institution to develop its own diagnosis and strategies to create a safe environment for queer students. But even in institutions open to queer inclusion problems may still be presented.

In 2023, the university ÚNICA (Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana) discovered through a diagnosis that many people in the educational community are not well-informed about gender-related topics. This university is recognized in Bogotá for its excellent training of bilingual teachers in English and Spanish in its BA in bilingualism and master's degree in education. Queer students are a population with high rates of suffering gender-based discrimination in the

educational system, in the future if this lack of knowledge continues, students at UNICA could commit a case of harassment of their LGBTQ+ peers or, when they graduate, they could perpetuate the harassment of queer students.

To address this problem the university has planned a series of preventative exercises, awareness campaigns and cultural workshops to raise awareness about gender and sexual diversity. This thesis describes the creation of an audiovisual resource that is expected to be used in UNICA's planned activities on gender awareness. This project is called "Haus Xpectrum", a series of 10 bilingual educational videos about gender and sexual diversity. Although in Colombia the creation of material on language teaching, specifically English, and gender and sexual diversity exists, there is a gap in terms of multimedia. Especially bilingual multimedia.

By providing an audio-visual resource, UNICA and other educational communities could have a better understanding of queerness in education. Helping also with the inclusion standards of SDG 4 and SDG 5 of which UNICA also aligned with. This research focuses only on the creation of the material itself, not on its implementation.

### **Problem Statement**

The 2000s and 2010s were key decades for LGBTQ+ civil rights in international law making (Kawasaka, 2025). Nevertheless, members of the community still struggle from stigmatization and mental health, being a predominant group with high suicide rates (WHO, 2024). Particularly when talking about youth. Sexual orientation remains a main factor for bullying and cyberbullying (Elipe et al., 2017). Even in tolerance countries, young queer people may experience physical, psychological and emotional damage that may lead to suicide that may be prevented with adult/peer support and school safety (Wallace et al., 2024).

In the internationalization of inclusive policies, it is necessary to consider the two previous factors to ensure the proper development of young LGBTQ people, especially educational rights. Yet, given the complexity that comes from speaking about queerness in the classroom, the discourse around these policies will change and remain controversial depending on the political, social and cultural relationship each country, or continent, has towards the LGBTQ+ community. Latin America has a well-documented catholic/conservative past, which limited the discourse around these inclusive policies. Nonetheless, in the 2000s and 2010s the continent also experienced an improvement in LGBTQ+ rights (Corrales, 2020). Changing the landscape for Latino educators and institutions to protect a population they previously oppressed.

In the Colombian context, the historical background shows how the prejudice against LGBTQ+ people has been used to maintain heteronormative power and control. One example is the Colombian armed conflict, where the armed groups target queer individuals to gain the

approval and legitimacy of the civilian population (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). Prior to the turn of the millennium, LGBTQ+ political and legal changes were predominantly focused on homosexual men. The decriminalization of homosexuality in the Código Penal Colombiano (1980) was one of the first breakthroughs of the community. During the presidency of César Gaviria in 1991 a new Constitución Política de Colombia (1991) was written. Being the first constitution that protects openly to marginalized groups such as indigenous population, religious minorities, black communities and gender/sexuality diverse individuals.

The constitution is less explicit in terms of legal frameworks for queer protection than later documents, but it was an important step in the pursuit of LGBTQ+ rights in Colombia. More favorable legislation occurred in the 2000s and 2010s. However, violence and discrimination against the community persist—meaning that Colombia presents itself in a paradoxical situation where the existence of these laws has not translated into a reduction of violence (Collinassi, 2022). In fact, Colombia Diversa (2024) reports a 12.1% increase in threats against LGBTQ+ people, where the most attacked identities were gay men and transgender women. This paradox has affected different aspects of Colombian society. Transferring also to education.

On the one hand, queer students are protected by a vast number of regulations that guarantee their right to education. But on the other hand, the establishment of these regulations has not prevented educational institutions from systematically abusing them. Unfortunately, “in many classrooms at all academic levels, teachers have biases and beliefs that imply heterosexuals are the norm, and other forms of sexuality are seen as unnatural or even unacceptable” (Largo-Gómez & Rúa-Castro, 2021, p. 6). However, something that has changed in the last two decades is the support that the Corte Constitucional de Colombia has provided to students whose educational right was violated due to sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

In 2014 a case changed the Colombian educational community when Sergio Urrego, a 16-year-old from Bogotá, committed suicide after facing pressure from his school's authorities over his sexual orientation. The event led to a landmark court ruling mandating improvements in school coexistence policies (Castillo, 2018). This resulted in the ruling T-478/15 (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2015) and opened a huge discussion about Colombia education and safe spaces for queer students. An openness to the students' queerness in the classrooms has occurred since that verdict, but discrimination has continued to occur in school's years after the ruling.

In 2024 a 14-year-old queer student known as “Ruben” (He/Him) was expelled from a school in Sogamoso after denouncing the systematic discrimination of LGBTQ+ students in his school (J. Pardo, 2025). The student talked to the organization Somos Jacarandas (2024, as cited in J. Pardo, 2025) who pointed out in an Instagram reel that the school had discriminated against

two female classmates that were in a romantic relationship, additionally the school showed a film about ex-homosexual conversion in the sexual education class. After the viralization of the reel, the school cancelled Ruben's enrollment claiming defamation, and in order to reinstate him, they asked the organization to take down the video and Ruben had to publicly apologize (Somos Jacarandas, 2025).

In January of 2025, the Corte Constitucional de Colombia (2024) ruled in favor of Ruben in the ruling T-529/24 which established, once again, the principle of no student suffering discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. This recent case proves how, despite attempts by traditionalist schools to oppress their queer students, Colombia's Constitutional Court is taking a stand in favor of the diverse rights of inclusive policies. And therefore, Colombian educational institutions must consider how to prepare themselves for the well-being of their own current or future queer students.

This is a current discussion at ÚNICA. A university located in Bogotá dedicated to the training of bilingual educators for English and/or Spanish teaching. In 2023, ÚNICA performed a survey on gender-based violence. It should be clarified that gender-based violence does not only refer to violence against women, it gathers other spectra of violence and discrimination, which include sexuality and gender identity. Two departments carried out the survey: administrative staff and the gender group “Única Diversa”, which is responsible for conducting research on diversity and inclusion in the institution.

The findings show a need to increase student awareness of gender-related topics at ÚNICA. It reveals that a basic understanding of gender-related concepts exists, although there is some confusion regarding specific terms; and there is a lack of knowledge about the existence of institutional protocols and strategies for the prevention and attention to gender-based violence (Salgado, 2024).

The results of this diagnosis were expected to feed other investigations in the seedbed, still, it has exceeded expectations and led to internal changes in the institution. A new protocol for the prevention of gender-based violence was written—with the assistance of the seedbed ÚNICA Diversa—and an action plan is now proposed to address this lack of knowledge in the institution. In terms of concepts related to the LGBTQ+, this specific lack remained evident when the surveyed had problems in knowing the difference between sex, gender, gender identity, and gender expression.

In their 2025 town hall event “El Flow de ÚNICA” the upgraded protocol of gender-based violence was announced. Including an explanation on how to use it and the availability of a laminated copy for consultation in the administrative section of the university. At ÚNICA

prevention has been chosen as the strategy to avoid cases of gender violence. Both within the institution and in the students' future jobs.

Under a “prevention and care” policy, the university will perform prevention exercises, awareness campaigns and cultural workshops to raise awareness about gender and sexuality among all the members of the educational community. If ÚNICA students are unaware of these concepts, they may perpetuate harassment, bullying and attacks on their classmates in ÚNICA or in their future jobs. Something that could get them into legal trouble for violating the right of education, as seen in the rulings T-478/15 and T-529/24.

This thesis attempts to create a set of educational videos about gender and sexualities to help pre-service and in-service teachers learn about the LGBTQ+ community. The project consists of 10 videos—5 in Spanish and 5 in English with the exact same topics, sequences and illustrations modified in their respective languages. Since ÚNICA is a bilingual environment, it is necessary to plan materials that can be used in English and/or Spanish activities. This project is expected to become a complementary tool that may allow multimedia-based learning in the prevention exercises, awareness campaigns and cultural workshops.

Although the main objective of this material is to inform the ÚNICA community about queerness, it also provides an educational resource under the name of ÚNICA that could be used in other universities. It is necessary to note that this work is centered on the creation of the videos, not its future implementation.

### **Main Research Question**

How could educational videos about gender and sexual diversity be created for the ÚNICA educational community?

#### **Specific question:**

- How could an initial production proposal for the educational videos be improved based on the feedback provided by ÚNICA experts in gender studies?
- How could the final version of the educational videos be enhanced by testing the demos among a group of educators outside of production development?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the production process that lead to the final version of the educational videos?

### **Main Research Objective**

Create educational videos about gender and sexual diversity for the ÚNICA educational community.

### Specific objectives:

- Improve an initial production proposal of the educational videos by including the feedback from ÚNICA experts in gender studies.
- Enhanced the final version of the educational videos by testing the demos among a group of educators outside of production development.
- Refine the final version of the educational videos by identifying their strengths and weaknesses during the production process.

### Literature Review

The Colombian educational system has followed a traditional model that reinforces gender stereotypes and hegemonic heterosexuality, but in recent years a significant shift in pedagogies of gender, body, and sexuality has emerged in the country (Gutiérrez, 2022). This shift has led to a great deal of research in relation to educational practices and sexual and gender diversity. Encouraging the restructuring of traditional educational strategies to foster diversity, an important factor to adopt strategies that aid in the safety, behavior, and success of a diverse population (Maddah, 2018). One of these first nationally recognized works was conducted by Luis Miguel Bermúdez Gutiérrez, who included sex education in the Ethics and Religion class to reduce gender violence and pregnancy.

At first Gutiérrez (2017) had difficulties implementing the project since the educational community opposed the idea, until the pregnancy rate exponentially reduced to zero and LGBTQ+ students felt safer in the institution. Gutierrez was not the first to suggest this type of propositions in Colombia, but the fact that he won the teacher of the year award has given this work a media coverage that has helped to open other avenues for sexuality and education research. As a result, a recent boom in academic literature can be seen in different educational fields. In order to narrow down the present corpus, the recollection of articles was in the areas of language learning, material creation, and gender and sexuality diversity.

Nevertheless, in the search of papers with similar objectives as the one presented here, it was discovered that most works that deal with the creation/use of educational videos about LGBTQ+ topics were mostly present in health training. Although health was not an initial field target of the study, the founding of a large piece of literature with these guidelines makes it worth it to include it as well.

### The PRISMA Statement

This literature review was conducted using the PRISMA statement postulated by Moher et al. (2009). Although the model's origin arises from the necessity of developing systematic reviews and meta-analysis of clinical literature (Urrútia, & Bonfill, 2013), its effectiveness has made

it worthy in other fields. The investigator already had 21 articles when the search started. A preliminary search on the databases EBSCOhost, SciElo, Redalyc, PubMed, Google Scholar and different university repositories, supply the recollection of other 131 articles. Giving a total of 152 articles based only on the title. After this initial recollection, PRISMA's culling and conservation steps were followed which helped to achieve a significant reduction in the literature (Seen in figure 1). During each stage, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were created and modified:

### **Inclusion criteria**

- Articles published from 2014 to 2024
- Articles that deal with diversity, LGBTQ+ topics, gender, and/or sexual education.
- Articles whose focus was the educational institution environment. Either within an institution or related to the educational system in general.
- Articles that deal with the teaching of English, Spanish, or other dimensions of the teaching of these languages (e.g. bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism).
- Articles dealing with basic, secondary or higher education. For it is the teacher preparation that prepares students in the BA of ÚNICA.
- Health articles were accepted as long as they met the criteria of dealing with the creation of videos and/or implementation of educational material related to the LGBTQ+ community.
- Other intersectionality dimensions of diversity were also accepted—as disability or race—as long as the focus was LGBT issues in teaching English, Spanish, or bilingualism in the two languages.

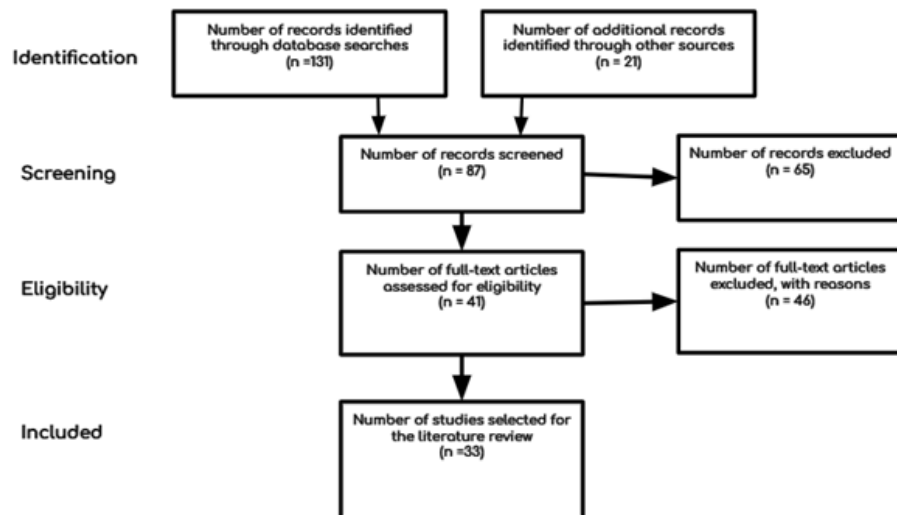
### **Exclusion criteria**

- Articles that address diversity and social justice broadly.
- Articles that focus on multimedia analysis rather than educational implementation or implications.
- Articles that address immigrant, equine, or social inclusion without explicitly addressing LGBTQ+ issues.
- Articles that deal with the LGBTQ+ community but do not focus on education.
- Articles that address the role of gender in multimedia but do not include the teaching of English or Spanish.
- Articles that addressed social media and the LGBTQ+ community but did not have an educational intervention as a central focus.
- Articles on activism in which the activist practice was more important than the creation of the materials itself.

After a general screening, 65 articles that did not follow the inclusion criterion were eliminated. Reducing the number to 87. Then, a further precious screening was carried out based on the abstract, methodology, results and conclusions. 46 articles were declined and 41 were kept. Finally, after a deeper reading and the development of more precise criteria, 33 articles were selected to be part of the literature review.

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA flow chart in four levels*



*Note.* Diagram created from the one proposed in Moher et al. (2009).

Aside from assisting in finding quality articles that met all the criteria, PRIMA also helped to outstand the categories across them. In this case, they were separated into three: workshops to increase awareness about gender, video-based learning for LGBTQ+ topics, and resources creation for gender and sexual diversity. Each will be explained below.

### **Workshops to Increase Awareness About Gender**

In terms of material creation, workshops are the most created tool to increase awareness about queerness and gender among educational communities. The general aim was to reflect critically on the educational experience and their role in gender and sexuality injustice. Certain articles launched activities involving only students: Garzón (2023) did creative writing activities in English language learning to change students' perceptions of gender stereotypes; Ramírez (2022) used storybooks with third graders to analyze their discourses on gender stereotypes.

Others designed reflections about the teaching: cases like Castañeda-Peña and Mojica (2017), Khan (2019) and Huertas-Abril and Palacios-Hidalgo (2022) did workshops exploring teachers' perspectives about inclusion to critically analyze gender and sexuality inequalities in English teaching performance. Some target both populations: Largo-Gómez and Rúa-Castro

(2020) aimed at identifying discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people in the classroom and considering how it affects in students and teachers; and Cossu et al. (2021) in the middle of a convention prepared a workshop for teachers and student-teachers of English to raise awareness about inclusion, diversity, and comprehensive sexuality education in language teaching.

Even a handful of papers took the opportunity to reflect on the implication of the material used in class to perpetuate gender hegemonies, in the way done by Evripidou (2021), Eisenmann and Ludwig (2018) and Vásquez-Guarnizo (2022). Overall, the general results revealed that—while participants may have had difficulty addressing the topics at the beginning of the activities—over time they became more open to the topics and were more willing to address them in their roles as student teachers, or even in their day-to-day monotony.

Nevertheless, while the results were positive, the researchers reported difficulties in conducting the workshops. In most cases, the populations did not have the necessary level of English to communicate. Especially with students. Often the teaching of LGBTQ+ and gender issues in second language teaching is focused only on English and not on the development of bilingual capabilities. In the case of ÚNICA, the creation of educational videos about LGBTQ+ topics for the BA of Bilingualism gives an opportunity to fill this gap. Given that the educational videos proposed in this work will be available in English and Spanish, its future use may not only be for an English and/or Spanish awareness course, but also in a bilingual one too. Which could contribute to the skill building of both languages.

### **Video-based Learning for LGBTQ+ Topics**

Literature regarding multimedia has demonstrated its effectiveness in English learning. Sari and Aminatun (2021) indicate how movies and TV shows are powerful tools for learning English in and out the classroom. In fact, Agudelo (2020) assigns a crucial role in the consumption of multimedia in the process of learning English, as the online fan culture formed around movies, TV, or music allows people to learn language by living through a close approximation to real contexts. In the digital era, multimedia has become a key element for teaching and learning. Its benefits—aside from that language learning—also includes an easy way to raise awareness about different topics. In this case LGBTQ+ issues.

Different projects have emerged with this objective. For example, *It Gets Better project* a group of short videos with celebrities that supports LGBTIQ+ youth to seek help if they have thoughts of suicide. The videos were analyzed by Kirchner et al. (2022) for their effectiveness, and while the videos were not a determining factor in their population not considering suicide, they were reported to provide emotional support that prompted them to seek help. The power and effects that screens have on us is a topic of constant debate. But in the field of education, and its

use to introduce LGBTQ+ issues, video-based learning is quite popular. Palacios-Hidalgo (2020) used it with a group of pre-service primary bilingual teachers to reflect about inclusion of gender and LGBTQ+ issues in the EFL Classroom.

As with the workshops, the population was reserved at first, but as each implementation went on there was a general acceptance of the topics. As stated earlier, the literature search found a huge selection of health-related articles. This is especially crucial in this category since they are more explicit in the use of video implementation than their counterparts in language teaching. Such video implementations are intended to inform the proper care of LGBTQ+ patients in medical training programs.

In particular, the articles center on the trans and non-binary community. Being the case of Guss et al. (2022) and Taracuk and Koch (2021). The areas of work vary greatly. Pachankis et al. (2022) discussed by the implementation of video for training related to psychology; Acosta et al. (2021) deals with the use of cineforum and problem-based learning for undergraduate nursing students; and Coulas and Gahagan (2022) explain the evaluation of cancer-related videos in undergraduate medical students. Similar to the workshops, significant results were revealed in terms of video implementation. Despite the participants' esteem for the LGBTQ+ community, the videos were effective in helping them learn about gender identities or sexual orientations.

The researchers obtained significant results that exceeded expectations by making participants open to diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion. This overview suggests the overall efficacy of video implementation for teaching about LGBTQ+ issues. Of course, the gap in this section is in terms of literature. The health field has a large number of articles that center on using video to inform about LGBTQ+ issues, while in teacher preparation articles use workshops and video implementation to reflect on queerness in the classroom rather than teaching about the concepts themselves.

The proposed educational videos of this work follow this objective. Rather than seeking constant reflection, the intention is to educate about the basic concepts that a teacher must know in order to provide appropriate assistance to LGBTQ+ students. In other words, rather than reflection the intention would be on training, inspired by the contributions of the health articles through the lens of bilingual education.

### **Resources Creation for Sexual and Gender Diversity**

Most of the literature on educational videos/resources for LGBTQ+ education tends to deal with implementation rather than creation. However, papers do exist that target the process of creation, and some with implementation. In the creation of written material, the connection between the documentary review and the needs of the context are evident. Such as Fenaughty

(2019) creator of resources to address the bullying that gay and trans students suffer and Palacios-Hidalgo et al. (2023) creator of a proposal with activities in an English book format about the LGBTIQ+ community using English for Social Purposes and Cooperation Approach.

In particular, there is a study that stands out for its documentary and contextual analysis: Segura & Ortiz (2023) looked at governmental and institutional documents, instructional material at their university; and the perceptions of peers who are gender-disruptive, to review the experiences of gender-disruptive pre-professors and, using all the information, create a booklet with pedagogical orientations for EFL teachers.

In terms of digital resources, a study, in this case by Williams (2021), was a proposal for the development of educational material for genetic counseling programs for trans\* populations. While it was all left open as to how it would be funded, it was equally beneficial for understanding the budgetary management of material design. On the other hand, Ziegler et al. (2021) were much more concrete and developed an online educational toolkit for the nursing care of sexual orientation and gender identity minorities. Now entering the video creation, it is necessary to make clarification.

Once again, a large part of the articles was health related. Research from the educational approach existed, such as Yang and MacEntee (2015) that combined video creation with a workshop to teach about condom use, but the health-related literature was more concrete with its objectives like those of the work presented here: creating educational videos to increase awareness about sexual orientation and gender diversity.

The articles are the most like what they want to do in this work. Like the category “Video-based Learning for LGBTQ+ Topics” Reynolds et al. (2021) with sexual health, Villegas (2023) with occupational therapy practitioners, piloted videos to help their population know how to provide help and care to LGBTQ+ patients. With the caveat that they were the ones who created the videos in relation to the needs of the context.

As before, a predilection for the trans community was also seen, being the focus of the videos by Martin et al. (2022) and Gavzy et al. (2019). In both cases, the experience of a trans person was used to guide the videos. The aim was to empathize with the person, but at the same time to know how to deal under pressure with any incident or change in the emergency room.

In general, the authors focused on the process of creating their material. Although some sought application, in general what framed and highlighted the research was the process as such. As with the category of “Video-based Learning for LGBTQ+ Topics” the gap is due to the fact that there are more studies on health training that use video production than articles related to language learning education. This is because most of the material for teaching about gender in

English classrooms is written (Zapata, 2022). From this, the creation of educational videos proposed in this thesis may fill this gap. Providing research that aims, instead of the production of written material, shows and reflects on the process of creating multimedia.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work has three umbrella constructs: queer pedagogy, media studies, and digital production. This decision was made due to the nature of each field. While queer pedagogy carries out the pedagogy behind the videos; media studies understand the philosophy and academic lens in which the videos alliance to; something different from digital production who oversees explaining the foundations for this production. In the following theoretical framework, the readers will find the pedagogical, philosophical, and technical justification of this thesis' videos.

### **The Queerness of Social Reconstruction**

Social reconstruction is an ideological positioning in education in which educators see society being unhealthy as the result of traditional mechanisms of power where the only solution is an education based on critical analysis and resolution of conflicts (Schiro, 2013). John Dewey is attributed to be the first in adapting social reconstruction into the pedagogical field. In Dewey's books *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1948) and *Democracy and Education* (1915), the thesis remains a criticism of the conservative teacher-centered approach, as the true goal of education is to form good citizens that will change society.

In Latin American, the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire is known as one of the most representative educators in the continent. Not only for his contributions to social reconstruction, but also to education in general. In his books *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998) and *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* (2005) Freire seeks to empower the student through education by means of social consciousness, defining teachers as facilitators of knowledge, who must help in the liberation of the student. In the Freiran proposal, the educator learns from the student, and the student learns from the educator (Pampouri et al., 2021).

A contemporary example of social reconstruction is Henry Giroux, who has become an important reference. Giroux took Freire's work to develop his own pedagogy that wants to understand the system of oppression and the inequality to minority groups. In his works *Theory and resistance in education* (1983), *Teachers as intellectuals* (2024) and *On critical pedagogy* (2011) Giroux seeks to define and perfect this pedagogy, where the analysis of society is not seen from a nihilistic point of view, but rather his intention is to create a learning model where the student is aware of the mechanisms, and from this can fight them.

Since social reconstruction is an ideological positioning where traditional power structures are analyzed for the betterment of society, it can be seen under what is called queer theory. This field is known for studying the complexity of gender and sexuality in LGBTIQ+ people. At the same time, queer theory emerged from gender studies, which is “an interdisciplinary academic field that examines gender inequality, women’s lived experience, sexuality, masculinity, and the interaction of gendered social processes with race, class, and other systems of inequality” (Scarborough & Risman, 2020, p. 41). While the core of gender studies is gender, the core of queer theory is queerness. And from queer theory also emerges queer pedagogy. In fact, most of the articles seen in the literature review were under it.

For this work, social reconstruction represents a fundamental pillar. Being what gives the validity to make educational videos as these could help educational communities to give a dignified treatment to their LGBTIQ+ students; it will also help to teach basic concepts, being facilitators under Freire's view, so that people in the community can have a starting point of how to analyze society critically through queer lens.

### **Educational Videos Before and After YouTube**

Before the digital era, the first educational videos were documentaries made for schools. Movie projectors and/or VHS tape allowed teachers to show image and sound in class. At the beginning of the 21st century, technology had a great impact in different fields, one of them being education. All the documentaries evolved on the web and from them the contemporary educational video was born.

In the 2000s, theory related to educational videos was built to provide guidance to this new medium. Interestingly, much of what was created in this period is still relevant to the contemporary educational video. In *El vídeo educativo* (The educational video), Ramos (2000) explains that the video is a complementary material for the teacher-in the classroom videos provide a more representative support than slides, since they combine visuals and sound to illustrate, schematize, and gain clarity and simplicity in the topics to be studied. Didactically, audiovisual resources as a strategy of diverse techniques contribute to understanding, guide as a component of lasting memory (Bustos, 2019)

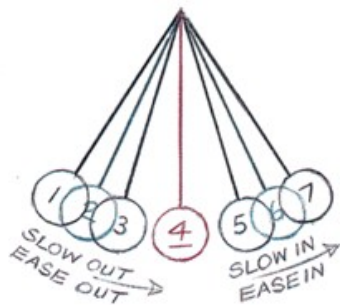
In research by Østereng (2022), the findings highlighted positive results when teachers use video-based learning, yet the educators acknowledge the need of active, constructive, and interactive learning experiences to facilitate videos as resources. When talking about educational videos, pedagogy cannot be left behind. Both elements must be balanced in order to have good results. Neither can the teacher leave everything in the hands of the video, nor can the video function without active participation from the students.

## Principles of Animation and Digital Composition

In traditional animation, the image is created by frames and layers. The process begins with hand drawing. In *The Animator's Survival Kit*, the legendary animator Richard Williams (2012) elucidates how back in the day the animation drew the character or the object on paper, each frame would create a moment, and depending on the sequence, these frames can get close or far for different purposes (see figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Illustration of a frame-by-frame animation*

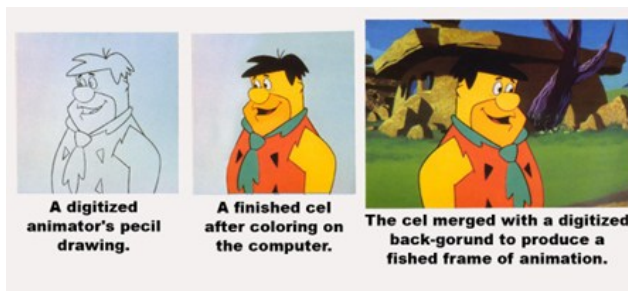


*Note.* Example taken from (Williams, 2001).

After finishing all the pencil drawing. The elements (meaning objects or the characters) are painted in a celluloid sheet. Here the image is composed of layers. In the most basic form only two things are required: the character and the background.

**Figure 3**

*Exemplification of a composition form drawing to cel*

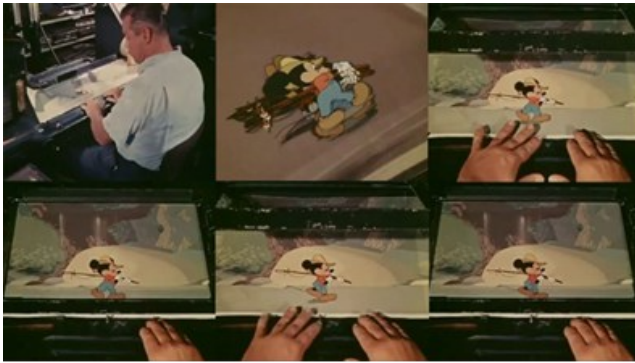


*Note.* Example provided by Hanna-Barbera Productions (1985) as used by Lewell (1985).

The more elements are in the composition, the more layers are needed. In the program *Tricks of our Trade* (1957), Walt Disney explained the process of traditional animation. Figure 4 conveys the animation process of a Mickey short in the 50s. The character has been inked on transparent sheets of cellulite; the animator puts sheet by sheet on a camera and takes pictures. The background is kept moving behind Mickey to create the illusion of motion and build the sequence (Disney, 1957, in the program directed by Algar et al, 1957).

## Figure 4

*Creation of an animated sequence*

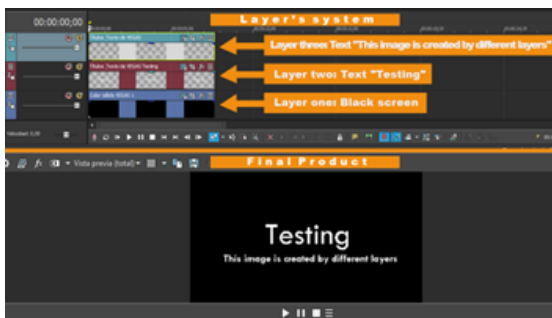


*Note.* Images taken from “Tricks of Our Trade” directed by Algar et al (1957).

The sheets of Mickey are in one layer, and the background is in another. Digital composition uses the principles of animation to create its composition. As current editing programs are handled through layers to create the material.

## Figure 5

*Layer system on the Sony Vegas program*



Instead of an animator, the editing program puts scene by scene into a final product. This process is known as “rendering”.

For educational videos composition is crucial, as composition not only creates the images but also the narrative. To exemplify this point, it is worth mentioning the video *The Turing Test, Judith Butler's Gender Performativity, and Her* (2021) by Film & Media Studies. The thesis of the video explains the common points between Alan Turing’s *Computing Machinery and Intelligence* (1950) and Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1999) found in the movie *Her* (2013). Here the videos play with composition and layers. Appearing elements such as pages of academic papers, quotes, images, interviews, and even videos from other channels. As presented in Figure 6, the video creates an interesting experience through its composition.

**Figure 6**

*Screenshot of the video*



*Note.* Screenshot of the video “The Turing Test, Judith Butler’s Gender Performativity, and Her” (Film & Media Studies, 2021).

Based on the above, educational videos offer the possibility to create compositions for interactive and pedagogical purposes. It has its foundation on traditional animation but adapts to digital. Through it, the videos of this research will be an interesting visual experience that will help in the understanding of LGBTQ+ topics.

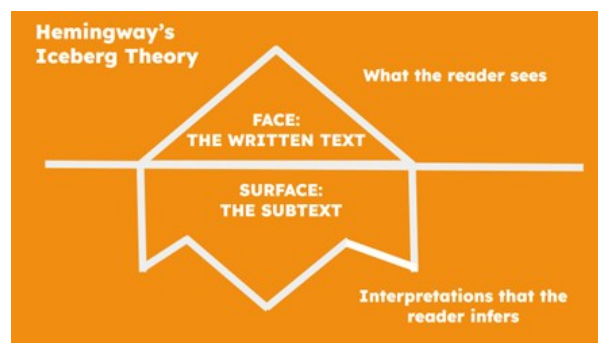
### **The Queer Subtext: A Matter of Media and the Classroom**

When people unaware of media studies analyze videos, they tend to focus only on the surface; what is literally happening on the page or the screen. Behind any medium, including educational videos, the subtext is equally important to understand the piece as a whole, particularly through the lens of social reconstruction.

Subtext in literary analysis is more related to the aesthetic purposes of a work. The well-known American writer Ernest Hemingway used subtext as one key element in the construction of his works. He proposes ‘The Iceberg Theory’. In any story there are two levels; the face or text, which is the actual in the story, and the surface or the subtext, what the reader infers is behind the story (Darzikola, 2013).

**Figure 7**

*Hemingway’s Iceberg Theory*



The subtext is in charge of structures, symbolism, and the inner thoughts of the characters.

Omission, rather to lower the quality, enriches the experience to the reader. As Blum (2013) explains:

Hemingway said that only the tip of the iceberg showed in fiction—your reader will see only what is above the water—but the knowledge that you have about your character that never makes it into the story acts as the bulk of the iceberg. And that is what gives your story weight and gravitas (Disk 1, Track 9)

In media creation, subtext is also fundamental. The construction of a good subtext is crucial in the quality of the final product (Foka, 2015). The subtext is obvious when it comes to screenwriting, but in the final product the subtext is perceived and analyzed through visual construction and linguistic communication.

In a linguistic lens, the subtext in media is composed by the speaking act of the characters. Both in real life and in media the linguistic the speech has three elements: the locutionary act, which is the direct form of what is said; the illocutionary act, which is the information that the speaker wants to convey; and the perlocutionary act, which is what the interlocutor infers from what is said (Anggraeni & Ramdhani, 2023). The subtext is found in the perlocutionary act. The three elements are presented both in verbal and nonverbal communication, and the way of speaking and the behaviors of the characters join the visual movement and create the subtext in the multimedia.

In visual terms, the filmmaker uses a series of different methods and applications in the camera movement to help develop the story (Drucker et al., 1992). The way the camera moves; how certain characters have more screen time than others; and how it gets close to x object or x element creates the subtext in media.

Different types of subtexts are found in media studies. Queerness has been hidden for a long time, finding its place in the subtext. In the history of multimedia, the 'queer subtext' was a major part of film. One of the fields whose main discourse goes around subtext is horror theory, and specifically horror queer theory. Horror movies tend to be pretty queer as homosexuality, bisexuality, lesbianism and other identities are not explicit, yet the viewer infers them (Dyer, 1988; Wood, 1979). Examples of this subtext can be found in recognized films of the genre, such as *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), *Nightmare on Elm Street 2* (1985), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), *Scream* (1996) and *Jennifer's Body* (2009).

Of course, this subtext is not only encountered in horror, but rather in multiple genres. In Marilyn Monroe's movie *Some Like it Hot* (1959), the characters play with trans ambiguity; some underline lesbian tones in *Rebecca* (1940); in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999), the main protagonist is coded as gay; and *Jawbreaker* (1999) deals with a female outcast being in love with a popular girl.

Over time, and as a result of social change, queerness went from subtext to being the text itself. Unfortunately, when queer moved from subtext to text, this was not always done in a respectful manner. Before the internet, the role of educational videos in classrooms was through documentaries. Some talked about homosexuality to inform the population, but they did so with huge biases. The most infamous example is *Boys Beware!* (1961). In it we have two main characters; the young Jimmy and the homosexual man Ralph. The documentary treats homosexuality as pedophilia. As the narrator says in it:

Then, during lunch, Ralph showed him some pornographic pictures. Jimmy knew he shouldn't be interested but well he was curious. What Jimmy didn't know was that Ralph was sick. A sickness that was not visible like smallpox but no less dangerous and contagious. A sickness of the mind. You see, Ralph was homosexual. A person who demands an intimate relationship with members of their own sex. But by now Jimmy felt a fondness for Ralph and they continued to go places together (Davis, 1962)

The legacy of anti-LGBT documentaries is a mark of how multimedia can be used to harm minorities. This research wants to change that, by using media as a way to help LGBTQ+ people and inform people around them. As, unfortunately, this disrespectful approximation to sexual diversity does not just occur in the media but in real life.

Behind any conversation there is a subtext, and in the classroom the queer subtext is also present. In traditional education there is an active process of never mentioning LGBTIQ+ topics. Nevertheless, through the subtext of the classroom, queer students explore their sexuality even if institutions prohibit it. 'Exploring sexuality' does not necessarily mean maintaining sexual relationships. Exploring means discovering, discussing, and accepting your sexual orientation. A process that happens to all students.

At school, heterosexual male students will talk about the girls they like, they will make out with their partners in the hallway, and they will pair up for a project. A gay boy, for example, will also be thinking about the guys he likes, he may have a partner in his class, and he may be more willing to explore his masculinity and femininity. But if the boy is not in a safe environment, he will hide the exploration in the subtext, but this is always noticeable.

Teachers and students always know who is queer in the classroom. Students may not say 'I am gay!' to everyone, but the queer subtext explodes their identity. In this type of traditional school, the only way in which the subject comes out is when 'gay' or 'queer' is used as an insult or the teacher/school's authorities explicitly say that it is wrong. To take queerness from the subtext to the text in this way contributes to the dehumanizing and oppressing process of queer students. The students will learn that it is something bad that is only worth mentioning as an insult, and

bullying comes after queer students.

The prior explanation of queer subtext interconnects media and school. In this research, the educational videos want to take queerness from the subtext to the text in a responsible way, as creating material that informs about these topics will ensure the well-being of students in this community. This will contribute to the inclusion of diverse media and to provide material that helps teachers and students to understand their LGBTQ+ peers.

## **Methodology**

### **Paradigm, Philosophy and Type of Study**

Qualitative research attempts to access reality through a middle ground between academic theories and personal and collective experience (Sampieri et al., 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Hence, several qualitative works choose interpretivism. This philosophical foundation uses interpretation as the basis for the whole body of research, especially considering the context and how reality and the researcher's goals act upon it (Myers, 2013).

Audiovisuals request an interpretative capacity that allows understanding and aligning the director's choices and the producers' demands. Such interpretation cannot arise from positivism, since each audiovisual production is developed from a narrative and aesthetic subjectivity with specific theoretical guidelines that, although it can be subverted, must have a congruence process to guarantee the quality of the product. This congruence does not emerge from strict formulas; it is built from the subjectivities of those who create the audiovisual material and the theoretical guidelines of film/media theory. For this reason, this work opts for the qualitative paradigm and the philosophy of interpretivism.

As an audiovisual production, the type of study is educational material design. This research field, whose name varies from material development, material creation, content design, and more, originated as a sub-category of methodology in an attempt to produce simplified explanations of methods (Pardo et. al, 2009). Over time, several theorists suggested a change, turning the sub-category into a field of study where the educator is invited to solve the problem of an educational community through the creation of materials (Pardo et. al, 2004, 2009; Pardo & Téllez, 2009), which contributes to developing educational content based on actual learning needs and not only memorizing rules, patterns and structures (Islam, 2013).

Most publications on material design emphasize the creation of textbooks, curriculum design, and other written materials, being the result of both online learning and its derivative approaches which are fairly recent (Costa, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the design of materials to online spaces, giving a new opportunity for educators to explore the creation of materials throughout the position of directors/producers (Castillo et al., 2021). The creation

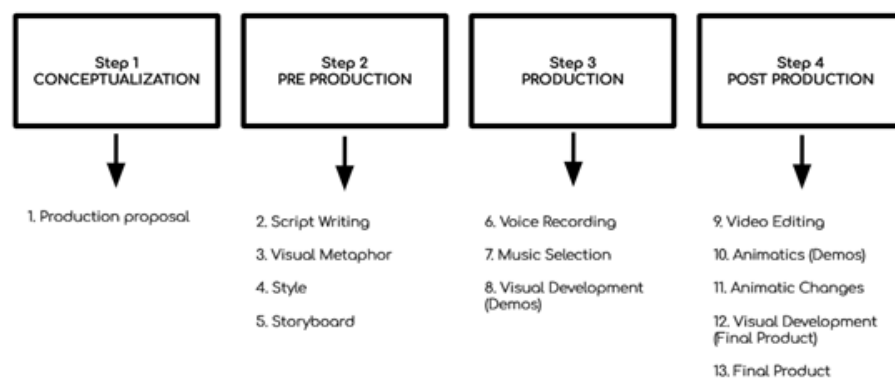
and use of multimedia also offer an opportunity for inclusion in the classroom since it allows diverse communities to have a chance for representation, action, and expression (Koenig, 2022).

In the scope of ÚNICA’s educational community, the educational videos could follow this criterion of media representation, action, and expression since they could work as a resource for the inclusion of queer individuals in the Colombian educational system. An affiliation between queerness, representation and inclusion is quite common. Queer theory itself has a predilection for analysis of different types of media, including films, videos, and other visual representatives (Plummer, 2011; Creswell, 2018). The transition between analyzing media and then creating it is common. One could even say it is a smooth process to learn from theory and use it to give a new perspective to an audiovisual product.

### Stages of Video Making

The following stages combine and modify the ideas of TED-Ed (2013a, 2013b), Castillo et al. (2021), and Pardo et. al (2004) into a single one production model, visually displayed in figure 8.

**Figure 8.** *Production Model*



*Note.* Adapted from TED-Ed (2013a, 2013b), Castillo et al. (2021) and Pardo et. al's (2004).

In stage 1 the video-maker writes an initial proposal about the project. It should include name, context needs, problem aiming to solve, objectives, possible use, an explanation of the production model and the list of episodes. In stage 2 the video-maker prepares the necessary elements for the production, things such as the scripts, visual metaphor, style and storyboards. In stage 3 the voice over is recorded, the background music is selected, and preliminary visuals are developed to create the demo of the videos. In stage 4 the video-maker takes the demo version and edit them into the final version of the educational videos. At the end of each stage, it is expected to receive feedback from a group of educators. This feedback will lead to the modification that the videos could need to construct a well-defined final version of the material.

## Ethical considerations

Butler (2011) acknowledges representation as how a political subject seeks visibility and legitimacy. This concept of representation is reflected in the relationship between queer people and media, since media can be a form of identity exploration and social acceptance (Alinchanec, 2024). Therefore, a huge ethical responsibility for appropriate representation lies in producing queer multimedia. Every piece is trapped in its own historical moment, but it will not remain forever pigeonholed in contemporary morality; for those same interpretations expand over time and the piece reaches constantly beyond its initial and future readings (Sedgwick, 2003). Haus Xpectrum is the result of academic research and the best intentions of a group of educators to make a good resource that represents and respects members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Nonetheless, language and concepts surrounding queerness change significantly fast (American Psychological Association, 2015). In ethical terms, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of the videos in terms of representation. They focused on a first approach to the LGBTQ+ community and queer terminology and drowns from contemporary discussions on queerness. For some people/places of implementation, this may fall short; however, it is worth mentioning that they do meet the needs of ÚNICA. Hence, the opportunity is provided for its continued evolution in the future when discussions and terminology about gender and sexuality mature, thereby fostering a space for further discussions and research similar to the one presented here.

## Context

To recap, Haus Xpectrum aims to be an educational resource for ÚNICA's future prevention campaign. In ÚNICA, all classrooms have a computer connected to a TV and Bienestar already has experience with VBL. Especially along TED-Ed videos to introduce or reinforce topics in their classes. In this sense, Haus Xpectrum may not be difficult to use in the community because its mechanics are similar to TED-ED. Furthermore, ÚNICA also has a background with group activities about gender and diversity. From the above, Haus Xpectrum is a project feasible in this context.

## Participants

Five educators from ÚNICA were selected as participants. They were divided into two groups: long-term participation and short-term participation. The long-term participation has Octavia, Aureliano, and Borges, educators with published articles about gender, queerness, feminist theory, and inclusion in the classroom. Furthermore, they have experience organizing academic events about the previous topics. As knowledgeable academicians, these participants will play a crucial role in the production by providing feedback about the accuracy and integrity of the

project. The short-term participants are Dante, Kiki and Lorenzo. These participants will provide feedback to ensure that people outside the seedbed can understand the videos. Dante is knowledgeable about gender but is not part of the production process as such. Therefore, he will provide feedback on the topic from an outsider's point of view.

### **Data Recollection Instruments**

Three instruments were constructed to gather and triangulate data: Google Forms, semi-structured interview, and a field diary. On the one hand, the forms and the interview relate more to the participants' feedback; on the other hand, the diary serves as a tool for documenting and reflecting on the video-making process. Each instrument is described below.

#### ***Google Forms***

Online surveys have become quite popular in recent years, especially Google Forms, a cloud-based data management tool recognized for its automatic recording of user responses and free availability (Vasanth Raju & Harinarayana, 2016). Online surveys are not only known for their efficiency in gathering data, but also for their effectiveness in collecting data on sensitive topics like queerness (Regmi et al., 2017).

In this research, the participants would use a series of Google forms to give feedback related to each stage of video-making, since each stage requires certain parameters. Before conducting the survey, an informed consent will appear, telling the participant how their data will be used in the analysis and kept confidential under a pseudonym. Based on their feedback, modifications will be made to refine the final version of the educational videos. The long-term participants are expected to complete five surveys, while the short-term participants may have one or two, because their main focus is on the demo version.

#### ***Semi-Structured Interview***

“The semistructured interview is a qualitative research method that consists of collecting data on facts and representations discovered during oral exchanges” (Albaret and Deas, 2023, p. 82). Unlike other types of interviews, semi-structured interviews have a set of questions beforehand but allow an openness in the conversation that can extend beyond the original expectations of the interviewer. It can be applied to a variety of philosophical approaches; however, the main goal is to obtain the subjective perspective of a population regarding a situation or phenomenon (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

In this case, all participants will undergo a semi-structured interview to gather their final feedback. They will answer questions about the final product. Its qualities, strengths, weaknesses, what to keep and what to improve in general. This interview shows transparency around the material and gives recommendations for future educational multimedia projects.

## Field Diary

The field diary is usually associated mainly with sociology, ethnography and anthropology rather than with the visual arts. Nevertheless, the use of this instrument for self-awareness of the development process has yielded good results in this field. In a Mexican research for graphic design students, Luna-Gijón et. al (2022) introduced the field diary as a reflection tool for the students and at the end of the course the population affirmed that the instrument was very useful for the enhancement of the final product since it made them aware of their pending, upgrades and achievements.

The award-winning sociologist Daniel F. Chambliss (1989) gave an explanation for this type of phenomena by considering self-consciousness and qualitative changes over quantitative ones to be the key to success. In the creative process, self-consciousness about the process itself offers an opportunity for registration and refinement between the material and its final result. For the reasons previously stated, a field diary was chosen for the self-reflection and recording of the educational videos' process development.

The video-maker answers the diary weekly through a set of guiding questions created based on Luna-Gijón et. al's (2022) and Chambliss' (1989) parameters, meaning they are posed to facilitate recording, self-comprehension, and quantitative changes. The questions are: *What did you do this week with respect to the project? How do you feel about the results obtained? What qualitative changes can you make next week to improve your process? Anything else to add?*

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Method of Analysis

Abductive thematic analysis is a variation of thematic analysis aiming for a middle ground between inductive and deductive approaches, in other words, a middle ground between the interpretative capacity of the researcher, and the theoretical foundations of a study (Tomasella, 2022; Thompson, 2022; Hurley et al., 2021). By selecting abductive thematic analysis, the subjective commentary from the participants and the video-maker can be categorized under codes and themes and give a general overview of what happened during the production of Haus Xpectrum.

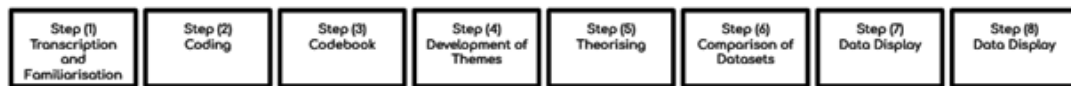
### Data Analysis Process

Thompson's (2022) 8-steps for abductive thematic analysis were chosen with a modification, applying Tomasella's (2022) suggestion of making a codebook before the beginning of the analysis. The codebook was designed adopting general parameters for material creation and cross referencing them with two prior themes: "strengths" and "weaknesses" (Appendix B). This preliminary codebook is not the ultimate version of the code-process; rather, it is a tool to guarantee the minimum requirements of quality and is expected to change in the future. Besides

the codebook, the rest of the analysis follows Thompson's (2022) steps represented in figure 9. In terms of programs, ATLAS.ti 9 serves as the main app for coding, whereas Notion was used as the note-taking app for the codebook.

**Figure 9.**

### 8-Steps to Conduct an Abductive Data Analysis



*Note.* Adapted from Thompson (2022)

Step 1 requires transcribing all the documents through active reading and listening to check the accuracy of the information. At this stage, potential patterns and codes emerge. In step 2 the coding process begins in 2 sessions. The first round is a preliminary approximation to interpret the data. The second round is deeper and screened the patterns and relationships found in the first round. In step 3 a mature version of the codebook is built. Based on an adapted guide by Guest et al. (2012) each code must answer the following criteria: “name”, “definition”, “when to use”, “when not to use.” When the codebook is done, a third round of coding must be conducted. In step 4, the codes are grouped together and labeled under a theme. The names can be taken from a revision in terminology, theories and/or literature in the study.

In step 5, the themes and their relationships are stable and double checked. If something does not make sense, it is better to either theorize a different explanation or connection or eliminate the theme/codes. In step 6, the different data sets are compared to have a full picture of the analysis. The codebook can be reviewed once again to determine if something needs to be changed. Step 7 requires a visual display of the data. The goal is to illustrate all the themes and codes in a network that justify the distribution and labeling of all the themes/codes. Finally, step 8 is the writing of the final themes.

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## Appendix A

### Caracterización poblacional:

DATOS ENCUESTADOS			
Tipo de población	Cantidad total	Encuestados	% encuestados
Estudiantes licenciatura	118	98	83%
Estudiantes especialización	25	9	36%
Docentes	26	7	27%
Administrativos	16	8	50%
<b>TOTAL POBLACIÓN ÚNICA</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>66%</b>

## Appendix B

### Preliminary Code-Book

#### Conclusiones

- Se evidencia un alto grado de conciencia sobre la importancia de abordar las cuestiones de género y violencia de género en el contexto diario de la comunidad ÚNICA.
- Hay una comprensión básica de los conceptos relacionados con el género, aunque existen algunas confusiones en relación con términos específicos como "sexo" y "género", así como "identidad de género" y "expresión de género".
- Aunque existe la percepción general de que se han abordado discusiones sobre género y violencia de género en ÚNICA, hay falta de claridad sobre la implementación y continuidad de estas discusiones en diferentes espacios académicos y extracurriculares.
- Se identificó falta de conocimiento sobre la existencia de protocolos y estrategias institucionales para la prevención y atención de violencias basadas en género en ÚNICA.

Castillo et al.'s (2021) and Pardo et. al's (2004) general parameters	Preliminar theme #1: Strengths	Preliminar theme #2: Weaknesses
The videos take into consideration the needs of the educational context.	Awareness in the context needs	Unawareness in the context needs
The videos have clear objectives of the knowledge they want to generate in the population.	Clear objectives	Mislead objectives
The videos take into consideration the target audience (In this case: teachers, students, administrators and any person in the educational community of ÚNICA)	Audience consideration	Target lost
The video is presented in an order that goes from the most basic to the most concrete.	Concrete order	Unclear order
The videos take into consideration the requirements raised by the educational community for their creation.	Follow of the requirements	Non-guideline of the requirements
The videos are designed to be performed in feasible activities for the educational community.	Activities viability	Unfeasible on activities proposal

## 5.

# Bilingual education in Mozambique: intertivist between colonialities and monovalent culture.

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### Abstract

This paper, framed within the theme of bilingual education, aims to reflect on the way in which colonialities and monovalent culture intertwine and impact society and particularly education in Mozambique. Based on qualitative research, supported by bibliographical review and content analysis, we seek to describe the linguistic policy in the National Education System. We then discuss the power mechanisms that, through the Portuguese language, seek to introduce a monovalent culture, characterized by colonialities. Finally, we will highlight decolonial and intercultural pedagogy as an educational proposal that values linguistic diversity in Mozambique. The study shows that the bilingual education introduced in Mozambique is related to the implementation of monovalent and colonial culture. Therefore, it is necessary to reevaluate and reform linguistic policies in order to value linguistic diversity, opening space for decolonial and intercultural pedagogy.

**Keywords:** *Bilingual education. Colonialities. Monovalent culture. Decolonial and intercultural pedagogy.*

### Introduction

Currently, discussions about colonialities and monovalent culture have gained prominence in social circles, especially academic ones, because, despite the political discourse that formally proclaims the end of colonialism, racist and exclusionary structures of power and knowledge persist. These structures continue to influence and shape social, political and economic relations, perpetuating inequalities and hierarchies. The recurring prescription of a (mono)worldview, preferably Eurocentric, marginalizes and underestimates other forms of knowledge and ways of life originating from other hemispheres. This monovalent culture can be considered a direct inheritance of colonialism that has metamorphosed and masked itself over time, seeking, with force and violence, to impose its values, norms and practices on colonized peoples.

In this essay, dedicated to the theme of bilingual education, we seek to reflect on the way in which colonialities, and monovalent culture intertwine and impact society, particularly education in Mozambique. Furthermore, we discuss the way in which such relationships are disguised and multiplied in public policies, in this case linguistic policies, specifically in the educational field.

Finally, we highlight studies framed within counter-hegemonic movements that propose decolonial and intercultural pedagogy that seek to challenge and dismantle these colonial structures.

To carry out this exercise, we used qualitative research based on documentary and content analysis. The bibliographic review contributed to the theoretical support of the entire study. In this sense, the legislation pertaining to the National Education System that guides the introduction of bilingual education in Mozambique (Law number 18/2018 of December 28) was reviewed. Furthermore, in an epistemic dialogue between the global South and North, we seek, based on the bilingual education study plan, to understand the paths that transform the Portuguese language into an instrument of power and a device for implementing a monovalent culture in a plural country and how this influences educational and linguistic policy.

## **2. Bilingual education in Mozambique: legislation and applicability**

Mozambique, a country historically invaded and colonized by Portugal from 1498 to 1975, has a linguistic and cultural diversity characterized by the cohabitation of more than 23 local languages of Bantu origin (INE, 2017) that are native to the majority of the population and the Portuguese language spoken mainly in urban centers and institutions.

Currently, the National Education System of Mozambique is governed by law number 18/2018 of December 28, which, regarding language policy, highlights, for the first time, the introduction of the bilingual teaching modality that proposes conducting the teaching and learning process in the initial classes of primary education through Mozambican languages and Portuguese in a transition process.

The justification for introducing this teaching method was due to the observation that Portuguese, which is not the mother tongue of most children, limited the course of learning, especially in the initial classes of primary school:

Language is one of the factors that has the greatest influence on the teaching-learning process, especially in the first years of schooling, as most Mozambican students who enter school for the first time speak a mother tongue that is different from the language of instruction. This factor means that many of the skills, especially communication skills, acquired by children before entering school are not used. (INDE, 2020, p. 45).

In this sense, several studies and experimental programs were carried out with a view to finding a bilingual teaching modality that could be suitable for the Mozambican context. Finally, the Elementary Education Curriculum Plan published in 2020 recommends the introduction of two teaching modalities, monolingual (only in Portuguese) and bilingual (Portuguese and a Mozambican language predominant in the region where the school is located), the latter following the study plan transcribed below:

**Table 1: Study plan for bilingual teaching modality**

No	Subjects	Classes and Workload					
		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
1.	Portuguese language	6	6	8	8	8	8
2.	Mozambican language	12	12	10	5	2	2
3.	Mathematics	10	10	10	7	7	7
4.	Social sciences				4	4	4
5.	Natural sciences				4	4	4
6.	Drawing					3	3
7.	Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

Caption: Distribution of workload by class. Source: Elementary Education Curriculum (INDE, 2020).

As can be seen, we are faced with the subtractive bilingual teaching method, in which the Mozambican language is used only as a transition vehicle for learning in Portuguese, which at the end of primary school is the language that gains predominance and becomes the only one used in subsequent levels. For its implementation in schools, the National Institute for Education Development (INDE) explains that:

In the 1st and 2nd grades, all subjects are taught in a Mozambican language, with the exception of the Portuguese Language subject, which begins with oral language as a way of familiarizing the student with this language. In the 3rd and 4th grades, students begin to develop reading and writing skills in Portuguese. From the 5th grade onwards, the student's teaching programs and books are the same as those for monolingual modality, except for those for the Visual Education and Crafts discipline. In the 6th grade, all subjects are taught in Portuguese and use the same materials as the monolingual modality (INDE, 2020, p. 46).

The introduction of the bilingual teaching program in Basic Education, limited only to the primary level, in Mozambique raises various questions, of which two points stand out: the psycholinguistic aspect, inherent to the study of bilingualism whose pedagogical-methodological ramifications cannot be ignored, and the sociocultural aspect, which is the center of reflection in this essay.

## **2.1 The Portuguese language as a device of power**

In the topic of this subsection, there are two concepts that we believe are interesting to address, namely, device and power. We will seek to establish relationships between them in order

to understand how Portuguese can be an instrument of domination, segregation, discrimination and exclusion in Mozambican society.

The Foucaultian concept of device was exhaustively discussed by Agambem (2005, p. 39), considering it as “anything that has the capacity to capture, guide, determine, intercept, model, control and ensure the gestures, conduct, opinions and speeches of living beings”. In this sense, the devices do not arise arbitrarily, but rather, they are always synchronized with the historical process of humanity. Furthermore, language can be considered the main vehicle for the exercise of power which, according to Foucault (2012), is not a natural object, a thing, therefore, it is a social practice and as such, historically constituted. For Foucault, power is something that is exercised, that is realized and works in a chain as a strategy that is not held by an individual or social group. According to the author, we consider that power is materialized through language, specifically through the discourse through which right and wrong are distinguished in a society.

Foucault introduces the term biopower to refer to a technique of power that seeks to create a state of life in a given population to produce economically active and politically docile bodies (Bertolini, 2018). Thus, it is important to question the power relations surrounding the design of language policies focused on education in Mozambique that value the (colonial) Portuguese language in relation to the Mozambican languages spoken by most of the population. To this end, we consider it pertinent to point out that Foucault divides biopower into two major, interconnected techniques: discipline (the government of individuals' bodies) and biopolitics (the government of the population as a whole), according to him:

The disciplines of bodies and the regulations of the population constitute the two poles around which the organization of power over life has developed. The installation, during the classical period, of this two-faced technology – anatomical and biological –, individually and specifically, focused on the performances of the body and facing the processes of life, characterized a power whose highest function is no longer to kill, but to invest in life, from top to bottom (Foucault, 2012, p.30).

Disciplines operate directly on the individual's body, shaping and training it; however, they define the mechanisms of control over the bodies of others so that they function as intended. “Discipline is a device of power that allows for the meticulous control of the body’s operations, which ensures the constant subjection of its forces and imposes on it a relationship of docility-utility” (Ibidem).

From the disciplines, it is evident that power relations influence the design of language policies in Mozambique, directly affecting the bodies of its citizens. In this case, the bilingual teaching method introduced in the country corroborates the linguistic and cultural training of

students, opening space for a potential “linguicide” (Nascimento, 2019), characterized by the imposition of the acquisition of the second language (that is, colonial) serving mandatorily for teaching and learning and formal communication to the detriment of local and mother tongues for the majority of Mozambican students who are progressively excluded in subsequent classes.

As agents of this discipline and who can influence power relations, it can be noted that despite the achievement of independence in 1975, the country remains politically, economically and socially dependent on Portugal and the West, which promote discourses of modernity and globalization. Furthermore, the socialist ideal of national unity meant that the first government of independent Mozambique, made up mostly of individuals who in the colonial period had the painful status of assimilated and who had higher education in Europe, mainly in Portugal, considered the Portuguese language as the only one capable of guaranteeing the political-administrative functioning of the State, hence the literacy campaigns were carried out only in that language, marginalizing the others.

Making an analogy with Fanon (2020) in his reflection on black people and language, it can be understood that by preferring to speak the colonizer's language, the colonized (in this case, the Mozambican) places himself in an inferior position and runs the risk of losing his cultural identity. The opposite scenario would probably happen if he spoke his own language, as it would be an instrument of resistance, self-esteem and challenge to oppressive structures.

For Hung (2017), language not only serves for communication but also for the expression of power, that is, it constitutes an ethnolinguistic, national or religious identity marker, so strong that people are willing to fight in its defense, just as they defend other markers of social identity. For the author, there are two approaches to the language-power dichotomy, which are the powers that exist behind language and the power of language.

The power behind language encompasses two dynamic relationships, demonstrating that language reveals and reflects power, that is, it transfers extralinguistic powers to the context of communication. In the first instance, at the micro level, the power behind language is the speaker's possession of a weapon, money, high social status or other attractive personal qualities; by revealing them in convincing language, the speaker influences the listener (Hung, 2017). In this context, Portugal's economic power in relation to Mozambique and the latter's dependence on the former stand out. Furthermore, knowledge of the Portuguese language is one of the factors for raising an individual's social status, since in the country, it is the key to accessing education, employment, justice and other social services. Therefore, mastering the Portuguese language means being accepted by others and having the power to exercise citizenship. However, an interesting aspect to highlight is that from a geopolitical point of view, the six countries that border

Mozambique have English as their official language and have successful examples of pluralistic bilingual education modalities that in many cases work up to higher education level. Furthermore, for Mozambicans to communicate with individuals from these countries, they are forced to speak a Bantu language or even English, with Portuguese being used more internally or generally for contacts with individuals from the CPLP or with those who know how to speak it, since it is little used as a lingua franca globally.

From a macro perspective, the power behind language constitutes the collective power of the communities that speak the language. In this sense, the requirement for mastery of the Portuguese language in a multilingual country like Mozambique not only demonstrates the colonial legacy that continues to permeate the country, but also the strategic need to maintain its ethnolinguistic vitality for capitalist and neocolonial purposes, while also seeking to provide what Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) call the cultural industry, that is, that which empties, commodifies and controls sociocultural values.

In relation to the power of language, two relationships between language and power stand out that influence the design of language policies. First, the power of language to maintain the existing dominance in legal, sexist, racist and prejudiced discourses that favor specific groups to the detriment of others (Hung, 2017), it is in this context that pejorative terms such as uncultured and marginal emerge, which serve nothing more than to antagonize those who do not speak Portuguese, for example, the difficulties in accessing employment, especially in public institutions, for individuals who do not know that language.

The power of language is its impact on national unity and discord (*ibid.*), in this context, the political justification for choosing Portuguese as the country's official language was centered on the narrative of avoiding ethnic conflicts that could arise if one of the Mozambican languages were chosen. Therefore, the Portuguese language, a foreign language spoken by a minority, would serve to guarantee national unity. However, what is noticeable is that the population, especially in rural and suburban areas, does not identify with this language, using it with immense difficulty in formal contexts, such as in public institutions that require it.

In short, in Mozambique, the Portuguese language is an instrument for exercising power that allows citizens to gain social acceptance, so that ignorance of it can lead to exclusion and marginalization. Thus, language policies in basic education in the country and the transitional, subtractive modality of bilingual education contribute to the disciplining of students as they are forced to gradually abandon their linguistic, cultural and identity values, originating from their mother tongues, in order to adapt to the exercises of biopolitics that elevate the status of the Portuguese language.

## 2.2 Monovalent culture and the path towards colonialities

Bakhtin's (1997) Marxist view establishes a dialogical and interactive relationship between infrastructure and superstructure, since language and culture (superstructure) are not only determined by economic conditions (infrastructures) but also constantly dialogue and transform each other.

From this perspective, an individual's uniqueness is inadvertently influenced by diversity and interactions with other individuals. Considering Mozambique as a society of plural cultures and recognizing the close connection between language and culture, it can be stated that bilingual education in Mozambique, whose subtractive modality aims to guarantee the transition from learning in the mother tongue (Mozambican) to the Portuguese language, enhancing linguistic-cultural erasure, promotes the implementation of a monovalent culture that crystallizes in the elimination of others, forcing assimilation by subjects, thus guaranteeing the vitality of colonialities.

Quijano (2005) proposed the concept of coloniality of power to explain that colonialism has not only shaped and continues to shape economic and political structures but also has a profound impact on the modes and production of knowledge. In this case, the structures of power, knowledge and culture in Mozambique constitute a colonial legacy and continue to cause exclusions, inequalities and hierarchies through the Portuguese language. Therefore, the attempt to transform a multilingual country into a monolingual one aims at the continued perpetuation of colonialities and domination of communities with their own identities distinct from Eurocentric cultures.

It is also important to highlight Mignolo's (2003) studies on the colonialities of knowledge, in which the author proposes epistemic decolonization and otherness, which consist of the need to decolonize knowledge, challenging the hierarchies and totalizing models that place the West (in this case the Portuguese language) at the top of civilization and the valorization of difference and cultural diversity, respectively.

In the Mozambican educational context, epistemic decolonization and otherness would be materialized by the introduction of a decolonial pedagogy guided by interculturality (Walsh, 2007 and Candau, 2009). In this way, the use of Mozambican languages, especially in rural and suburban areas, where they are mostly spoken, on an equal footing with Portuguese, or perhaps at a higher level, could not only contribute to the mitigation of linguistic racism and help the emancipation of individuals, but also, the school would value and integrate diverse cultures currently in the process of being silenced, therefore, each student will feel useful in sharing and constructing knowledge and not just a mere mechanical replicator of knowledge originating from other hemispheres that have long emptied their history and identity.

Decolonial and intercultural pedagogy does not aim to ignore Western knowledge that builds humanity, but rather to value other knowledge originating from geographies and subjects historically neglected by ongoing colonial structures. It is a proposal to change the epistemic axis against colonial paradigms that place Eurocentrism in the hegemony of knowledge.

As Walsh (2007, p. 9) explains: “taking on this task implies de-colonial work aimed at removing the chains and overcoming the enslavement of minds; at challenging and overturning the social, political and epistemic structures of coloniality”. This is a challenge, a militancy that, in this case, would begin with the decolonization of the curriculum by reviewing the law of the National Education System, replacing the subtractive transitional bilingual teaching modality with the pluralist one through which the student can learn in his/her language and additionally other languages without losing his/her cultural identity. It is the movement to give a voice to the once marginalized. Therefore, it constitutes a counterpoint to the monovalent culture that is intended to be imposed, as well as a possibility of promoting social justice and valuing linguistic and cultural diversity, contributing to the construction of an increasingly inclusive school free from colonial constraints.

### **3. Conclusion**

The study reveals that the bilingual education modality introduced in Mozambique highlights the Portuguese language as a device of power, continuing a colonial heritage that influences the country's social dynamics. Thus, the predominance of the Portuguese language in linguistic and educational policies is an example of a biopolitical disciplining process that favors the appropriation of the colonial language to the detriment of local languages that are the mother tongue of the majority of the population.

The imposition of Portuguese as the official language and main means of instruction functions as a device for maintaining the social order established by the coloniality of power, promoting social acceptance and the status of Portuguese speakers, while excluding those who do not master the language. This situation highlights the urgent need to reassess and reform language policies in order to value local languages, promoting a truly inclusive education that respects Mozambican cultural diversity, since, currently, bilingual education in Mozambique has increased linguistic-cultural erasure, promoting a monovalent culture that eliminates other languages and cultures.

The proposal of a critical, decolonial and intercultural approach to educational and linguistic policies can help overcome inequalities inherited from colonialism and build a more just and equitable society and can also contribute significantly to the mitigation of linguistic racism and the emancipation of individuals.

Finally, it is important to point out that through the decolonization of the curriculum and educational policies, Mozambique will be able to free itself from colonial ties and provide all its citizens with the opportunity to express themselves and learn in their mother tongues, preserving their cultural and historical identities.

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## 6.

# The impact of pre-service teacher program in Centro Cultural Colombo Americano – Cali.

*Claudia Andrea Díaz  
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### Introduction

The Centro Cultural Colombo Americano Cali has consistently prioritized its educators' professional development, as evidenced by implementing the pedagogical practice process via the Pre-Service Teaching Program. This program has guided prospective teachers in grasping the essential phenomena, concepts, and knowledge crucial for effective pedagogical practices.

Structured into three key modules—Pedagogical Guidance, Didactic Orientation, and Reflective Teaching, the Pre-Service Teaching Program employs a communicative approach in each session, aligning seamlessly with Colombo's teaching methodology. Throughout this enriching process, participants partake in thirteen in-person sessions, each lasting four hours, in addition to two remote sessions (8 hours) and six autonomous work hours dedicated to investigative and reflective tasks. The latter contribute significantly to reinforcing the learnings acquired during the in-person sessions.

This program, implemented over three years, signifies a substantial investment by the institution in the comprehensive training of its future educators. The amalgamation of in-person sessions and autonomous work provides a solid theoretical foundation and cultivates reflection and the practical application of acquired knowledge. The aim is to address the demand for education professionals and equip them with essential tools for a confident and effective initiation into their teaching careers.

This pedagogical training context, framed with institutional commitment, provides an ideal setting for the subsequent systematization of experiences. The meticulous documentation and analysis of experiences within the Pre-Service Teaching Program will facilitate a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the program's success, pinpoint areas for continuous improvement, and ensure that specialists precisely tailor the training to meet the institution's and participants' needs.

### The Socio-Academic Context

The Centro Cultural Colombo Americano Cali, a binational center officially recognized by the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, has been a key institution in fostering English language education and promoting American culture in Cali for over 70 years. As a non-profit foundation, it operates

two main branches in Cali, with the larger Northern branch serving as the hub for various administrative and cultural activities, including the Abraham Lincoln Library, the art gallery, and the IdeaLab Maker Space. The organization's commitment extends to accommodating the population's growing needs in the city's south by opening a new branch in the Colegio Americano (Sede Melendez) and its traditional South branch. These expansions reflect its dedication to providing accessible language education and cultural experiences across different city regions.

The Centro Cultural Colombo Americano Cali has further exemplified its proactive approach to academic excellence and professional development with its strategic response to the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic brought. Recognizing the importance of adapting to local and global educational needs, the institution significantly restructured its academic area at the end of 2020. This initiative aimed to enhance its teaching staff's professional development and refine its academic management processes, ensuring the highest standards of educational service to the community. By developing an Integrative Professional Development Model, the CCCA has strongly emphasized teacher education, innovative pedagogy, and adequate supervision of classroom practice. This model aims to bolster student language learning outcomes, showcasing the CCCA's commitment to fostering research, digital literacy, interinstitutional cooperation, and quality teaching practices. Such efforts highlight the institution's capability and readiness to develop and implement comprehensive programs that meet the evolving needs of its educators and students alike, thereby providing a robust foundation for introducing our current Pre-Service Teacher Program.

## **Phase 1 - Identification of the teaching practice**

### **The Educational Practice Problem**

The teaching field has significantly transformed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The widespread impact includes a surge in teacher resignations and declining applicants for available positions. This shift in the workforce dynamic has added to the challenges faced by educational institutions worldwide. Moreover, the pandemic's disruptive influence on education is highlighted by global averages, indicating complete school closures for 20 weeks with an additional 21 weeks of partial closures. This extended period of disrupted learning has profoundly affected an estimated 63 million teachers globally, further emphasizing the far-reaching consequences of the pandemic on the education sector (UNESCO, [2020](#), [2022](#)).

According to survey results, educators encountered heightened levels of stress and burnout during this timeframe. A significant number of 15,000 teachers surveyed across 11 countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Russia, and New Zealand, consistently expressed fatigue during 2020–2021. Over half of the surveyed teachers indicated a requirement for

assistance to address their well-being ([UNESCO et al., 2022](#)).

Likewise, the situation in Latin America mirrored these challenges. In nations such as Peru, the organizational, resource, and salary circumstances for teachers have made their work more stressful, leading many to contemplate resigning ([Yupari-Azabache, et al., 2021](#)). In Colombia, a parallel struggle is underway. It has worsened over time, prompting numerous protests by organizations like FECODE (Colombian Federation of Education Workers) and ADEA (Association of Educators of the Atlantic) in response to earlier issues. FECODE advocates for the rights of all teachers due to inadequate conditions in areas such as health, education, economics, and social security. Additionally, many rural areas resumed in-person classes without the necessary health safeguards ([Yupari-Azabache, et al., 2021](#)).

Considering all this in the Colombian context, Cali was no exception. According to a study by the Observatory of Educational Realities (ORE) conducted in 12 municipalities of Valle del Cauca, 85% of the total teachers surveyed indicated they had no experience teaching virtually before confinement, and 77% had a medium-low mastery of ICT tools. Furthermore, 48% of teachers noted that students' learning processes deteriorated. Regarding the challenges students faced in virtual learning, the most notable included the lack of habits for virtual learning (65%), permanent support from parents (61%), availability of technological devices (61%), internet access (60%), having conditions at home to receive virtual classes (58%), and mastery of the technology used for classes (35%) ([Universidad ICESI & ORE, 2020](#)). In a similar vein, teachers expressed that one of their most significant difficulties was responding to domestic and care work (35%), followed by the evaluation of learning (30%) and curricular structuring adapted to virtual education (26%) ([Universidad ICESI & ORE, 2020](#)).

The academic staff observed many teachers leaving their positions throughout the pandemic, with fewer applications for open spots. Consequently, the remaining teachers took courses to fill these vacancies, leading to an increased workload. This increased workload provided a valid reason for them to experience quicker burnout due to the heightened stress. Additionally, the pandemic directly impacted the academic sphere by necessitating the migration from physical classrooms to Google Classrooms, creating Provisional Lists (virtual attendance lists), and requiring teachers to devise activities for a virtual environment with which they were unfamiliar. When teachers gradually had to return to the branch, they faced further challenges, such as teaching while ensuring adherence to biosecurity rules.

Another challenge was creating activities based on CLT but with no physical interaction. Additionally, several cultural services had to be canceled, like projects aligned with the American Spaces agenda, special occasions, and IdeaLab services. Consequently, in post-pandemic times in

2021 at Centro Cultural Colombo Americano, the Head of Human Resources, the Academic Director, and the Assistant Academic Director proposed a potential solution to the situation mentioned above: a project to recruit new teachers and simultaneously promote the government's push for companies to provide jobs for first-time employees.

### **The Identification of the Educational Practice**

This section, "The Identification of Educational Practice," is divided into five parts. First, it outlines the practice's objective, enabling readers to grasp the primary purpose of the Pre-Service Teacher Program. Then, it delves into the specific aims and actions undertaken at each stage, charting the journey from the initial idea's inception to the post-implementation evaluation and adjustments. Moreover, it presents this systematization project's objective and details the key aspects considered at each stage to re-examine the practice. This comprehensive and insightful analysis will provide the framework for the rest of this text.

#### **1. The name of the educational practice intervention**

The Impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program in Centro Cultural Colombo Americano (CCCA.)

#### **2. The objective of Educational Practice**

The general objective of The Pre-Service Teacher program is to increase the number of available teachers with the necessary skills to join the institution, favoring the inclusion of young people into the labor force as established in Decree 688 of 2021. Likewise, the objectives and description for each step will be presented:

##### **Step 1: Project Proposal Development**

**Objective:** To prepare the project proposal.

**Procedure:** The Pre-Service Teacher program came up as an idea to respond to the pressing need for teachers in Centro Cultural Colombo Americano. In 2021, in an Equipo Directivo meeting, the issue was presented by Martha Orobio, the Academic Director of the institution. As a possible solution, she commented in the meeting that going to the universities and recruiting pre-service teachers could provide a solution to the institutional needs. Mr. Bernardo Franco, the head of the financial department, approved the creation of a new program addressing the pre-service teacher population.

The workgroup, formed by Ana María Chate, the head of Human Resources; Martha Orobio, the Academic Director; and Brayan Portilla, the Assistant Academic Director, collaborated on a comprehensive proposal. In that project, they defined the conditions for the program with a description of the candidate profile (a 7th semester or higher university student, B1+ level of English, undergraduates of Foreign Languages, Bachelor degrees in Education or related fields), a budget for transportation benefits for participants to travel to the Colombo

Americano for classes, and some potential partner universities that could be invited to participate in the program. The information was compiled into an Excel file as the foundational document. (See Appendix 1. Propuesta Plan Semillero de formación 2021 - 2024)

## **Step 2: Partnership and Network Formation**

**Objective:** To create a network to promote the program

**Procedure:** As part of the second stage of the project, Brayan Portilla, the Assistant Academic Director, created a syllabus proposal, which the Academic Director approved. Both decided on a person who would lead the program activities and who was the bridge between the participants, university practicum coordinators, and Centro Cultural Colombo Americano. The academic advisor, Claudia Andrea Diaz Melo, was assigned this role. Also, the trainers for each session were selected and informed; a Google Classroom was designed to compile all the materials trainers were to use, plus all the legal information about the program for participants.

Then, the group of four engaged with university program directors and deans of education to present the project and establish agreements between the institutions. The first two universities to participate in the project were ICESI University and Santiago de Cali University (see Appendix 2. Presentation Pre-Service Teaching Program—ICESI & USC—May 2022 and Appendix 3. Infographic: Pre-Service Teaching Plegable Logo Colombo.pdf).

## **Step 3: Recruitment and Selection**

**Objective:** To call for applicants and the selection process.

**Procedure:** Each university invited students in the 7th and eighth semesters of foreign language degrees to participate in the program. Colombo Americano staff presented the program to potential pre-service teachers interested in completing their Centro Cultural Colombo Americano internships. As a result, three meetings were held on February 11th, 14th, and 15th, 2022. In the meetings, possible candidates were able to learn about Colombo's offer: The core of the Pre-Service Teacher program, recruitment conditions, the plan of benefits, the calendar of activities, and Q&A time. They got a QR code to fill out a form to apply. After that week, 23 participants applied to the program, fourteen participants were not selected due to their level of English (B1 or below), and 8 participants were selected.

Secondly, the Head of Human Resources and the Academic Director checked the applications to select the candidates. The chosen participants took the OOPT test and a personal oral interview. Those selected in the third filter could start the program (see Appendix 4 Inscripción Programa Semillero Colombo).

## **Step 4: Educational Framework and Practice**

**Objective:** To provide participants with a common theoretical framework and meaningful

practice.

**Procedure:** The implementation time came on Saturday, March 12th, 2022, when the opening session of the Pre-Service Teacher Program took place. Participants and the Academic staff were excited about that new beginning. Participants were expected to attend eleven in-situ sessions and two synchronous sessions from the opening day to June 11, 2022, when the closing ceremony occurred. During those thirteen weeks, participants delved into different professional development topics divided into three sections: Pedagogical, Didactic, and Reflective orientations. In six of the thirteen sessions, participants had to develop an Exit Ticket, understood as an independent activity, to reflect on their gains in the process and how to apply all the information in the sessions. They got feedback from their trainers after each Exit Ticket deadline.

Participants also had the opportunity to delve deeply into pedagogical subjects, providing a solid foundation for their professional development. Finally, they got a certificate of attendance. Also, they filled out a feedback survey. (See Appendix 5. Pre-Service Teacher Program Feedback.)

There were four cohorts from February 2022 until November 2023. The following chart contains the number of participants per cohort:

Cohort	Year/Semester	Number of participants	Participants hired by the CCCA
1st	2022-1	8	6
2nd	2022-2	13	7
3rd	2023-1	13	5
4th	2023-2	17	4

### Step 5: Program Evaluation and Adjustment

**Objective:** Adjust the Pre-Service Teacher Program based on participant and Academic Staff feedback.

**Procedure:** The Assistant Academic Director and the academic advisor in charge of the program met to check feedback forms; the comments condensed in the document were the input for the improvement made to the program in terms of curriculum, trainers, session time, and practical exercises.

After each cohort, a process of reflection and adjustment has been conducted. In the same Google Forms document, participants could indicate their availability to work with the Colombo Americano teachers' staff (see Appendix 5, Pre-Service Teacher Program Feedback).

### Phase 2 - Establishing the objectives and axes of the systematization project.

#### The Objective of the Systematization of Educational Practice

To analyze the impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the academic, administrative staff, and hired teachers.

### **The Axes of Reconstruction of Educational Practice**

1. The impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the academic administrative staff.
2. The impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the hired teachers.

### **Phase 3 - Reconstruction of the teaching practice**

This section, "Reconstruction of the Teaching Practice," is divided into two parts. First, it describes the events that show how the implementation of the Pre-Service Teacher Program impacted the academic administrative staff. Second, it presents the participants' perspectives after the program's conclusion.

#### **Axis 1: The impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the academic administrative staff.**

To assess the effectiveness of the Pre-Service Teacher Program, Martha Orobio, the Academic Director, and Ana María Chate, the Head of Human Resources, responded to a series of questions where they expressed the program's intentions. Ana María Chate mentioned that in 2021, there was a shortage of teachers due to a high turnover, and the growth of CCCA prompted the program's creation. Afterward, Ana María Chate, Martha Orobio, and the Assistant Academic Director, Brayan Portilla, created an initial draft of the program in Excel outlining the various conditions and curriculum, considering the universities' needs in terms of topics, practicum opportunities, and available financial resources to present a robust proposal. Later on, they began seeking potential collaborators. The first two universities they visited were Santiago de Cali and ICESI, which accepted the invitation.

Ana María Chate emphasized that the program's main objective is to provide CCCA with a pool of teachers to be employed in the institution. She underlined the importance of recruiting new teachers while aligning the initiative with the requirements outlined in the Colombian Technical Standards 5555 and 5580, which establish the criteria for teachers regarding content and experience needed to teach in a certified institution. Additionally, she highlighted that this program is aligned with the national government's promotion of jobs for young people.

In her academic role, Martha Orobio highlighted that while the Program was initially founded on administrative principles, its fundamental goal is to draw in university students by presenting teaching as a rewarding path for professional development. She emphasized that the Pre-Service Teacher Program enables students to explore teaching as a vocation, thus offering practical experience in developing their teaching skills. (see Appendix 6 - Transcripción preguntas y respuestas realizadas a Martha Orobio y Ana Chate.)

As illustrated in the chart in the previous phase, the program implementation yielded positive results for Centro Cultural Colombo Americano. The first cohort contributed to six new teachers hired to work in the Kids and Teens program, meeting the program's expectations of acquiring new educators.

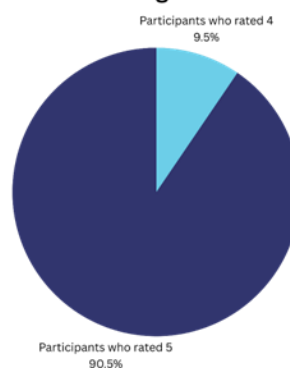
Since the program's inception, three additional cohorts have been initiated: the second cohort from August 27th to November 19, 2022; the third cohort from March 11th to June 10th, 2023; and the fourth cohort from September 2nd to November 18th, 2023. Since February 2022, seventy-one candidates out of the four cohorts expressed interest in joining the program, with fifty-one selected to undergo the sixty-hour training and twenty-two ultimately hired to work in the Kids & Teens and Adults programs.

### **Axis 2: The impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the hired teachers**

At the end of the implementation of the Pre-Service Teacher Program, participants from each cohort provided feedback on various program components. Forty-five participants completed the feedback form between June 2022 and November 2023, consisting of closed questions rated on a scale from one to five. The questions covered topics such as the virtual complementary learning environment, the usefulness of materials and resources for pedagogical discussions, the significance of the course, its utility for teaching work, and how the trainers' contribution greatly enhances the professional development process. Notably, all responses received scored either a 5 or 4, with none falling below an average score of 3 or a low score of 2-1.

The following paragraphs offer more detailed information about participants' perceptions: Forty-five participants completed the survey to answer the following questions: 1. The virtual complementary learning environment Google Classroom facilitated the development and achievement of the program objectives and goals; thirty-eight participants rated it as 5, and four rated it as 4.

**Participants' Scores for Google Classroom Effectiveness**



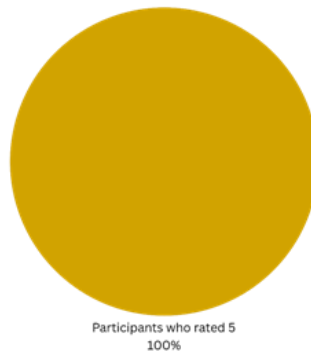
### Participants' Scores for the Usefulness of Course Materials in English Teaching



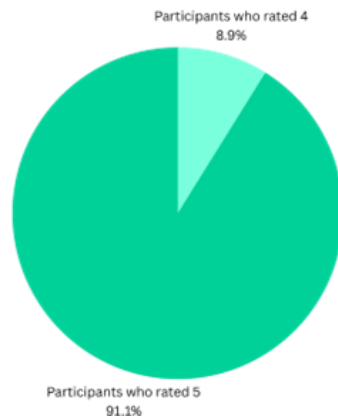
To question: 2. The materials, digital resources, and support learning systems in the course were helpful for the discussions and awareness about English Teaching as a Foreign language; forty-one participants ranked it as 5, and four evaluated it as 4.

To the question: 3. The content, resources, and discussions in the course were significant for developing teaching the language—the total number of participants evaluated this question as five.

### Participants' Scores for the Significance of Content and Discussions



### Participants' Scores for Trainers' Facilitation of Course Objectives



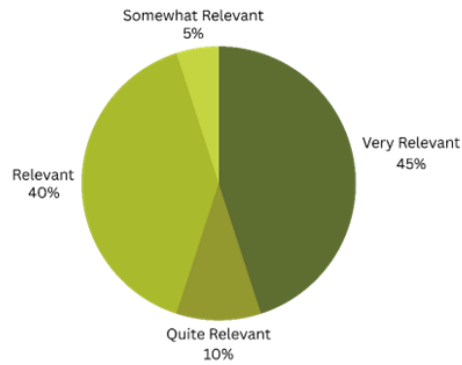
To question: 4. The trainers facilitated the achievement of the course objectives, the participation, and interactions among the course members; forty-one participants ranked it 5, and four individuals evaluated it as 4.

The survey also included an open-ended section for participants to share their opinions about the program. The majority of comments were overwhelmingly positive, with participants using words such as 'helpful,' 'enjoyable,' 'applicable to teaching,' 'passion,' 'commitment,' 'fulfilling expectations,' 'meaningful experience,' 'useful tools,' 'improved pedagogy,' and 'teaching English competence.' These comments were overwhelmingly positive, but we also asked participants in a more informal setting to give us feedback. In this case, they told us things like “The program should retain a theoretical component such as delving into approach, method, and methodology, since these topics are not extensively covered in our academic curriculum and are useful for reflecting on our pedagogical practice.” “The program should give more prominence to micro-teaching sessions as they differentiate this program from any ordinary teacher preparation course.” Also, “I would like more reflective activities such as debates and discussions on traditional teaching methods and the new needs of students from more contemporary educational contexts.” Unlike the comments on the survey, these informal comments helped improve the Program after each cohort and made it more robust in practice, class observations, and didactics.

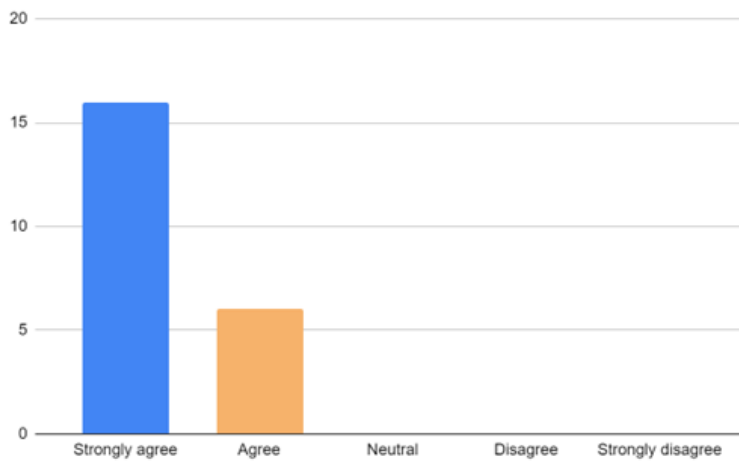
As a result of implementing the Pre-Service Teacher Program, twenty-two participants were hired to be teachers starting in the Kids and Teens Program. The participants from the first and second cohorts in 2023 could also teach in the adult program. They were interviewed again after they started working for Centro Cultural Colombo Americano. The survey included a combination of closed and open questions. In the first section, teachers were to answer if they agreed or disagreed with five statements about “their understanding of teaching,” “skills to manage a class,” “effective teaching practice,” “a supportive learning environment offer,” and “open-minded teaching practices.” On the other hand, the second section provided teachers with room to express their opinions about the “relevance of the program in their teaching experience,” “if after the program they changed their teaching approaches,” “if they got a better understanding of their student’s needs,” and “if they feel more confident in teaching after participating in the program.” Twenty of the twenty-two teachers hired answered the survey.

The first section showed that ex-participants generally considered the Pre-Service Teacher Program “relevant” for effective teaching. It changed their teaching perspective and equipped them with the foundations needed for teaching a class. Consequently, twenty of them expressed feeling more confident when teaching a class.

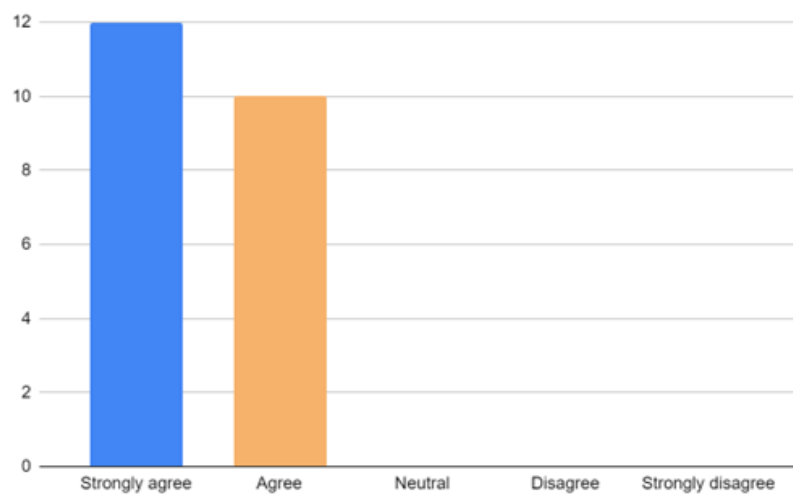
### Pre-Service Teacher Program's Relevance to Current Teaching Practice



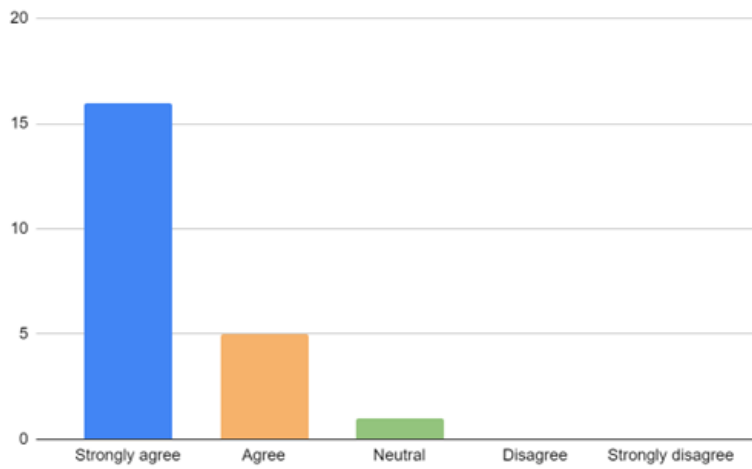
The information about participants' perceptions was found to be more detailed. In answer to the question, “I have a deeper understanding of how to teach a language,” sixteen participants strongly agreed, and six participants agreed.



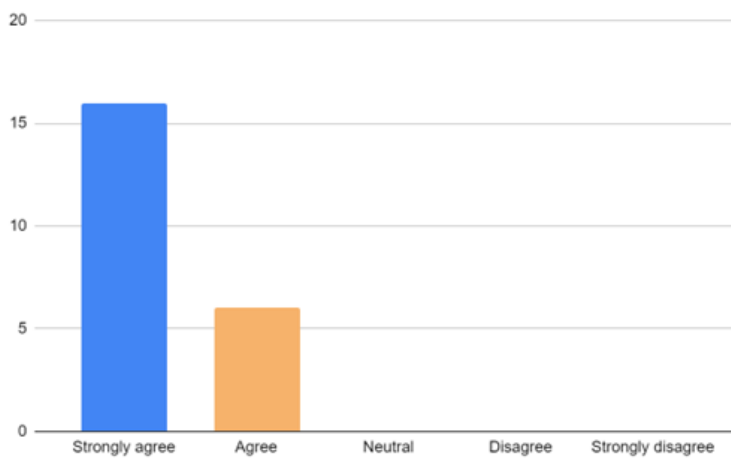
Regarding the question, “I am better able to manage my classroom effectively,” twelve participants strongly agreed, and ten participants agreed.



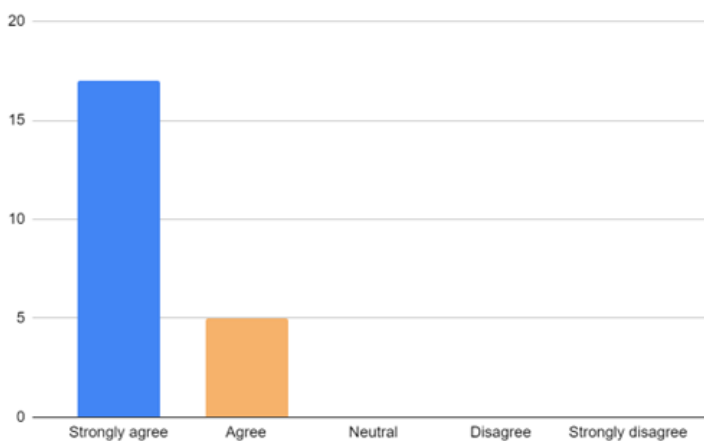
Sixteen participants strongly agreed, five participants agreed, and one participant had a neutral opinion of the statement “I am more reflective of my teaching practice.”



Regarding the statement, “I am creating a more positive and supportive learning environment,” sixteen participants strongly agreed, and six participants agreed.



For the statement “I am more open to trying new things in my teaching,” seventeen participants strongly agreed, and five participants agreed.

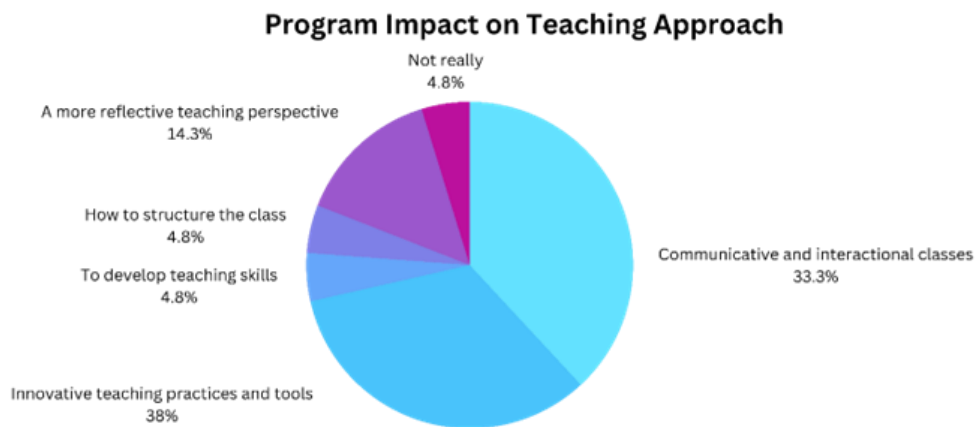


In the second part of the survey, teachers were asked three more open questions in which they expressed the following opinions on how equipped they felt to teach a class:

To the question: “Has the program changed your approach to teaching in any way? If so, how?” The opinions were consistently positive. The comments were grouped into six categories, taking into consideration the most common ones:

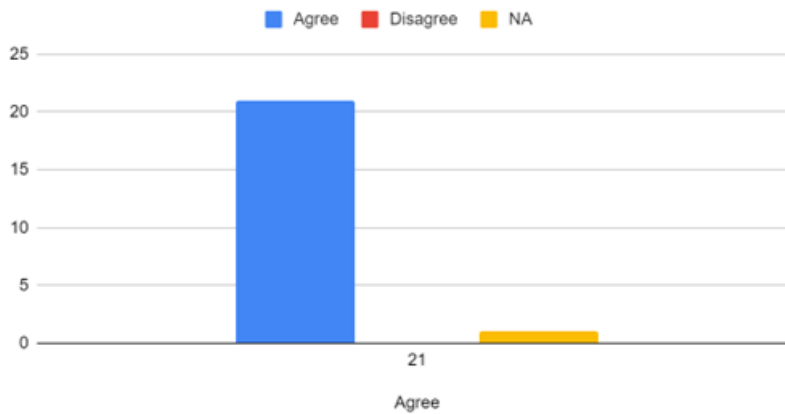
- How to structure the class
- Communicative and interactional classes
- Innovative teaching practices and tools
- To develop teaching skills
- A more reflective teaching perspective
- Not really

The following graphic shows the results:

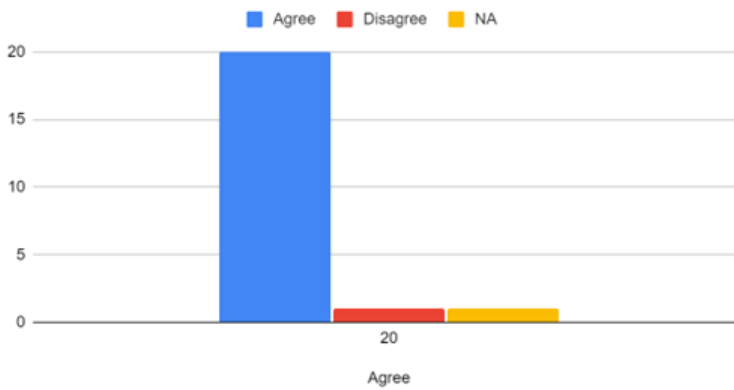


Below, we will present the data collected from the open-ended question that responds to two questions: “Has the course helped you to understand the needs of your students better?” and “Do you feel more confident in your teaching abilities as a result of the course?”. To record the data in this document, we classified the affirmative responses with “Agree” and the negative ones with “Disagree.”

Has the course helped you to better understand the needs of your students?



Do you feel more confident in your teaching abilities as a result of the course?



Implementing the Pre-Service Teacher Program at the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano underscores the significance of equipping future educators with a comprehensive theoretical and practical foundation. Through innovative methodologies and institutional commitment, the program has proven crucial in training qualified teachers and addressing current educational needs. The positive outcomes, reflected in the high satisfaction of participants and the successful integration of new teachers into the institution, highlight the value of this collaborative and reflective approach to teaching. This joint effort between the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano and participating universities has enriched the educational experience of teachers in training and significantly contributed to the professional development and enrichment of the academic community at large.

#### Phase 4 - Interpretation of the educational practice

In the previous phase, information was presented based on the feedback collected from ex-participants in the Pre-Service Teacher program; in this phase, an analysis of the program implementation will be shown.

## Axis 1: The impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the academic administrative staff.

According to the information found, the administrative staff had the idea of implementing a robust program to facilitate the acquisition of new teachers while training them in teaching practices to be executed in CCCA classes. The objective of [Decree 688](#) is to implement a strategy for young workers to develop activities to strengthen their life projects, social-emotional skills, innovation, and leadership in collaboration with Colombian institutions. It seeks to contribute to closing gaps for young people to access information and knowledge, preparing them to take on challenges and participate in new economic opportunities ([Decreto 688, 2021](#)). The chart shown in the first stage measured the program's impact in the four cohorts: ninety-four pre-service teachers applied to the program, fifty-three were selected and participated, and they had access to the pedagogical, didactic, and reflective foundations offered by CCCA. As a result, twenty-two of them work as teachers in the institution. This fact has positively impacted the institution by increasing the number of teachers and reducing the need for advertisements to find new teachers outside the institution. Also, nineteen of them were covered by [Decree 688](#), which impacted the financial benefit received by the individuals in their first job.

As researchers, it is satisfactory to see how Centro Cultural Colombo Americano participates in this government initiative by training and employing young university students who can grow professionally in the institution. That is the case of one of the participants, whose professional experience and growth in the institution allowed him to be selected as an academic advisor in December 2023. The role of the academic advisor is understood in Colombo Americano as a teacher who can guide other teachers in applying Communicative Language Teaching in the classroom by improving their teaching skills.

The program's implementation indicates Colombo's growth and how new projects could be developed to impact the working environment meaningfully. As workers in Centro Cultural Colombo Americano Cali, we see the consolidation of the Pre-Service Teacher Program as a laboratory that proves how a step-by-step project implementation can help solve administrative issues. According to the data, the growth of pre-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge and didactic skills is also evident. As [Decree 688](#) proposes, there is a positive perception of innovation, leadership, and preparation to face classroom dynamics accurately and diligently. Also, Colombo Americano has taken into account participants' needs and recommendations given in the feedback form to adjust the curriculum of the program to the particular needs and expectations of the university students, providing them with meaningful training in core language teaching topics that impact the way they would apply that knowledge in the classroom whenever they would be hired

by a school, institute, among others.

On the other hand, the number of universities participating in the program also increased within two years of implementation. This fact gives the researchers a sense of trust in the program. Initially, two universities participated in the program's agreement. By March 2024, six universities will be participating in the program recruitment sessions; that is another fact that supports the potential of the described project.

In her article “Professional Development Through Teachers’ Associations,” Baecher (2023) mentioned some information related to organizations such as Colombo Americano, which intends to impact new teachers positively. She writes, “Teachers Associations are formal organizations that bring teachers from different subjects and levels of education into a professional community” (Baecher 2023, para. 9). In the case of Colombo Americano and its Pre-Service Teacher Program, it provides support to university students in their professional development. At the same time, they have access to networking opportunities. These kinds of agreements, such as the one between the CCCA and the participant universities, are described in Baecher:

To provide a valuable platform for teachers to develop their skills, stay current with trends in teaching and learning, and connect with other educational professionals. [...] teachers can advance their careers, improve the quality of their teaching, and contribute to the overall development, growth, and improvement of education (Baecher 2023, para.14).

A third area of analysis, as expressed in the impact of the feedback survey, was applied to the participants when they finished the program, which affected the curriculum adjustments during the program's four semesters. These adjustments have taken into account the needs of the participants in terms of a higher number of class observations, the removal of some topics that were not considered core in the field of language teaching, and the inclusion of other topics like new technologies, new trends, and lesson planning, which are less present in the pedagogical orientation field and more present in the didactics field.

## **Axis 2: The impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the hired teachers**

In this study, the perceptions of twenty-two hired participants towards the Pre-Service Teacher program are analyzed concerning the strengths and needs expressed in the feedback form after they began to work as teachers at Colombo Americano. Participants shared their opinions on various aspects of teaching, including collaborative learning, classroom strategies, practical content, and class observations.

The opinions of CCCA participants align with those found in a study by Gadella Kamstra (2024). Gadella Kamstra focused on training conducted in two universities in Spain and its evaluation from the perspectives of pre-service and in-service teachers. The results showed

similarities with the categories found in CCCA participants' feedback, particularly in recognition of being part of a community of teachers in training and the importance of pedagogical practice. Gadella Kamstra's study highlights the significance and value of being part of a community of pre-service teachers within a teacher training program. The data indicated that both in-service and pre-service teachers consider this aspect extremely valuable because it allows participants to encounter diverse opinions, effectively preparing them for their future professional lives in education.

Another researcher, Farrell (2012) emphasizes the crucial role of the Pre-Service Teacher Program in professional development. Farrell introduced the concept of "novice-service teacher development," advocating for a collaborative effort to ensure a seamless transition into the teaching profession. CCCA participants noted the program's constant support in the feedback they provided. They acknowledged strengths such as the usefulness of the virtual complementary learning environment, materials, and resources for collaborative pedagogical discussions in each session. They also emphasized the significance of the course for their teaching work and how the trainers' contributions greatly enhanced their professional development process.

Another significant aspect that CCCA Pre-Service Program participants noticed is pedagogical practice, which is crucial for facing the challenges of a real classroom environment. Gadella Kamstra's study also notes the importance of pedagogical practice as a practical experience that allows participants to assess their affinity for the teaching profession and refine their skills in handling real classroom situations. Farrell (2012) emphasizes the value of interdisciplinary communities and pedagogical practice in enriching pre-service teacher education, advocating for a curriculum that integrates theory with classroom realities to develop reflective and effective educators. This reflection points to a broader discussion on the effectiveness of teacher training programs and the importance of ensuring they are responsive to the evolving needs of educators and students in a rapidly changing educational landscape, a topic that could be considered for future research.

Gadella Kamstra's study highlights the importance of integrating a supplementary course dedicated to exploring the challenges and realities of the first years of teaching through reflective practice. Such a course could help prepare pre-service teachers for the complexities of classroom teaching and encourage the development of essential reflective practice skills. Johnson, mentioned by Gadella Kamstra (2024), suggests that preparation programs should focus on three key areas: content knowledge required by L2 teachers, pedagogical approaches, and the institutional mechanisms through which these elements are delivered and learned.

Consequently, the CCCA program has proposed and improved a curriculum that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching skills. With a total of 60 hours of

training, participants highlight the importance of discussions in all sessions. The didactic orientation has evolved to include more hours of training in topics such as the role of the teacher and the student, differentiated instruction, lesson planning, and new trends in language teaching. This strong hands-on component significantly impacts classroom decision-making and teaching practices.

The 22 hired teachers in CCCA highlighted feeling more confident in their teaching abilities due to the course and a better understanding of their students' needs. The program has evolved by including more hours of class observation, which Noguera (2018) considers a powerful tool for identifying teacher behavior and refining teaching strategies as well as for sharing teaching techniques, documenting and learning in-class dynamics. Additionally, the CCCA program focuses more practically on aspects such as class preparation, activity selection based on student needs and context, classroom management strategies, and assessments. Participants prepare a Micro-Teaching session collaboratively with the guidance and feedback of program trainers.

The feedback survey enabled an understanding of participants' expectations and needs. Comparing survey results with the knowledge acquired at the program's conclusion, it is evident that educators must receive training focused on professional development and preparation for teaching a class considering specific teaching methods during their university formation process.

Moreover, Farrell (2012) calls for stronger partnerships between education programs and schools or institutions like Colombo Americano, advocating for a collaborative approach to pre-service teacher development. This collaboration could involve designing and implementing orientation programs that provide mentoring and support for non-experienced teachers, recognizing the importance of multiple sources of support in fostering a positive teaching experience and enhancing teacher efficacy beliefs during the formative years of teaching, as demonstrated by the CCCA Pre-Service Teacher Program.

### **Phase 5 - Learnings and experiences**

The systematization of the Pre-Service Teacher Program at CCCA highlights a significant undertaking to enhance future educators' professional development. This process was embarked upon with the dual goal of refining the program's methodology and content to ensure it remains responsive to the evolving needs of the educational landscape and the participants it serves. The project aimed to document the program's effectiveness and establish a model that could be iteratively improved based on systematic analysis and feedback.

Reflecting on Axis #1, the impact of the Pre-Service Teacher Program on the academic administrative staff reveals a transformative effect. The program has facilitated a deeper engagement between the institution and its educators, fostering a culture of continuous learning

and adaptability. This engagement has been crucial in navigating the challenges of external factors, such as the global pandemic. It has underscored the importance of resilience and flexibility in adversity.

Considering Axis #2, the program's influence on hired teachers underscores a profound shift in pedagogical approaches. The feedback from participants indicates a significant enhancement in their teaching efficacy, confidence, and ability to adapt to diverse learning environments. This shift benefits the individual educators and enriches their students' learning experiences, contributing to a more dynamic and engaging educational process.

The systematization project has been an enlightening journey from the academic advisor's perspective. It gave us a valuable opportunity for reflection and critical analysis in our pursuit of excellence in teacher training. Additionally, we experienced the power and gratification of exploring new ways of analyzing educational situations and transforming them into growth opportunities. By systematizing our Pre-Service Teacher program, we learned how to effectively engage in the research process and develop proposals to enrich our teaching practices.

Conversely, the collaborative effort between the program's university coordinators and participants has captured the program's multifaceted impacts, offering broad and deeply nuanced insights. This process has reaffirmed the necessity of maintaining an open dialogue between all stakeholders to ensure the program's ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

Moreover, the experience has emphasized the importance of flexibility and innovation in program design. By staying attuned to the latest educational trends and participants' feedback, the program demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement. This adaptability is essential in preparing educators to be proficient in their subject matter and capable of navigating the complexities of modern educational environments.

From the coordinator and leader's perspective, leading the Pre-Service Teacher Program has been a testament to the power of visionary leadership and collaboration. The ability to conceptualize and implement a program that addresses the pressing needs of pre-service teachers while contributing to the professional landscape of education in Valle del Cauca is a remarkable achievement. It reflects a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities within teacher education and a commitment to pioneering solutions that have a lasting impact.

Throughout this systematization project, essential knowledge was acquired on standardizing a project as significant as the seedbed and adapting it to the systematization format. Initially, this process was perceived as a considerable challenge, as it was the first attempt to undertake a project in this format, generating uncertainty about the comprehensive understanding of the project and its successful execution. Additionally, the initial phases of the project presented

specific challenges as its structure began to be outlined by Claudia Díaz, who took on the perspective of coordinator and leader of the program. Subsequently, Farid Sandoval, a former participant of the first cohort and currently an academic advisor, joined the team, facilitating the presentation of the project from a joint perspective and enriching it with insights from both the coordination and as a former participant. This collaboration proved extremely valuable, allowing for the appreciation of various facets of the program and sharing perceptions that might not have been considered individually.

It is crucial to highlight that, for both the project's creator and former participant, conducting this research has allowed us to observe the program's evolution over the past two years. This evolution has facilitated continuous refinement and adaptation of the contents to meet the needs of the professionals in training, demonstrating that the Pre-Service Teacher program is versatile and capable of evolving, can keep up to date with the latest educational trends, and has proven sustainable over time.

On the other hand, executing this systematization project has allowed us to recognize that we are one of the few, if not the only ones, who have ventured into this field of professional development at the national level, working closely with higher education institutions at the regional level. Thanks to the thorough research conducted for this project, we have identified that a similar program is being implemented in Spain. However, information has yet to be found to indicate the existence of a comparable program in another Latin American country. Despite this, we are convinced that we are the leading institution for this project in the Valle del Cauca, marking a milestone in teacher professional development.

It is essential to highlight the crucial role that various articles and projects played in forming and developing our project, the Pre-Service Teacher Program. The meticulous research phase was a cornerstone in this process, allowing us to identify and select authors whose works resonated with our objectives and enriched our understanding and approach to teacher education. A prominent example of this was the analysis of the case of the University of Seville (Gadella Kamstra, 2024.) This study proved invaluable by comparing how an educational incubator can be fostered by leveraging the socio-educational and cultural context of a European country like Spain. Moreover, it provided us with a deep insight into the aspirations and challenges of the program in an environment that, being first world, faces its own educational peculiarities and regional needs.

Likewise, authoritative sources such as UNESCO publications were instrumental in helping us understand the impact of disruptive global events, like a pandemic, on the educational field. This perspective allowed us to adopt a more holistic view, appreciating not only the adversities and challenges that arose but also identifying opportunities for innovation and

adaptation within the framework of the Pre-Service Teacher Program. The ability to reflect on these circumstances and apply key learnings to our program proved vital for its success and relevance.

In conclusion, the systematization of the Pre-Service Teacher Program reveals an innovative and responsive multifaceted approach to teacher education. The insights gained from this project highlight the program's vital role in shaping the future of education and underscore the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in achieving excellence in teaching. Additionally, the author's work (Yupari-Azabache, 2021) was particularly enlightening. Her focus on the psychosocial dimension of educational program development provided valuable insights into addressing and mitigating the consequences of modern diseases affecting the teaching community. The consideration of psychosocial factors and the search for innovative solutions to contemporary problems emerged as fundamental elements for creating a resilient and adaptive teacher training program that prepares educators to face current challenges and anticipate and respond proactively to future needs. This comprehensive and reflective approach toward constructing the Pre-Service Teacher Program underscores the importance of a solid, diverse, and applied research base, which becomes the foundation upon which a promising and sustainable educational future can be built.

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### **Appendices**

Click on the link

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BQucZkZGN8IFIoKr9ofq32srsSLK7Oc0> or scan the QR Code.

## 7.

# Approaching English language teaching to critical pedagogy and social justice.

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### Abstract

In southern Colombia, language teacher education has traditionally focused on the instructional and technical aspects of teaching. However, the profession involves much more than improving language proficiency or reflecting on classroom practice. It also includes becoming aware of the social context and proposing pedagogical and curricular alternatives to encourage changes. In response to the limited engagement with sociopolitical issues in local ELT programs, we proposed an academic space for English language student-teachers to become aware of other possibilities of being a teacher. Drawing on critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988) and social justice perspectives in ELT (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Hawkins, 2011), this initiative foregrounded the role of language education in challenging systemic inequities and fostering advocacy, awareness, and respect. Throughout this presentation, we will discuss a pedagogical experience in which student-teachers, guided by reflective and dialogic activities, engaged with an under-resourced community in Neiva while teaching English. They read, interrogated, and re-signified the particularities and possibilities of this context, deepening their awareness of its social and educational dimensions. In doing so, they not only reflected on their realities but also enacted pedagogical interventions grounded in their students' lived experiences and local knowledge systems. Through ongoing critical reflection on their praxis, they positioned themselves as emerging English language teachers committed to transformative education. Ultimately, we argue that such critical educational spaces are essential for preparing teachers to build inclusive classrooms where English becomes a tool for empowerment and social change (Nieto, 2010; Pennycook, 2001).

**Keywords:** *Critical Pedagogy, Teacher Identity, Social Justice in ELT, Reflective Practice, Transformative Education.*

### Introduction

This article describes an academic experience designed to integrate critical pedagogy and social justice theories in a terminal course within an ELT program in Neiva, Huila. The initiative to create this course emerged because the program typically focuses on preparing English language teachers from a traditional perspective, prioritizing technical skills and language proficiency, and

often neglects the broader social dimensions of education. Still, we believe that teaching is not merely a matter of mastering instructional techniques, but a profoundly social act that shapes and is shaped by the realities of the communities it serves. For English language teachers, this means understanding their role not only as language instructors but also as agents of change who can challenge social inequities and promote social justice.

The terminal course, titled "*Approaching English Language Teaching to Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice*," began by providing theoretical foundations related to the main issues (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Hawkins, 2011). However, our goal was not just to check the theory but to put it into practice by working with youngsters who participated in a Pre-ICFES Popular program organized by volunteer teachers from various institutions, including the city's public university. Consequently, the course participants planned some interventions that incorporated critical pedagogy and social justice principles, guiding youngsters towards understanding the SABER 11 test.

By examining this pedagogical experience, the article highlights how reflective, dialogic, and context-sensitive teaching practices can transform teacher education. It argues that critical educational spaces are essential for preparing teachers who can create inclusive classrooms and use language education to foster awareness, respect, and social change.

### **Theoretical framework**

This pedagogical experience was grounded in the principles of Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice in English Language Teaching (ELT). It provides a comprehensive lens to examine the experiences of English language student-teachers as they engage with marginalized communities.

### **Critical Pedagogy**

Conscientização (conscientization) was a term coined by Paulo Freire (1970) to describe the process of becoming critically aware of social realities. This conscientização results from the reflection and action (praxis) that conduces individuals to recognize social, political, and economic injustices and empowers them to challenge and transform oppressive structures. Freire suggested that this Conscientização was only possible through a dialogical process, involving closer contact with those who were considered oppressed and marginalized. Paulo Freire (1970) suggested that the only way to overcome oppression was through education, but not the traditional banking perspective, but rather a problem-posing education that encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and empowerment.

Similarly, Giroux (1988) highlighted the connection between education and politics. He explained that educational spaces were not neutral but sites of cultural politics. The classroom is

not an isolated space separated from society's reality. Instead, it is part of larger social, cultural, and ideological contexts. In this scenario, teachers play an essential role as transformative intellectuals. This role requires teachers to recognize teaching as a profession, not just a labor of transmitting knowledge. In this role, teachers become agents of change, fostering critical awareness and challenging oppressive structures imposed by political and economic systems. In contrast to the principles of standardization and competition, a critical teacher should prioritize social and democratic values over market values; then, the critical teacher should promote spaces for critical reflection and social transformation.

Finally, McLaren (1995) explored how marginalized students experience oppression within educational systems and how they can resist these oppressive structures through critical pedagogy. As well as Freire and Giroux, McLaren argued that education has the potential to transform individuals; through his proposal of cultural resistance, McLaren invited students and teachers to critically engage with their cultural backgrounds and use them as a basis for challenging oppressive narratives. Furthermore, McLaren explained that neoliberal policies in education, which prioritize market-driven values, competition, and standardization over critical thinking and social justice, undermine democratic values in education and turn students into consumers rather than critical thinkers. For that reason, he expanded Freire's concept of *praxis* (reflection and practice), and he coined the term revolutionary praxis, which he used to encourage educators and students to not only reflect on oppressive conditions but to actively work towards transforming them.

### **Social Justice in English Language Teaching**

According to Hawkins (2011), social justice differs from critical pedagogy in that the latter focuses on analyzing societal inequities, whereas the former emphasizes the responsibility of educators to actively address and transform these inequities through their teaching practices. She recognized the capacity teachers have to effect change within and beyond the classroom, which results in the exercise of their agency to understand how institutional and societal structures impact educational opportunities and strive to create more equitable learning environments. Consequently, Hawkins emphasized the need for language teacher education to be responsive to local contexts and conditions. She argued that social justice education cannot be prescriptive but must consider the specific sociocultural and institutional landscapes in which teaching and learning occur.

Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (2006) proposed the postmethod pedagogy, which is intended to be a framework to challenge traditional and prescriptive methods. He argued that these methods promoted inequalities and injustices within the classrooms; then he proposed three parameters that were aligned to his idea of postmethod pedagogy. The first one, *particularity*, emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific cultural, institutional, and social contexts of learners. The

second one, *practicality*, encourages teachers to develop pedagogical knowledge through reflective practice, integrating theory with classroom experiences. And the third one, *possibility*, draws from critical pedagogy to empower learners and teachers to recognize and challenge sociopolitical inequalities, promoting transformative action.

In the same vein, Sonia Nieto (2010) also proposed a framework for implementing social justice in the classroom. Nieto explains that social justice is not merely a goal but a guiding philosophy and actionable approach in education. In this fashion, educators should combat inequality by challenging misconceptions and stereotypes; additionally, they should pursue their full potential by ensuring equitable access to resources and identifying and addressing policies or practices that may disadvantage certain students, such as biased assessment methods or exclusionary disciplinary policies. Additionally, educators need to create an appropriate classroom atmosphere where all students feel respected, valued, and able to express their opinions without fear of discrimination.

Finally, Pennycook (2001) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing the sociopolitical contexts that influence language learning and teaching by viewing language education through a critical lens. This perspective encourages educators to recognize the classroom as a site of cultural struggle and to engage students in discussions that question dominant ideologies and promote social justice. Furthermore, this perspective requires teachers to be creative and continually innovate in the classroom, not only for their own benefit but also for the consolidation of education.

## **Methodology**

This pedagogical experience was an opportunity for the student-teachers to develop an awareness of social contexts and propose alternatives to encourage change. Through the modules of the course, the pre-service English teachers gained theoretical insights into Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice in ELT. They also explored possibilities for designing a small-scale research project focused on social justice and collected and analyzed data from the social context of one comuna in Neiva. This allowed them to identify the particularities, possibilities, and practicalities of positioning English language teaching as a way for social justice. Through the whole process, they engaged in constant critical reflection on their praxis and explored the construction of their identity as critical English teachers.

## **Context and participants**

This initiative is a pedagogical experience designed in the context of an English Language Teaching Education program at a Colombian university. Nineteen student-teachers from the 8th and 9th semesters of the TEP participated in the course, many of whom have completed all or

two of the teaching practicums included in the program's curriculum. The course was an additional option they took to get their degree. Furthermore, the social context where the student-teachers got immersed to explore and find possibilities was in the Comuna 8, located in the southeast area of Neiva. This area is affected by many social issues but is also recognized for strong communal development and activism. A joint effort exists with a community association and a youth group (Colectiva Lola Cendales) that started a "Pre-ICFES Popular" three years ago. This project aims to provide educational opportunities to the students from the neighborhood, who have had limited access to higher education due to the low results on the standardized Prueba Saber 11 test. Within this context, the student teachers were responsible for teaching English to 53 teenagers aged 14-17 years old, guided by the theoretical elements of Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice. While they were implementing Critical Pedagogy in their English teaching, their students were engaged in an alternative way of learning.

### **Data Collection**

Data in this experience were collected through various qualitative instruments to gain a deep and rich understanding of the experience. The methods included reflection with a mapping activity, which allows student-teachers to explore their learning path and engage in critical reflection of who they are as learners and as teachers. An initial observation of the community enabled them to understand the context and propose possible courses of action. They journal after each visit, intervention, and hold group discussions to collect the collective experiences and perspectives of the community.

### **Pedagogical Experience**

The experience started with the exploration and discussion of student-teachers' initial understanding of Critical Pedagogy and social Justice. Later, we delved into the theoretical considerations of Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice, followed by encounters and immersion in the Comuna, to help student-teachers envision possibilities. This process led us to have four important stages in the experience:

#### **Walking through the Comuna.**

Before the start of the Pre-ICFES, during a two-hour walk through the neighborhood, students could recognize the practices and realities of the students they would be teaching. The walk involved not only visiting important places of the comuna, but also seeing the social and cultural dynamics of the people. Students and teachers also had the opportunity to listen to and learn about individuals who have made a significant contribution to the community's development. Based on an observation instrument they designed, the student-teachers could read the context and recognize power dynamics, social inequities, and potential for transformative practice. This

initial encounter was the first step in developing an understanding of the realities faced by young students who later enroll in the Pre-ICFES.

### Conversing with students and parents.

The first day of the “Preicfes Popular”, the students from the community attended an initial meeting with their parents. Student-teachers also designed a semi-structured interview to guide their conversations with both parents and students. Once the dynamics and purpose of the “Pre-ICFES Popular” were explained, the student-teachers had the opportunity to speak with the parents. During this conversation, they inquired into the parents' perspectives regarding their children's future and education, their backgrounds, and their commitment to the “Preicfes Popular” process. Later, in small groups and for approximately two hours, the student-teachers engaged in conversations with the students. The discussion aimed to explore aspects of the students' lives, experiences, expectations, interest in learning English, and their views on the comuna.

### Projects and Interventions.

Based on the insights gained from the conversations, after the group discussion and journaling, the student-teachers began to design their small-scale project and plan future interventions. Seven groups were created, each of which designed a small-scale project addressing issues they identified in the context. The projects aimed to empower the students within their community. They guided students in exploring their identities and aspirations, understanding and challenging local issues, envisioning their future through life project planning, and actively participating in community transformation through English language learning (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Projects

Group	Project	Purpose
1	Life Project	To engage students in reflecting on the roots of the community that help shape their identity, values, and aspirations through meaningful goals in a life project.
2	Who am I?	To help students know their importance as members of the community, their identity within their community, the important role they have in it, and their power to change.
3	Life Project	To engage students in understanding of who they are, what they want to achieve in life, and how they are going to do it. Mapping decisions, dreams, and goals in areas like education, career, family, and personal growth.
4	Challenging community issues	To critically examine and challenge the normalization of systemic issues such as environmental pollution,

		substance abuse, and violence within the community was to give students the empowerment to start thinking critically and acting to improve their context from their positions as members of the community.
5	Entrepreneurship	To explore entrepreneurship initiatives in the community.
6	Transformative Voices: Rediscovering Our Community	To foster social awareness and active participation among teenagers and us, through some Interventions that helped them identify issues and propose alternatives to make changes within the community while integrating English language learning (ELT).
7	Understanding Our Students	To break stereotypes to inspire students to challenge societal limitations. Through self-reflection and creative activities, we aimed to empower students to create their vision for the future.

The student-teachers discussed the project with the students and subsequently designed five interventions, each with specific activities tailored to meet their needs. The activities were designed to develop language skills while exploring the project's topics. They also incorporated language tasks such as reading texts, announcements, and vocabulary exercises, which familiarized students with the type of tasks found in the Pruebas Saber. These tasks were contextualized within the themes of the projects. This approach provided the students from the “preicfes” with an opportunity to learn English from a more situated perspective, allowing them to engage with issues and topics related to their realities and lives.

### Findings

This section presents the key findings derived from the student-teachers' reflection on the process.

#### Contextual Awareness as a Foundation for Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Action

From the initial visit to the comuna, student-teachers began to understand that the socio-cultural, political, and historical realities of their learners' community are not just necessary to understand the students' backgrounds, but also an essential point for designing meaningful, relevant, and transformative teaching and learning experiences.

Student- teachers do not only recognize the good places, but also the challenges that the community face, some of which can be invisible to those who do not belong to the space: "The area has diverse spaces-some are pleasant, while others reflect the challenges faced by its

population, a context different from what we are usually accustomed to seeing." (Adriana, Journal 1).

Walking through the comuna was an opportunity for the teachers to see beyond superficial appearances and recognize social structures and the potential power for transformation that the people have, Angela describes them as "an underestimated population, one that many fear, but within it lies a strong spirit of resilience and solidarity" (Journal 1). Similarly, Adriana states:

"I believe Commune 8 also has enormous potential. Its people, its art, and its strong sense of community could serve as the foundation for positive change. This is an underestimated population, one that many fear, but within it lies a strong spirit of resilience and solidarity."

These perceptions reveal elements of community resistance and empowerment, as they have challenged the difficulties they face and the systemic issues, they must address in collaboration to construct and transform their contexts.

### **Understanding of Critical Pedagogy in Practice**

Student-teachers not only reflected on their realities but also enacted pedagogical interventions grounded in their students' lived experiences and local knowledge systems. They demonstrated a practical understanding of Critical Pedagogy, moving beyond the theoretical elements into implementing strategies rooted in the students' realities. Andres describes how the connection of pedagogical intervention should be grounded in the local experiences.

"To design an English learning project based on the community's needs and resources, it is essential to involve local leaders and community members. This inclusion allows for identifying available resources and generating initiatives to develop additional ones if necessary." (Journal 1).

Through ongoing critical reflection on their praxis, they positioned themselves as emerging English language teachers committed to transformative education; such critical educational spaces are essential for preparing teachers to build inclusive classrooms where English becomes a tool for empowerment and social change (Nieto, 2010; Pennycook, 2001).

They acknowledge that being immersed in a Critical Pedagogy approach requires them to reflect on their positions critically. "It was a unique experience because we often forget that these types of cases exist in our society. In our comforts and privileges" (Angela, Journal 1). They also show empathy and challenge their own privilege:

I try to put myself in their shoes (because I have never been in them) and think about how I would feel if my entire being were judged just based on where I live and if that defined my future, leaving me without any possibilities of changing it. (Daniela, Journal 1).

The reflections reveal the student-teachers' evolving understanding of their role, moving beyond mere instructors to agents of social change, a process driven by continuous critical self-assessment.

As educators, we learned the importance of creating inclusive, empathetic environments. We saw firsthand how critical pedagogy fosters personal growth, reflection, and connection. The experience reinforced the power of creativity in education to inspire transformation.

### **Strengthening Teacher Identity**

As educators in the making, student-teachers learned the importance of creating inclusive and empathetic environments where all learners feel valued and heard. Through this experience, they could witness how critical pedagogy fosters not only social awareness but also personal growth, reflection, and meaningful human connection. The process reinforced the transformative role of creativity and dialogue in education as tools to challenge traditional hierarchies and inspire change.

The following quote, constructed collectively by the members of one of the groups, reflects the profound impact this experience had on their teacher identity construction:

We took some time to talk with them and asked how they were feeling about the activities and with us our attitudes. They answered that all we did was interesting, and they were comfortable with those exercises, but they were not active participants.

This made us question if we were having an inadequate methodology or if maybe we weren't doing enough, maybe we weren't trying hard enough to teach a meaningful class, we were frustrated, we even had the sudden intrusive thought that we weren't doing a good job at all and it made us feel confused about our personal objectives in the seminar. (María F., Valentiana & Yerly)

As explored by the student-teachers involved in this project, incorporating critical pedagogies presented significant challenges. They had to confront not only their responsibility to engage students actively but also their own insecurities and self-perceptions as future educators. When students did not respond as expected, the frustration and self-doubt that arose exposed the complex emotional dimension of teaching and the fragile nature of developing teacher identity.

This moment of discomfort, however, became a turning point for reflection and growth. By questioning their methods and their own positioning, student-teachers entered a deeper process of self-awareness, aligning with what Freire (1996) describes as the "unfinished" nature of educators, always in the process of becoming. Their experience highlights that building a teacher identity within a critical pedagogical framework is not a linear or immediate process but one filled with tensions, vulnerability, and continuous learning.

Such experiences encourage future teachers to see moments of uncertainty not as failures but as essential components of professional and personal development. Through these reflective processes, student-teachers begin to construct identities grounded in empathy, critical consciousness, and commitment to creating more participatory and transformative educational spaces.

## Conclusions

Approaching English Language Teaching through critical pedagogy and social justice allowed student-teachers to experience a different way of understanding their role as educators and the true potential of language education. For many, this experience marked a break from traditional conceptions of teaching that reduce English to grammar rules and isolated vocabulary. Instead, teaching became a space to connect with students' realities, emotions, and stories.

Throughout this process, student-teachers realized that ELT is not neutral. It carries the possibility to either reproduce exclusion and silence or open spaces for dialogue, reflection, and transformation. By bringing critical pedagogy into their classrooms, they discovered that teaching English can—and should—respond to students' social, cultural, and personal contexts. Language became a tool to question, to express, and to make sense of the world.

This experience also revealed the challenges of teaching with a critical and socially just lens. Student-teachers confronted doubts, frustrations, and moments of uncertainty when students did not respond as expected. But those tensions became opportunities to reflect, to question their own methods, and to grow. They learned that teaching is not about having all the answers but about listening, adapting, and walking alongside learners.

Approaching ELT through critical pedagogy helped student-teachers transform their classrooms into spaces for empathy, dialogue, and collective questioning. It reminded them that their students' voices, experiences, and ways of seeing the world are central to building meaningful learning processes. At the same time, it invited them to see themselves not only as language teachers but as educators committed to promoting cultural awareness, social inclusion, and critical thinking.

In the end, this experience reaffirmed that language education can—and must—be a space for imagining new possibilities. A space where students can challenge stereotypes, share their realities, and see themselves as active participants in their communities. For the student-teachers, approaching ELT from a critical pedagogy perspective was not an easy path, but it became a meaningful step in shaping their identities as educators who believe in the power of language to foster connection, reflection, and social transformation.

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## 8.

# Ale in the unbeknownst borderland: a queer gender identities construction rhapsody.

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### Abstract

Little is known about how teenage Queer EFL students construct their gender identities, as most gender studies in Colombian ELT over the past decade have focused on LGBT and cisgender individuals, overlooking Queer learners and teachers. This decolonial autobiographical narrative study explored how three Queer EFL students build their gender identities, highlighting the sociocultural challenges they face and the value of narrative research in understanding identity. Conducted over two years as part of my B.A. in Modern Languages, this study also reflects my journey as a trans non-binary teacher. Data collection over four months revealed key issues: ageism against teenagers, the urgency of embracing 21st-century diversity, the researcher's role in the process, and the lingering impact of COVID-19 on identity formation.

**Keywords:** *autobiographic narratives, gender, gender identities construction, identities, narratives, Queer teenagers.*

### Introduction

#### “Down the Pink Fox Hole”

To begin, it feels essential to share the context of this autobiographical narrative study and the reasons that led me to write it this way. I first encountered the word *Queer* while reading *Alice in Wonderland* in 2015. I was fifteen, searching for something hidden in someone else's lines. Back then, being a teenager had stripped me of dreams and direction—I felt like an empty bottle adrift in a dark sea, wordless but watched. Not by monsters, but by eyes filled with judgment. In that silence, I found my voice through my hands, as writing became the way I existed. Literature gave me enough safety to whisper myself into being and eventually be heard.

This autobiographic narrative study is more than academic work; it is the logbook I wrote over the years of becoming a trans non-binary Queer teacher as I did not always feel *Queer* as I still carried traces of the gender norms I was raised with. But the moment my gaze broke free from heteronormativity, a system that elevates heterosexuality as the only acceptable reality, my deconstructive autobiographic narrative journey began.

Narratives shape how we understand experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and narrative research highlights storytelling as a way of making sense of social realities

(Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). As part of the postmodern qualitative paradigm, this narrative study embraces the autobiographical narrative approach, also known as *autobistoria*, understood by Anzaldúa (2015) as a term employed in the genre of literature that intertwines personal and collective history with fictive aspects, akin to autobiography or fictionalized memoirs.

### Statement of the problem

#### “A Senseless Race and a Poem”

Much like Alice, I ask questions without clear answers—especially about how cis-normative society treats Queer youth. Questioning gender or heteronormativity often leads to silence or discomfort. In schools and universities, diversity is still largely ignored. My own experiences—being sidelined for not fitting gender expectations—taught me how invisibility shapes Queer lives. As Harris (2011, in Miller, 2015) notes, “when you are not recognized, it is difficult to maintain a positive self-image” (p. 39). Teachers saw but rarely acted. This silence reinforces heterosexism and erases those outside the binary (Miller, 2012; Miller & Gillian, 2014).

Supportive educators are vital (Vásquez-Guarnizo & Álvarez-Contreras, 2021), yet gender remains seen as fixed, shaped by outdated roles rooted in industrial capitalism (Rose, 1993). Thinkers like Butler (1990) remind us that gender is performative, cultural, and changing. When I began my B.A., I noticed how sexism and homophobia persisted in language and classroom jokes, showing how ignoring diversity alienates students (Hagood, 2002). Education, I have come to believe, is a chrysalis—a space for transformation (Vásquez-Guarnizo & Álvarez-Contreras, 2021). But only if we let it be. Traditional roles like blue for boys, and men earn, women care (Corral, 2014; Thomas, 2020) still limit who we can become.

### Theoretical framework

#### “A Senseless Race and a Poem”

My mentors helped me navigate the doubts and contradictions in this journey, not by offering answers but by widening my lens—helping me read experience like a map of many truths. This journey was guided by the central question: *What do three Queer EFL learners’ narratives reveal about their gender identities construction?* The following constructs formed the core of my prismatic wind rose.

### Decoloniality in ELT

Decoloniality responds to *coloniality*—the lasting social, cultural, and epistemic dominance rooted in colonial power structures (Granados-Beltrán, 2022; Mignolo, 2005). In ELT, this is visible in textbooks and curricula that privilege Western knowledge (Núñez-Pardo, 2020). Decoloniality promotes unlearning and rehumanizing through stories, giving voice to marginalized

perspectives (Carvajal et al., 2022; Rendón, 2000).

### **Cultural Hegemony**

Hegemony refers to power maintained by consent and social norms (Davis, 2004; Giroux, 1985). In education, cultural hegemony silences local voices and reinforces dominant ideologies (Gramsci, 1971). Resistance comes through reclaiming meaning, questioning traditions, and rewriting narratives (Thompson, 1963; Cortés-Ramírez, 2015).

### **Queer Theory**

Originally a slur, “Queer” has been reclaimed as a term for those outside normative gender and sexuality (Pardo-Rubio, 2017). It challenges binaries and embraces fluid identities (Butler, 1993; Anzaldúa, 1987). Language becomes central to this process—it not only reflects but shapes our realities (Thomas, 2020).

### **Masculinities and Femininities**

Masculinity is a social construct tied to power and often marked by emotional repression and dominance (Connell, 2003; Varela, 2005). While not fixed, hegemonic masculinity persists in Colombia, resisting change even as some men redefine their roles in response to feminism (Bonino, 2003).

On the other hand, femininities have been defined by patriarchal norms, but feminism has sought to disrupt and rebuild them through emotional awareness, equity, and resistance (Thomas, 2020; Cixous, 1995). Feminism is a diverse, evolving set of practices that push toward justice and social transformation.

### **Gender Identities Construction**

Gender is not binary or static—it is constructed through discourse, context, and time (Coates, 2004; Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017). It includes identities beyond male/female and intersects with biological, cultural, and emotional factors (García, 2005; Vásquez-Guarnizo & Álvarez-Contreras, 2021).

### **Identity and Gender Identities**

Identity is shaped by discourse and social interaction (Norton, 2011). Gender identity emerges through negotiation with cultural roles and stereotypes (Barberá, 1998), and teachers play a key role in this process, often unconsciously reinforcing gender norms (Guijarro, 2006).

### **Discourse and Social Construction**

Discourse reflects and constructs power and identity (Litosseliti, 2006). It reveals how individuals see themselves and others. Breaking gender norms requires unlearning rigid roles and embracing fluid, culturally constructed identities (Benavides, 2017; Thomas, 2008, 2020).

Queer gender identities construction is a complex, ongoing negotiation shaped by personal, cultural, and pedagogical influences. Understanding this process is vital to decolonizing ELT and creating inclusive, equitable educational spaces.

## Research design

### “Colours and Questions”

Here, you will encounter a kind of Cheshire Cat—offering clues, not conclusions. Between riddles and glimmers of story, the essential coordinates of this inquiry unfold: its foundations, methods, participants, and instruments.

This study adopts a qualitative approach to amplify the voices of three Queer EFL learners. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note, qualitative research makes the world visible through interpretive practices like interviews and reflections, revealing meaning from lived experience. It allowed data to emerge naturally, using both inductive and deductive analysis, and provided space to explore how social, educational, and familial forces shaped participants’ gender identity construction (Creswell, 2013; Cropley, 2019).

Though still rare in Colombian ELT research, narrative inquiry offers a powerful lens to explore identity (Bruner, 1990; Barkhuizen, 2008). Stories do more than recount events—they reflect how people interpret, perform, and reconstruct their experiences over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). In this study, narratives are treated as brief autobiographies that reveal identity in motion, shaped by context and interaction (Quintero-Polo, 2016).

Inspired by Brijaldo (2009), Barbosa (2018), and Vásquez-Guarnizo (2019), I approached narrative as both method and mode of analysis. Storytelling became a dialogic act—part literature, part inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). Given the personal and reflexive nature of this project, I adopted autobiographical narrative inquiry, which centers the researcher’s voice and positionality. Following Clandinin and Huber (2010), three dimensions frame the process: temporality (how things evolve), sociality (the personal/social), and place (where they unfold).

Although autobiographical inquiry is more common in trauma or activism research (Appel & Papaikonomou, 2011), it remains underexplored in education. This study embraces the researcher’s experience as integral, echoing Cárdenas (2021) on the importance of researcher subjectivity in shaping inquiry.

To capture experience, I developed two metaphorical tools: *Lavender Voices* and *Dandelion Draughts*—emerging from the intersection of pedagogy, identity, and creativity.

### Lavender Voices

This hybrid interview method emerged from blending phenomenological and in-depth interviews, with guidance from Professor Bertha Ramos. It draws on Clandinin and Connelly’s

(2000) three narrative dimensions—interaction, continuity, and place. Each *Lavender Voice* explored key moments in participants' gender identity development, positioning me as a listener and co-traveller.

### **Dandelion Draughts**

These are reflective logbooks—written and visual artefacts representing growth and transformation, like dandelions. Inspired by LeCompte and Ludwig (2007), they invited participants to reflect on identity through tools like The Genderbread Person and The Identity Iceberg. These multimodal exercises deepened self-understanding across gender, identity, and expression.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Following principles of respect, autonomy, and justice (Kvale, 1996; Orb et al., 2001), I obtained consent from participants and their guardians. Forms were written in Spanish, with clear information about confidentiality and voluntary participation. Participants chose their names and had access to the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), shaping their final narratives. Institutional approval was granted with the agreement to share results at the end of the PPIP.

### **Data analysis**

#### **“A Vanilla Green Tea Party”**

Leaving behind theory and others' voices, it's time to take the floor. This is the moment where story meets analysis—born from an autobiographical narrative study alongside three Queer participants. After wandering with a broken compass, I found them—not a Mad Hatter's tea party, but voices long silenced, now ready to speak. This research unfolded during a sixteen-week Practicum and Pedagogical Intervention Project (PPIP), made possible by their trust and courage.

The analysis is structured around three Narrative Arcs—the *Petal*, *Anther*, and *Stigma*—inspired by Mathewson et al. (2019), who define narrative arcs as the evolution of beliefs across contexts. Burns (2018) adds each arc holds tension, builds, and resolves; this way, the *Petal* captures the gradual trust built through conversations, shared experiences, and a joint commitment to challenging heteronormativity. Here, we blurred the student-teacher divide to become allies—and, at times, friends. The *Anther* consists of three reflective cycles, each combining *Lavender Voices* interviews and *Dandelion Draughts* artifacts. These tools, guided by Schön's (1987) reflection-in-action, helped participants explore and articulate their gender identity constructions. The sessions were held in weeks 13, 14, and 15 of the PPIP.

Finally, the *Stigma* marks the final interpretative stage through *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)* (Smith et al., 2009). This process allowed me to revisit and validate meanings collaboratively with participants, asking Van Manen's (1997) question: *Is this what the experience is*

*really like?*

## Performative Analysis

Following Riessman's (1993) *Performative model*, this analysis moves beyond narrative content and structure to consider posture, gesture, and other embodied cues that shape meaning. It honours how participants wish to be seen and how their stories should be interpreted (Vásquez-Guarnizo, 2019).

As a form of meaning-making and verification, *IPA* explores how people make sense of life experiences. It requires the researcher to inhabit dual roles: participant in lived experience, and interpreter of its expression (Smith et al., 2009). After the three narrative cycles, I held a reflective meeting—converging past and present, in Spanish and English—with written transcripts shared for participant validation. Though the formal study lasted sixteen weeks, our conversations continued for six months, deepening rapport and trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Findings and discussion

### “The Bloom’s Battleground”

After years of gender struggle, I met them—three Queer adolescents, ready to spark a quiet revolution. In a world ruled by heteronormative norms, their truths were often silenced. I didn't arrive to win a war, but to help take a first, vital step toward Queer critical consciousness. Through our *Lavender Voices* and *Dandelion Draughts*, three Narrative Arcs emerged—safe spaces where these young voices explored and expressed their gender identity construction. Each journey unfolds in three parts: *Petal*, where trust grew and stories began; *Antber*, where reflective tools deepened their insights; and *Stigma*, where *IPA* grounded their narratives in ethical, interpretative analysis.

Our three meetings followed themes: *Thoughts*, to explore gender concepts; *Whispers*, to uncover lived identity; and *Whoops*, where resistance and reflection collided in embodied rebellion. Guided by Riessman's (1993) *Performative Analysis*, I found that their stories, while connected by generation, school, and Queerness, resisted sameness. Their only shared trait was difference. And that was the point: rhizomes, not replicas.

Each participant becomes a **Bloom**—Sam, Athena, and Eve. These aren't case studies, but living stories, expressed through memory, art, and reflection. My role shifted from teacher to narrator—amplifying, not translating.

### Summer Bloom: Sam (They/Them)

Sam, a 15-year-old passionate about cinematography and visual arts, stood out from the beginning. Curious, articulate, and grounded in their identity, they approached me during Introduction Week, eager to engage beyond surface-level school dynamics. With a B1 English

level—remarkable given Rayuela’s limited instruction—they brought critical insight and enthusiasm to both this research and activities like Gender Day.

Already well-versed in gender concepts, Sam told me

*“I already had clarity about my identity.”*

Even so, they remained open, reflective, and generous in our conversations. Their *Genderbread Person*—a reluctant drawing—still included careful personal touches and honest rejection of binary norms.

*“Gender is like an experience. Period.”*

Rayuela, they said, gave them space to be themselves, something not every school offers.

Our second meeting happened remotely—Sam was sick, but still showed up, this time via WhatsApp. We explored identity, social influence, and family. Despite early worries from their parents, Sam found acceptance at home, shaping how they understand gender:

*“I always tried to take the best from both worlds.”*

Their Identity Iceberg—a Dandelion Draughts activity—captured this complexity: identity is layered, shifting, and deeply personal.

*“You won’t stay the same throughout life—you’re always changing.”*

Sam identifies as Gender-Fluid—a conscious, evolving stance. Their reflections challenged my own assumptions and discomforts as I struggled to use correct pronouns, not from lack of effort, but from unlearning ingrained norms.

*“My identity relates to the fluidity in the gender spectrum.”*

Sam emphasized the importance of gender education in schools—not only for those questioning, but to foster respect broadly.

*“It’s essential to talk about gender identities... and to teach respect.”*

For me, Sam became more than a participant—they became a compass in my journey. Their clarity, resilience, and humour continue to guide me.

On August 7, 2022, I shared Sam’s full Narrative Arc with them via WhatsApp. Their response

*“It’s one of the kindest, most interesting visions someone has had of me.”*

Their words affirmed that this wasn’t just research—it was a shared act of storytelling, care, and Queer resistance.

### **Autumn Bloom: Athena (She/Her)**

She is the most beautiful girl I’ve ever met—not just in style or makeup, but in spirit. Sixteen and full of light, she was introduced to me by Sam, and from our first exchange, I knew we’d become close. I wasn’t wrong. We bonded as teachers and students, as LGBTQ+

people, and as human beings. Born in Cartagena on August 4th, 2006, Athena feels like a star that landed on Earth. Though she rarely speaks of her family, her love for her mother is evident. She recently shared her plan to leave Rayuela Pedagogical Foundation before graduating, to reunite with her mom a decision that weighs heavily on her. Athena is cherished at Rayuela. Her recent birthday was met with gifts and affection, echoing how much she's loved. She helped me navigate the school when I first arrived and eagerly joined my research from the beginning. Now, it's your turn to meet her.

Athena learned about our meeting only hours before it happened. Though we were close, we were nervous—it's easier to talk about makeup, boys, or *Euphoria* than to dive into *Lavender Voices*. Our hands were sweaty, eyes uncertain, but we began.

Reflecting on gender through the *Genderbread Person*, she offered  
“*How you feel identified concerning how people refer to you... You can't pigeonhole the gender spectrum into one small thing.*”

For Athena, gender is deeply personal. She resists rigid norms about makeup, love, or who one should be with:

“*Everything is so boxed in... it's boring.*”

Proudly Queer now, she once feared showing her true self:

“*It goes beyond the heteronormative... It's not black or white, but grey.*”

Rayuela gave her the space to live freely, and she embraces it.

Adolescence is already hard, but for Athena, the pandemic deepened her inner struggles. Isolated, she lost touch with herself and even quit Rayuela's band, doubting her voice. Still, she sings. With me, it was often Harry Styles or Olivia Rodrigo. She described identity as:

“*Fragments that make you. Gender is the container.*”

She spoke of her evolving self with quiet wisdom

“*Maybe I was one way before, now another... like Athena misunderstood.*”

Identity, for her, is not change—it's construction.

I didn't want our final *Lavender Voices* to be our last moment. That day was sunny and soft. No nerves—just openness. Gender still escapes words, she said:

“*Everything and nothing... it can change over time.*”

She sees people as stained-glass windows—complex, colourful. Loving yourself is still hard, though:

“*People don't need to know these things. It's not my cover letter.*”

Her words reminded me—identity isn't a label. It's humanity. And talking about it matters

“*It helps reduce bullying, harassment... to be empathetic.*”

This project became a healing space for her:

*“It was a form of release. A therapy.”*

Then, she surprised me

*“Finn, did you know I’m a sunflower?”*

I’d say she’s a whole sunflower garden.

*“I’m Athena. That’s it. No labels”.*

After completing Athena’s narrative, I shared it with her. Despite language barriers, she read it in English and said

*“I was very satisfied... I felt very very very good.”*

She added

*“I never thought that after so much fear, I could feel proud of who I am.”*

### **Winter Bloom: Eve (She/Her)**

Eve arrived at Rayuela mid-first term, quiet and reserved, often expressing herself through drawings scattered across her desk. While not as close to me as Athena or Sam, our bond grew during shared lunches, especially as she cared for her younger siblings with quiet devotion. I admired her strength—balancing school, family, and self-discovery. Despite family difficulties interrupting her studies, Eve returned determined to contribute to this project with grace and commitment.

On a soft Thursday afternoon, Eve defined gender as

*“a social attribute assigned at birth that can change as we grow and discover who we are.”*

She spoke with clarity, rejecting shame or fear. Expression, for her, is a right, not a spectacle. She questioned stereotypes and championed love’s visibility, stating:

*“Love is easy to give, but hard to reclaim. Not expressing it freely violates our rights.”*

Eve began by researching LGBTQ+ history in education before shifting to teen anxiety and social media. Still, her early focus revealed deep commitment to queer visibility. Her Genderbread Model reflected a plural, questioning identity:

*“Being Queer means breaking norms, following our hearts, and refusing assumptions about others.”*

Identity was a frequent class theme, and Eve always leaned in. She described identity as

*“Who I am—my consciousness, not my mistakes or what others say. I am shaped from within.”*

She rejected the need to “fake it” to survive. Instead, she embraced her evolving self

*“One day I may feel like a woman, another like a man... Identity isn’t static.”*

As we neared the end of *Ale in the Unbeknownst Bonderland*, Eve reflected:

*“Gender identity is how we feel inside—male, female, or non-binary. I’m a woman and feel like one, and I’ve been accepted as such.”*

This space helped her grow, she said, giving her clarity and safety.

*“It’s important to talk about gender to express who we are.”*

She recalled how confusing it was to like women at 13 in a strict military school

*“I had no one to turn to... Even now, many don’t understand, but it’s a process.”*

I learned as much from Eve as she may have from me. Her art, her courage, and her insight will stay with me.

After I shared Eve’s narrative, she replied:

*“I want others to show themselves without fear. Everyone has a story—beautiful, raw, or ugly—that shapes who we are.”*

Seeing herself in words moved her:

*“It was overwhelming and unique. I’m glad to have shared a fragment of me.”*

## Conclusions

### “A trans non-binary English teacher’s story”

This is the conclusion of my autobiographical narrative study, reflecting on two years exploring how three queer EFL learners construct their gender identities. Like the Duchess sharing morals with Alicia, I share insights gained from this journey.

Discussing gender identities in education is crucial, as awareness is still low. As Sam noted, talking about gender helps those confused and teaches respect beyond norms.

A recurring phrase in the narratives was *Toda mi vida* [All my life], yet many participants are teenagers whose life experiences are still forming, especially after COVID-19 disrupted normal development. It’s vital to support youth with workshops that help them manage time and reconnect with life. Also, we must stop underestimating teenagers’ perspectives just because of their age; identities are dynamic and shaped by unique contexts and experiences.

It’s important to distinguish between tolerance and respect: tolerance resists difference, while respect embraces it. Inclusion must go beyond disabilities to neurodiversity and gender diversity. Similarly, teaching the difference between gender equality (absence of discrimination) and gender equity (fairness in resource distribution) can deepen understanding and promote critical thinking.

Finally, narrative research is especially valuable for studying identities and diversity because it honours the unique, personal ways people experience the world, rather than forcing common patterns.

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## 9.

# A Documentary Study: Tracing Research Skill Teaching in Undergraduate Program

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### Abstract

Within the context of a systematization of experiences to get an overview of the way bachelor's programs in teacher education worldwide have approached research skills, a review of studies published on the subject matter, over the last 10 year, was carried out. This inquiry was guided by the question: What do studies reveal about how research skills teaching has been addressed in undergraduate programs with preservice teachers?

After considering various international and national papers, the following themes were identified as relevant for this documentary research: ways to approach research skills teaching, ways to conceive research skills teaching, and trends and gaps in terms of research skills teaching. Some conclusions that were drawn from the articles analyzed showed that, first and foremost, research skills teaching has been given a noticeable priority in education programs, particularly through action research approaches. Second, such work, as reflected by the papers, has led students to gain a general understanding of research skills. And third, it is still needed to carry out and report studies that describe how the challenges encountered by students while learning research skills, especially specific ones such as analyzing data, have been addressed.

*Key words:* research skills, research training, thesis writing, documentary research

### Introduction

This paper is framed within a comprehensive research project on formative research that has been carried out at the Language Teaching Program in Bilingualism: English and Spanish from ÚNICA since the first semester of the year 2024. This research encompasses a review of studies published on the enhancement of research skills in undergraduate programs with preservice teachers, particularly over the last 10 years at the national and international arenas. The purpose underlying this search was to gain an overview of the way bachelor's programs in teacher education at national and international levels have approached these skills so that we, as research educators and thesis advisors can learn about the way undergraduate programs, for instance, deal with the challenges that arise in the research accompaniment process and the strategies that are implemented for a successful completion of the degree project document.

## **Problem Statement**

Research skill training is pivotal in teacher education provided that most bachelor's programs intend to prepare their students (i.e., preservice teachers) to perform as teachers while either having a solid research foundation or even becoming researchers. It is imperative to inquire into such research preparation to determine what has been done, how it has been done, and what needs to be done.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The constructs that make up this framework are: research skills, research training, thesis writing, and documentary research.

## **Research Skills**

For López (2022), the concept of research encompasses three subskills: 1. basic research skills, which embrace the fundamental skills that undergraduate programs in education should promote in students, as the ones related to logical thinking processes (e.g., analyzing, synthesizing, comparing), and those related with general research skills (e.g., searching information, and communicating findings). 2. Specific skills to a given discipline, which comprise the application of the core knowledge of the area the undergraduate student is specializing in. 3. Specific skills to pedagogical research methodology, which include the basis required to do educational research.

## **Research Training**

This is the type of education that academic programs offer to their students for them to get acquainted with the research process as an ongoing inquiry, understand the research stages, and the way a research project is laid out (Espinosa et al., 2016). Thus, a thesis or degree project embodies a great opportunity for novice researchers to reflect upon an issue, propose an alternative to comprehend, improve, or modify it from a new perspective. On the other hand, Guerrero (2007) associates this term with the way students might take ownership of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform efficiently in productive tasks linked to scientific research, technological development, and innovation.

## **Thesis Writing**

This is one of the research skills that students should possess to prove they know how to write academically. In the views of Muñoz et al. (2009), two of the most important writing skills pertaining to thesis writing imply writing documents which describe educational setting issues as well as improving academic writing skills such as taking field notes and synthesizing.

## **Documentary Research**

This type of research design is thought of, according to Cotrina (2025), as a systematic

process through which a researcher has the possibility to gather, organize, and analyze sources of information such as papers and manuscripts to determine the state-of-art on a specific topic of interest. For successful documentary research, this author claims that researchers should make use of various sources, analyze the information collected as critically as possible, systematize the existing body of literature, and identify significant gaps in that literature.

## **Methodology**

In this study, the procedures for synthetic literature reviews suggested by Templier and Paré (2015) were followed. Thus, first, the corresponding research questions and objectives were formulated; then, the existing body of research was searched; after that, inclusion criteria were screened; later, the quality of primary data was assessed; subsequently, data was extracted and analyzed.

## **Analysis Procedures**

To fulfil the analytical-synthetic process of analysis proposed by Paré and Kitsiou (2017), the researchers in this study collated the data, which means that they gathered, arranged, and blended information from various sources into a coherent and useful dataset, in this case a matrix designed on Word; they summarized the data previously registered in the matrix by reducing it into more concise, significant, and easy to understand information; they aggregated the data, that is to say, they started to identify patterns, trends, and insights that might not be easily spotted in the data that had been summarized; they organized and compared the data which implied categorizing the information more deeply and selectively, seeking similarities, differences, and correlations between the sets of data; finally, they agreed on and designed the most convenient graph to display findings as well present the contribution to extant literature explicitly.

## **Findings**

After following the steps described before, three categories arose: ways to approach research skills teaching, ways to conceive research skills teaching, as well as trends and gaps in terms of research skills teaching.

### **Ways to Approach Research Skills Teaching**

This category makes references to how undergraduate programs have opted to address the teaching of both specific and general skills so that their students are prepared as future teachers and teacher-researchers. In this sense, four insightful findings appeared:

Action Research as Preferred Research Design. Various studies (Elmas & Aydın, 2017; Oestar & Marzo, 2022; Rahimi et al., 2018; Toquero, 2021; Tuchyna & Kamynin, 2022) have addressed the issue of preparing student teachers as researchers and helping them develop their research skills. Some of those studies have focused on offering courses to guide students to do

their degree project or combining the teaching practicum with research practice so that student teachers can develop their research skills.

These studies have proven that there is a clear bond between what students experience in their teaching practicum and what they write in their degree project since at schools they function as educators who propose a set of pedagogical interventions commonly known as workshops, and as student-teacher-researchers they are expected to materialize that teaching experience in their research project.

Most undergraduate academic programs advocate for action research as the most desirable research design that allows research educators to directly and indirectly develop research skills in preservice teachers because the former conceive this method highly instrumental in gaining insights into the actions the teachers-to-be carry out in the classroom as well as the perceptions they have of this process.

Teaching Research Skills as a Practical Exercise. Regardless of the research design that undergraduate students have chosen for their study, according to Landin and Juárez (2020), the training in education research that programs offer should be regarded as a meaningful experience in which students who are doing the degree project and their advisor join to look for answers and quest for knowledge.

Considering Landin and Juárez's views, it is relevant to note that undergraduate programs tend to place an emphasis on the development of research skills rather than the enhancement of inquiry skills. Let us remember that despite these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, as both imply investigating and asking questions, there is a slight difference in terms of focus and methodology.

Inquiry is more connected with exploring and does not necessarily call for a structured approach; research, on the other hand, embodies a further systematic and rigorous process to discover or yield new knowledge or validate extant theories.

When research training is addressed under an inquiry-based perspective, students feel that they are not doing research just for the sake of completing a project which conduces to graduation, but they are putting to test what they think they have learned through their major. Owing to the inquiry process, students can explore a topic or issue, seek information of their interest, and understand a complex situation they previously observed.

Elaboration of Artifacts as Substantial Elements. Alternatively, there are academic programs for which designing an artifact might prevail over writing a formal research document. For example, García and Hernández (2021), report how a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Design from a Colombian university did not place an emphasis on research per se but on the elaboration

of artifacts as substantial elements in their professional development as designers. Considering this finding, these researchers concluded that in some undergraduate programs where creativity is definitive, research education and the process of making artifacts should be amalgamated.

Consequently, research education should not be approached just aiming at developing research and writing skills put together in a formal and official academic text, but also as an opportunity to foster inventiveness and imagination in preservice teachers. To find a balance between creativity and general research skills, programs could tailor some flexibility to allow students to thrive in those areas in which they stand out. For instance, this can be observed in a material design project where a thesis student might excel at creating a high-quality type of material or providing an insightful systematization of their experience.

García and Hernández (2021) point out that the amalgamation of these two views is paramount so that neither of the skills implied in research training is neglected, particularly when programs claim they offer integral education.

### **Ways to Conceive Research Skill Teaching**

This category refers to how undergraduate programs have embraced the teaching of both specific and general skills to equip their students to face future challenges as teachers and teacher-researchers. Thus, four enlightening findings emerged.

**Meaningful Experience in an Ongoing Inquiry.** Teaching research skills has been conceived as a significant exercise in which participants exchange ideas actively to unfold what doing research means. Thus, in a constant communicative routine both parties, namely, preservice teachers and research educators, interact by asking questions, making analytical comments, expressing existing challenges and ways in which these have been overcome, or answering the questions posed, replying to the remarks made and providing feedback on how the challenges are faced.

As Landín and Juárez (2020) pinpoint, according to the eight participants of their study, this implies that training in research skills ought to be considered as a memorable experience where students and advisors embark in a collaborative quest for answers and knowledge. Such an experience becomes relevant for these novice researchers as what they have been doing in the various courses from the undergraduate materializes and gains validity at the end of their major.

**Formative Research as Significant and Transcendental When Connected to Social Context.** In line with the belief that formative research is significant for undergraduate students when it is connected to their social context, through an empiric study conducted in Cuba, Romero et al. (2021) found that the essence of formative research in undergraduate programs is to develop a set

of research skills to educate professionals who can keep up with the ever changing dynamics and accelerating advances the current society embodies.

In this vein, the degree project constitutes a great opportunity for student-teachers to prove they have gained an understanding of social, economic, scientific, and cultural issues upon approaching their research topic. Then, in educating undergraduate students to do research, they must learn to participate in their social context, employing the most suitable research tools and knowledge to solve local issues.

Acknowledging that formative research cannot and should not be detached from initial teacher education, Pensado et al. (2022) describe how educating future teachers to conduct research becomes for some Bachelor of Art in Mexico and worldwide the most effective way they rely upon in their attempt to transcend the instructional boundaries.

Students who do research in such a context develop a more acute awareness to see aspects connected not only with linguistics, but also with matters that somehow affect them.

Through the research process, students can work on their general research skills while identifying issues that merit deeper understanding. They establish links between those issues and their teaching roles seeking to find alternatives, for example, to the ways in which tasks have been carried out or courses have been taught. Similarly, students have the opportunity to work on their specific research skills by, for instance, analyzing whether those issues they have identified truly constitute problems or situations that can be improved, so that they can think of means of formally diagnosing a problem with the argumentation required.

Research Education and the Process of Making Artifacts Should Be Amalgamated. As explained above, some bachelor programs in humanities, particularly, and other areas need not be limited to submitting a thesis document. Rather, the teaching research skill activity can be expanded to challenge students to create products that show their field of study knowledge addressed to present practical applications to common questions or problems in their areas of concern.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that students should neglect the development of their research skills. On the contrary, students are to call upon their general research skills while planning what kind of artifact they can create, and then both general and specific skills can be implemented when pondering how to articulate and present the planning stage and design of the artifact created.

Reading, Discussing, Inquiring, and Writing as Researchers. With respect to the writing skills in the research context, Aldana (2013) shows some insightful views about the dilemma many undergraduate students must go through when they become novice researchers, which has to do with authoring their thesis. Students should select a topic of study that requires a thorough reading

that revolves around it. In the same manner, the young researcher needs to know the logic of research without which it is impossible to write a complete and well-structured document.

In this sense, teaching research skills, and learning them specifically, cannot be disconnected from developing academic writing skills. While putting together the various sections of their document, students need to be able to express their ideas in a cohesive and coherent way while keeping the argumentative essence of the whole thesis paper. As explained by Carlino (2013), neither general writing skills nor academic writing skills are acquired effortlessly. On the contrary, learning to create a solid writing piece requires conscious learning and consistent practice. Carlino (2013) pinpoints that forming proper writing skills demands going through processes of analysis, argumentation, facts association, categorization, and summarizing to mention some.

### **Trends in Research Skills Teaching**

During this examination of studies concerning the ways in which research skill teaching has unfolded in various bachelor's in education programs, common paths can be visualized. This category will briefly describe the most recurrent issues identified across the studies examined.

**Priority Given to Teaching Research Skills.** A great interest in the area of teaching research competencies can be perceived, for example, at the Latin-American and Colombian levels where studies have focused on analyzing the state of the art concerning research skills teaching. For instance, research such as that by Arzuaga et al. (2023) can be noted. In a metanalysis, they found that several studies about teaching research competencies in universities have increased over the last ten years. Countries like Cuba and Colombia appeared at the top of the list, especially in the fields of medicine and education respectively.

Besides the metanalysis, other studies considered reveal that programs display acknowledgement of the pressing need to educate in research, as well as responses to such acknowledgement. Thus, programs offer opportunities by means of courses, mini projects, practical research exercises within non-research classes, etc., for their students to gain the skills intended. In the contexts mentioned, the efforts seem to be focused on promoting general research skills.

A considerable group of those studies show that preservice teachers find it beneficial that research education contributes to their understanding of and application of research skills concerning aspects such as identifying a research topic, formulating research questions, organizing information, and writing a research report (Elmas & Aydın, 2017; Rahimi et al., 2018). For example, in the Colombian context, a group of scholars set out to analyze the teaching of research competencies within the context of the practicum in the seven programs for teacher education of a public university in the south of Colombia, one of which was a Bachelor's

in EFL (Buendía-Arias et al., 2018). Findings revealed that student teachers were able to execute observation skills and collect data as part of their development of general research skills.

As described earlier, action research has been a favored design to promote research skill teaching as within this design students can put into practice not only their pedagogical knowledge but also the skills they have been learning and continue to explore in their programs. This seems like a logical and practical strategy for programs to follow. Yet this is not the only one, which has been acutely pointed out by researchers such as Castañeda-Trujillo and Alarcón-Camacho (2023) who take a stance for not instrumentalizing research skill teaching for prospective teachers, this is, confining it one single design and ways to explore it. A more detailed version of this view will be presented later in this paper as it also constitutes a strategy to educate students on research skills.

### **Gaps in Research Skill Teaching**

Scarcity of Strategies to Make the Degree Project Elaboration Process Easier for Students. Several authors such as Becerra, 2012; Castañeda-Trujillo & Alarcón-Camacho, 2023; García & Hernández, 2021) concur in the idea that in the research formation process various difficulties related to both specific and general research skills arise. These difficulties have to do mostly with not being able to select a suitable design, not structuring a solid theoretical framework, not building a synthetical literature review, not providing a feasible solution to the problem diagnosed, not achieving a global coherence in the final version of the degree project.

Precisely, one of the most salient gaps in the studies reviewed is the scarcity of concrete strategies, either cognitive or metacognitive, that undergraduate thesis students use for overcoming those issues. It would be desirable for future student-researchers, thesis advisors, and research course professors to rely on a bank of strategies tailored to each of the challenges mentioned previously.

In conjunction with these difficulties, the predicaments that research educators face when attempting to engage students in a rewarding journey to do research. In this sense, there seems to be another gap in the studies revisited concerning the concrete strategies and suggestions that advisors and research course professors can provide to students for successful completion of the thesis.

In response to the gaps identified, two studies can be cited as possible proposals of strategies to face the challenges found by students when navigating research skill learning. For example, Castañeda-Trujillo and Alarcón-Camacho (2023) set out to propose alternative ways for research training. They intended to promote students' interest in research while offering alternatives for them to learn it in practice and linking it to their own realities and social contexts.

This paper deserves a special mention as it touches upon a few issues with which this report is concerned. First, it appeals to the need to search for fresher perspectives on how to teach research skills. Hence, it argues that there are paths beyond action research. Without denying the practical reasons for which action research has been used as a preferred means, which have been explained earlier, the study states the need to explore other ways to teach students how to research.

Second, their proposal highlights the need for students to connect research to their realities and their social context, which coincides with what other researchers have underscored (Pensado et al., 2021; Romero et al., 2021:). A third point worth mentioning is that the perspective proposed by Castañeda-Trujillo and Alarcón-Camacho (2023) constitutes a strategy that can contribute to the gap presented here about the scarcity of strategies for programs to come out with newer views to teach research. They emphasize starting at early stages (first year, second year of studies) and providing continuous accompaniment as key points when teaching research.

Another study worth mentioning is one led by Pérez-Gómez & Romero-Molina (in press). In their research, they described closely the guidance students went through during their undergraduate studies to consolidate their research skills in a thesis. Such mentoring was facilitated by three main means: the research courses of the program on which the study was based, the guidance given by the professor of the research project courses, and the advisory provided by a thesis mentor. The coherence achieved among these three components of research skill teaching seems to constitute a macro strategy for students to thrive in their understanding and application of research skills.

## Conclusions

This systematic review of literature has revealed that in most respects, there is an intrinsic connection between the way in which undergraduate programs conceive the teaching of research skills and the way in which they address that teaching process. In this sense, academic programs regard research skill teaching as an experience that should be meaningful for students so that they are constantly seeking answers in different sources (inquiry), as a significant and sensical practice that must be connected to social context, as a great opportunity where formal research education and the creation of artifacts can be merged, and as the space for student to learn to read, discuss, inquire, and write as researchers do.

Aligned with these views, undergraduate programs emphasize that students, as preservice teachers, should embark in a teaching practicum that serves as the sources for research practice (action-research). Also, they offer specialized courses where students are guided throughout the elaboration of their degree project. Besides, these programs embrace research training as an inquiry process where students explore a topic or issue, look for attention-grabbing information, and

comprehend a complex situation they had observed in a setting, and they conceive the teaching of research skills as the most suitable scenario for students to show their creativity and talents upon making pertinent and relevant artifacts.

In terms of trends, there is a growing interest in teaching research competencies in Latin American countries, particularly in Colombia. In most studies, the state of the art concerning research skill teaching continues to be a concern. As proof of this concern, most academic programs acknowledge the need to educate their students to become future teacher-researchers. With that in mind, the licenciatura programs offer research education through courses, mini projects, practical research exercises within non-research classes, etc. These undergraduate programs aim at students' gaining the research skills required to perform effectively in their teaching jobs. In the contexts mentioned, the efforts appear to be focused on fostering general research skills.

As mentioned earlier, action research has been the preferred way to promote research skill teaching as within this design novice researchers can put into practice their pedagogical knowledge and the skills they have been learning and continue to deepen in their programs.

Concerning gaps, one of the most remarkable findings from the studies revisited is the scarcity of strategies, either cognitive or metacognitive, that students can use to overcome the challenges that arise in the thesis writing process. Most researchers concur in the idea that in the research formation process, various difficulties related to both specific and general research skills appear. Related to this, there is also a scarcity of strategies that thesis advisors as well as research course professors can use to make the elaboration of degree projects smoother for students.

It is important to note that we, as research educators, will consider all these findings and learnings from this review to understand students' challenges better, guide them more effectively and consolidate the areas at which we have been excelling.

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## 10.

# Exploración de círculos restaurativos y construcción de empatía a través de la pedagogía para la paz en una institución educativa de Soacha.

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### Resumen

Esta investigación-acción participativa reporta la exploración de diez círculos restaurativos con un grupo de estudiantes de octavo grado de una institución educativa de Soacha con el objeto de promover acciones en torno a la construcción de la empatía. Debido a acciones reincidentes dentro del aula de clase tales como: robos, agresiones físicas y verbales, individualismo, entre otras, que afectaban las relaciones interpersonales en la comunidad educativa, se diseñaron diez talleres para fortalecer la empatía cognitiva, afectiva y compasiva aplicando principios de la Pedagogía para la Paz conjuntamente con la exploración de cuatro fases de los círculos restaurativos: *caracterización, acercamiento, intervención y reparación.*

La reflexión de los datos recolectados a lo largo de estas fases, a través de artefactos, narrativas, audio-grabaciones, un cuestionario estructurado y diarios de campo permitieron profundizar y develar perspectivas de los estudiantes sobre su comprensión frente al conflicto, diversidad, inclusión, solución de problemas, entre otras. Los resultados demuestran que los círculos restaurativos generan acciones reparadoras desde el reconocimiento del respeto individual para su construcción hacia un sentido social; la empatía como una responsabilidad social y un proceso recíproco de conciencia ciudadana; y el manejo de emociones y acciones para cultivar la paz con quienes nos rodean.

**Palabras clave:** Círculos restaurativos, Empatía cognitiva, afectiva, compasiva, Pedagogía para la Paz.

### Introducción

La escuela debe ser un lugar seguro para la comunidad académica brindando bases para la creación de un tejido social, es decir aprender a ser, hacer, saber e interactuar con los demás. La importancia de entender que el ser humano es un ser social por naturaleza y que las interacciones aseguran la creación de un tejido social, impone la necesidad de solventar algunas problemáticas desde la apreciación de las habilidades socioemocionales, en especial el tratamiento a la empatía en la escuela. En ese sentido, la empatía es esencial en el fortalecimiento del tejido social, ya que esta

favorece la tolerancia, la inclusión, el respeto y la amabilidad. Generar espacios donde los estudiantes puedan fortalecerla, vivirla y replicarla puede mitigar situaciones que afectan la convivencia en el aula (UNICEF, 2019).

Hoy por hoy, para el fortalecimiento del tejido social varias entidades gubernamentales promueven la empatía desde la tolerancia, la inclusión, el respeto y la amabilidad a través de la Pedagogía para la Paz. Por ejemplo, desde que se creó la Comisión de la Verdad mediante el Acto Legislativo 01 de 2017 y el Decreto 588 de 2017 su finalidad ha sido la búsqueda y promoción de la verdad, la sana convivencia y evitar la reincidencia de acciones violentas que afectan la construcción de paz desde el conocimiento de la veracidad de los hechos y el esclarecimiento de lo ocurrido.

En esta búsqueda por la verdad, la Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (JEP) y Educapaz dirigen un programa sobre justicia y restauración donde su objetivo es permitir que en la escuela se puedan adquirir herramientas que abordan conflictos desde el respeto y la tolerancia fortaleciendo las habilidades socioemocionales. Una de estas herramientas constituye la exploración de prácticas restaurativas que aportan al tejido social y a una construcción de empatía en el ámbito escolar. Dentro de estas prácticas, autores como Pranis (2006) y Watchtel (2016) reconocen diferentes modalidades para generar restauración en las aulas, tales como: preguntas, reuniones espontáneas, paneles de impacto, prestación de servicios a la comunidad, facilitación o mediación víctima ofensor, y círculos restaurativos. Por lo cual, esta investigación se centra en los círculos restaurativos que se clasifican en apoyo, diálogo, sanación y círculos de paz.

Así, esta investigación se desarrolló en un contexto público dentro de la Institución Educativa Chiloé ubicada en Soacha a través de una metodología de investigación-acción participativa a través de diez talleres diseñados para el uso de círculos restaurativos en el aula con un grupo de veintitrés estudiantes de grado octavo. Además, estos talleres estuvieron enfocados en algunos principios de la Pedagogía para la Paz mediante el uso del material diseñado y adaptado por entidades gubernamentales cuyo propósito era la restauración y construcción de la empatía desde el ambiente escolar. De acuerdo con el Ministerio de Educación (MEN) (2020) “La educación para la paz debe surgir en el aula, en los escenarios de participación y en las familias para que todos estemos en capacidad de resolver los conflictos sin violencia” (p.3). En virtud de lo anterior, como docentes debemos aportar a la paz trascendiendo el aula para poder impactar en la comunidad.

Específicamente, a través de esta investigación que se enmarca en la línea de investigación aprendizaje socioemocional se presenta la fundamentación teórica en la creación de una propuesta para la promoción de la empatía a través de la implementación de diez círculos restaurativos. Cada

círculo se desarrolló en cuatro momentos. El primer momento conocer (*fase de caracterización*); el segundo momento articular (*fase de acercamiento*); el tercer momento intervenir (*fase de intervención*); por último, el cuarto momento reparar (*fase de reparación*). A lo largo de los cuatro momentos, en cada círculo se generaron espacios de contextualización, discusión y reflexión, así como también de proposición para acciones encaminadas a la generación de una transformación de las interacciones en el aula.

### **Marco teórico**

Estas concepciones teóricas permiten articular diferentes apreciaciones sobre la necesidad de construir prácticas pedagógicas en el aula enfocadas a la empatía, la paz y a las cartillas o materiales cuyo enfoque restaurativo permiten abordar nuevas metodologías para la resolución de problemáticas escolares. Estos constructos se describen a continuación Pedagogía para la Paz

La Educación para la Paz se basa en un bien colectivo que permite la trascendencia de las buenas acciones contribuyendo a una sociedad basada en el respeto, empatía, y tolerancia donde se enfatiza el bien común. Además, tomando como soporte el Decreto 1038 de 2015 por el cual se reglamenta la Cátedra de la Paz, la paz debería ser una asignatura implícita en todos los programas académicos permitiendo un fortalecimiento desde los inicios escolares para brindar las bases necesarias sintetizadas que por medio de la violencia o la fuerza no se puede imponer las ideas propias. Orientar hacia la paz es fomentar una cultura de cooperación integrando habilidades, capacidades, conocimientos, actitudes y aptitudes.

### **Empatía**

En las competencias emocionales y como una habilidad para relacionarse, los seres humanos aprenden a controlar sus propias emociones, dominándolas y reconociendo las mismas en los demás; a esto, se le reconoce como la empatía. Catret (2001) considera que “la empatía es una habilidad de competencia emocional” (p.144), y que a los niños hay que sensibilizarlos a entender a los demás, cómo se sienten, e identificar esas expresiones que aparecen en determinados momentos. Esta habilidad debe ser practicada constantemente desde el ejemplo de sus docentes para facilitar la práctica de la misma en casa y en el aula. La empatía se potencia facilitando la importancia de esta adecuándola a la edad del aprendiz, generando espacios de acercamiento con compañeros sugiriendo situaciones en las que puede solucionar desde el ejemplo con el lenguaje verbal y gestual. Para Catret (2001) “el mundo está en perpetuo cambio. Hay que liderar y gestionar los cambios y, si es posible, adelantarse. Eso exige estar en permanente situación de aprendizaje y tener capacidad de adaptación.” (p.112).

### **Tipos de empatía**

La empatía aviva las conexiones interpersonales permitiendo los vínculos basados en el

respeto con familiares, amigos y docentes. Giani (2024) afirma que la falta de empatía se evidencia a través de la intolerancia, desigualdad e individualismo. Por esta razón, se hace necesario indagar en los 3 tipos de empatía propuestos por Giani (2024):

- **Empatía afectiva o emocional:** la capacidad de percibir, comprender y sentir las emociones que otra persona experimenta. Mateu (2019) la define como la sensibilidad para entender los sentimientos de aquellos que están alrededor y controlar los propios para evitar sentirse abrumado por el dolor observado.
- **Empatía cognitiva:** habilidad de comprender la forma de pensar de otra persona, “ponerse en sus zapatos” (párra.6) de acuerdo con Mateu (2019), puesto que considera que esta etapa es la primera en desarrollarse y permite reconocer mediante las gesticulaciones y expresiones verbales lo que quiere transmitir el otro mediante una codificación de lo que se percibe racionalmente sin involucrarse completamente emocionalmente.
- **Empatía compasiva:** la motivación a ayudar al otro ya que se comprende que está pasando por una dificultad. Mateu (2019) postula que en este proceso las personas se sienten motivadas a hacer algo por el otro y esta compasión está ligada a las personas que pertenecen a su círculo social. Esta ayuda brindada es incondicional, espontánea y desinteresada.

### **La empatía en la escuela.**

Desde la escuela se deben forjar bases morales que aseguren la práctica de lo aprendido manteniendo conexiones con los demás de forma asertiva y respetuosa. UNICEF (2019) describe la empatía como una herramienta en la escuela que ayuda a llevar vidas significativas y productivas. La empatía es una de las habilidades necesarias para que cada estudiante desarrolle plenamente sus capacidades en el entorno educativo, a través del trabajo en equipo, teniendo la oportunidad de entender a los demás. “Las neuronas espejo hacen posible la comprensión de los estados emocionales de otras personas, es decir, la empatía. Cuando vemos a alguien que expresa miedo, ira, tristeza, etc., comprendemos su estado emocional porque se activan nuestras neuronas espejo” (parra.4) según Bisquerra (2022).

### **Círculos restaurativos**

Las prácticas restaurativas son una estrategia que permiten un aprendizaje articulado con la participación activa de los estudiantes enfocada a una reflexión sobre la importancia de los valores y la disminución de acciones que limiten la construcción de paz y empatía en el aula. Wachtel (2016) explica que el uso de estas prácticas minimiza el bullying, contribuye a la conducta humana, facilita el liderazgo, restaura relaciones y enmienda daños promoviendo la expresión de afecto o emociones.

Wachtel (2016) sostiene que la herramienta de los círculos restaurativos brinda

oportunidades donde hay una escucha activa, un espacio seguro e inclusión entre los participantes. El intercambio de sus propias perspectivas permite una resolución de conflictos adecuada, apoyo, sanación, toma de decisiones, y fortalecimiento de las habilidades sociales. Existen algunas estrategias para el uso de los círculos facilitando el desarrollo manteniendo un formato secuencial. Además, estos círculos pueden brindar una organización donde la oportunidad de participar avanza en forma del círculo, manteniendo un orden secuencial sin ser interrumpidos. No obstante, puede ir en desorden si el organizador lo desea, pero se hace necesario llevar un objeto para que este sea sostenido por la persona que habla.

## Metodología

Teniendo en cuenta a Denzin y Lincoln (2005), este proyecto tuvo un diseño de investigación cualitativo donde se pretende interpretar y conocer el impacto de los círculos restaurativos en los participantes y cómo estos inciden en sus entornos. Además, esta investigación se desarrolló en un paradigma constructivista permitiendo la transformación del contexto de los participantes mediante situaciones realistas como lo propone Poonam (2017) donde las sesiones aplicadas promovieron espacios de reflexión, participación y reconocimiento del otro en la sociedad, esto se evidenció en cada sesión donde se mantuvieron cuatro fases y en cada una fomentando espacios de reflexión, restauración y compromisos los cuales trascendieron más allá de aula de clase. Así mismo, este trabajo desarrollado mediante la investigación-acción permitió un abordaje desde las posibles causas de las situaciones a investigar brindando alternativas para mitigarlas desde la implementación asegurando una reflexión, experiencia y participación, como afirma Cornish et al. (2023).

El proyecto se aplicó en la institución oficial Chiloé ubicada en Soacha, Ciudad Verde. La Institución Educativa Chiloé se fundamenta en calidad académica, sentido de pertenencia, autonomía y conservación del medio ambiente. Los participantes pertenecían al grado 8 - 02 de la jornada mañana, sus rangos de edad oscilan entre los 13 y 17 años de edad. El grupo tenía 45 estudiantes, 23 niñas y 22 niños de los cuales participaron en el proyecto de investigación 23 estudiantes. Se caracterizaron por una división permanente en los pequeños subgrupos, limitando la colaboración, empatía y solución de algunos conflictos presentados desde el inicio del año escolar lo que conllevaba a problemas convivenciales que afectaron su desempeño académico.

El proceso de recopilación de datos de este proyecto de investigación utilizó artefactos con narrativas y audio-grabaciones, diarios de campo y un cuestionario semi-estructurado los cuales permitieron reconocer las experiencias y perspectivas de los estudiantes durante las sesiones implementadas. Se realizaron 10 talleres, donde cada taller tenía las 4 fases que se deben desarrollar en los círculos restaurativos definidos por Pranis (2006) se decide que en cada sesión deben estar

las cuatro fases; caracterización, acercamiento, intervención y reparación. donde cada fase tiene un objetivo alineado con la siguiente fase y por ende manteniendo una conexión con las demás sesiones.

La primera fase, la caracterización permitió a los participantes comprender los principios que se trabajaron durante la sesión, para esto se utilizó actividades que facilitaron la transición a la siguiente fase y que aseguraron un acercamiento desde la realidad y la reflexión individual; por ejemplo, en algunas sesiones se aplicaron juegos o cuentos. En la segunda fase, durante el acercamiento se brindó la oportunidad de reflexionar a partir de preguntas orientadoras que acercaron al tema de la sesión, en esta se encontraba una gran variedad desde lo individual y grupal brindando la posibilidad de reconocer al otro como parte del acercamiento.

En la tercera fase, durante la intervención se dio la posibilidad de intercambiar las percepciones que se tenían antes de la sesión, aportando a la reflexión y como lo aprendido durante la fase de caracterización y acercamiento trascendió de una forma positiva permitiendo al participante proponer nuevas acciones desde sus experiencias. En la cuarta fase, la restauración fue el cierre donde se evidenció compromisos, acuerdos y disculpas a través de cartas, posters, narrativas y mensajes. Estos tuvieron una variación en las sesiones para asegurar desde lo individual la aceptación e identificación de la importancia de sanar desde adentro para poder ser empático primero con ellos y así retribuirlo con los demás.

Para la planeación de los diez talleres de la intervención pedagógica se tuvo en cuenta cinco principios restaurativos, tales como: Percepciones personales e igualmente valoradas; Los pensamientos influyen en las emociones y las emociones, a su vez, influyen en las acciones; Empatía y consideración con los demás; La identificación de las necesidades viene antes que la identificación de las estrategias para satisfacer estas necesidades; Responsabilidad colectiva por los actos y por sus consecuencias. Igualmente, se promovieron seis principios de la pedagogía para la construcción de paz, incluyendo: Justicia y Derechos Humanos; Resolución pacífica de conflictos; Proyectos de impacto social; Diversidad y pluralidad; Uso sostenible de los recursos naturales y por último, Memoria histórica. Sumados a estos principios, se contextualizaron los tres tipos de empatía: Empatía emocional, compasiva, cognitiva.

## **Resultados**

Mediante un proceso de análisis mediado por la Teoría Fundamentada de acuerdo con Benard Calva (2016) consistente en la generación de etiquetas descriptivas que comparten características entre sí, se generaron interrelaciones y triangulación entre los diferentes datos recolectados mediante los diferentes instrumentos de investigación. A partir de este análisis, emergieron tres categorías principales, descritas a continuación.

En primer lugar, la primera categoría se denomina: El respeto individual desde el auto-reconocimiento promueve la empatía con equidad y fortalece los lazos familiares para construir el respeto con sentido social. Esta categoría se compone por las concepciones sobre el respeto y el amor propio por la vida y la familia de los participantes, así como también el respeto como eje fundamental en el ámbito social. Esta categoría permitió reconocer la manera en que los participantes aprenden a valorar y respetar lo que tienen, promoviendo primero el respeto hacia ellos mismos para poder tener empatía con sus compañeros y para reconocer sus habilidades que permitieran fortalecer su autoestima. Adicionalmente, esta categoría exploró la forma en que el respeto individual parte del auto-reconocimiento para así posteriormente respetar a las personas que nos rodean equitativamente y sin hipocresía, promoviendo así la amabilidad y la generosidad.

En segundo lugar, la segunda categoría se denomina: La empatía es una responsabilidad social y un proceso recíproco de conciencia ciudadana que permite fomentar la justicia social educativa mediante la aceptación de nuestras diferencias. Esta categoría resaltó la importancia de tener empatía para comprender a los seres que nos rodean a través de un pensamiento justo y como un proceso recíproco para generar responsabilidad social y la conciencia ciudadana, siendo estos factores clave en el aula de clase. Igualmente, esta categoría permitió reconocer las diferencias que nos hacen únicos e irrepetibles sin excluir a nadie por sus condiciones físicas. En particular, los participantes reflexionaron acerca de que ninguna persona es inferior a otra sin importar nuestras diferencias.

En tercer lugar, la tercera categoría se denomina: Reconocer errores y controlar emociones, acciones o palabras hacia los demás, permite cambiar comportamientos para cultivar la paz con amigos y familia. Esta categoría se compone de cómo la familia es el primer lugar donde los niños aprenden valores, modelan acciones y se sienten seguros al ser ellos mismos. Así mismo, reconocer y olvidar los errores cometidos para enorgullecer a su familia y recuperar lo que los participantes han tenido ya que hace parte de sus pensamientos y manifestaciones al hablar de reparación. Esta categoría permitió también reconocer cómo los participantes perciben estar rodeados de amigos para tener momentos de alegría, facilitando un desarrollo de las habilidades socioemocionales y la construcción de empatía ya que al entender al otro se puede construir un tejido social promoviendo un uso adecuado de las palabras en situaciones complejas que puedan afectar la convivencia.

## Conclusiones

Esta investigación responde sobre la manera en que se precisa caracterizar la promoción de la empatía a través de la implementación de diez talleres mediados por la Pedagogía para la construcción de paz. Sobre esto, se evidencia en los participantes cambios actitudinales y

comportamentales dentro de las relaciones interpersonales y dinámicas de trabajo en el aula de clase y su relevancia para fortalecer el tejido social desde el reconocimiento de que todos los seres humanos tenemos características propias que nos hacen diferentes más no inferiores ante los mismos. Por ejemplo, el trabajo colaborativo en grupos aumentó y se disminuyeron los conflictos de agresiones verbales, físicas entre otros, en tanto que la participación de los estudiantes en diferentes actividades de los círculos restaurativos promovió la reflexión sobre sus propios compromisos para promover acciones de cambio en sus entornos.

Acercas de la identificación de las cartillas pedagógicas establecidas por entidades gubernamentales para la construcción de paz que favorecieron la implementación de los círculos restaurativos para el fomento de la empatía de los estudiantes, se encontró que existe un número significativo de materiales pedagógicos que pueden ser utilizados o adaptados para propósitos relacionados con el manejo asertivo de las habilidades socioemocionales y la construcción de empatía. Por ejemplo, se utilizaron las siguientes seis cartillas: *PazatuIdea* en alianza con la Comisión de la Verdad y el Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz Educapaz; *El puente está quebrado* de la Comisión de la Verdad; *Una guía para promover la empatía y la Inclusión* de UNICEF Ecuador; *Movilizando mis Pensamientos* de la Organización Fé y Alegría Colombia; Cartilla (Paso a Paso) *Estrategia de Formación de competencias socio-emocionales en la Educación Secundaria y Media* del Banco Mundial; *¡Pillatela y Aprende!* de la Universidad de Cartagena. Sobre el uso de estas cartillas, se concluye que son materiales prácticos, accesibles para todos los docentes independientemente de su área de formación e incluyen recursos audiovisuales contextualizados en aspectos culturales, sociopolíticos, humanísticos y éticos que permiten ahondar en temas relacionados con la promoción de una cultura de paz desde la empatía y las habilidades socioemocionales.

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# 11.

## Representation of semantic prototypes in English foreign language learners' available lexicon

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### Abstract

This study investigates prototypical word associations in the mental lexicon of EFL learners to determine how they categorize words retrieved in response to prompts in a lexical availability task. Our study includes two groups of Spanish EFL learners: 70 children in the 6th grade of primary education and 66 adolescents in the 12th grade (2nd baccalaureate) of secondary education. The study aims (i) to ascertain whether there are similarities or differences in prototypical word associations observed in response to the semantic categories of 'Hobbies,' 'House,' and 'Professions' between the two groups differing in age and language level, and (ii) to establish whether there is evidence supporting the universality of prototypes in semantic categories that vary in compatibility (shared responses) and dispersion (no common responses). Results suggest that (i) there are convergences in the most available and prototypical word associations despite the differences in age and language level, and (ii) there is evidence of the universality of prototypes in some of the selected semantic categories, as the responses from both groups of informants are similar. This study provides new insights into comparing EFL learners' productive lexicon, particularly regarding the role of semantic prototypes in vocabulary learning and the organization of the mental lexicon.

**Keywords:** *Semantic prototypes, EFL learners, Lexical Availability, Categorization, Mental lexicon.*

### Resumen

Este estudio investiga las asociaciones léxicas prototípicas en el léxico mental de aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE), con el fin de determinar cómo categorizan las palabras evocadas en respuesta a estímulos en una tarea de disponibilidad léxica. Nuestro estudio incluye a dos grupos de aprendices españoles de inglés: 70 niños de sexto grado de educación primaria y 66 adolescentes de duodécimo grado (segundo de bachillerato) de educación secundaria. El estudio tiene como objetivos (i) determinar si existen similitudes o diferencias en las asociaciones léxicas prototípicas observadas en respuesta a las categorías semánticas de 'Pasatiempos', 'Casa' y 'Profesiones' entre los dos grupos diferenciados por edad y nivel de competencia lingüística, y (ii) establecer si existe evidencia que respalde la universalidad de los

prototipos en categorías semánticas que varían en compacidad (respuestas compartidas) y dispersión (ausencia de respuestas comunes). Los resultados sugieren que (i) existen convergencias en las asociaciones léxicas más disponibles y prototípicas a pesar de las diferencias de edad y nivel lingüístico, y (ii) existe evidencia de la universalidad de ciertos prototipos en algunas de las categorías semánticas seleccionadas, ya que las respuestas de ambos grupos de informantes muestran similitud. Este estudio aporta nuevas perspectivas para la comparación del léxico productivo de los aprendices de EFL, en particular en lo que respecta al papel de los prototipos semánticos en el aprendizaje del vocabulario y la organización del léxico mental.

**Palabras clave:** *Prototipos semánticos, aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera, disponibilidad léxica, categorización, léxico mental.*

## Introduction

Semantic prototypes are the most representative members of a category (Rosch, 1975). Therefore, they help us understand the categorization within a language. However, the concept of word prototypicality has not been thoroughly examined in EFL contexts. Little research has been conducted in this field. Some studies have included prototype analyses in vocabulary production (Šifrar, 2014a, 2016; Author, 2019, 2022, 2024a, 2025) and vocabulary input in EFL textbooks (Author, 2021a, Author, 2021b, Author, 2024b). This study aims to shed light on how semantic prototypes are represented in the available lexicon of EFL learners since it enables us to comprehend the organization of the mental lexicon when responding to a semantic category. To achieve this objective, this paper comprises five sections. The first section reviews semantic prototype foundations and their impact on EFL contexts. The second section describes the sample and method. The third section presents the results, followed by a discussion of our findings. Finally, this paper presents conclusions and implications for future research on semantic prototypes in EFL learners' available lexicon.

## Review of Literature: Semantic Prototypes in EFL Contexts

Aristotle's classical view of categorization emphasizes categories as collections of members with equal status and clearly defined, necessary characteristics. In contrast, Rosch's (1975) prototype theory introduces a more flexible model, identifying the prototype as the most representative and cognitively salient member of a category—e.g., *apple* for *fruit*, as opposed to *olive*. Prototypes, according to Martos (2010), serve a central communicative and cognitive function. The theory evolves into two versions: the *standard*, which organizes categories hierarchically (superordinate, basic, subordinate) with the *basic level* being the most salient (Kleiber, 1995), and the *extended* version (Lakoff, 1987), which allows for gradience and non-prototypical category members, aligning with Wittgenstein's (1953) view of family resemblances.

In EFL research, prototype theory has informed studies on lexical and semantic development, exploring topics such as word prototypicality (Šifrar, 2014a, 2016; Author, 2019, 2022, 2024a, 2025), prototype networks (Author, 2024a) and cultural aspects in textbooks (Author, 2021a, 2021b, Author, 2024b). Empirical studies using Lexical Availability Tasks (LATs) have specifically addressed prototypicality, such as the ones conducted by Šifrar (2014a) and Author (2019, 2022, 2024a, and 2025). Šifrar (2014a) found high cross-cultural convergence in prototypical responses across nine semantic categories in L1 and L2 Spanish. Author (2019) extended this work to L2 English and Spanish, identifying both convergence and divergence in prototypical responses to ‘Clothes’ and ‘Parts of the Body,’ although age-related variation was not explored. Author (2022) addressed this gap by examining age differences in prototypical responses to ‘Hobbies.’ The study confirmed that both children and adolescents produced prototypical words—primarily at the basic level—though adolescents generated a greater number of lexical items. The results suggested a shared mental categorization system, supporting the universality of prototypes. Author (2024a) further explored this with five categories, again identifying age-related differences in lexical volume and variation in two categories, although prototypical associations persisted across both age and course levels. Most recently, Author (2025) investigated ‘Daily Activities’ among L2 and L3 learners. The study revealed that prototypical verbs (such as *eat* and *sleep*) were central and suggested that lexical organization is influenced by personal experience and syntagmatic/paradigmatic associations, offering new insights into prototypicality within a nontraditional category.

## Methodology

This section includes essential information about the study participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures.

## Sample

The study sample comprised 136 Spanish EFL learners from two schools in La Rioja, northern Spain, divided into two age-based groups. The first group included 70 children (ages 11–13) in their final year of primary education (6th grade), while the second group consisted of 66 adolescents (ages 16–18) in their final year of non-compulsory secondary education (12th grade, or 2nd baccalaureate). The 6th-grade group represented diverse national and linguistic backgrounds—Pakistani, Romanian, Ukrainian, Spanish, and Colombian—with native languages including Urdu, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Spanish. Following regional educational standards, they were expected to reach an A2 proficiency level in English. The 12th-grade group included learners from Spain, Pakistan, Serbia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Argentina, with Spanish as the predominant language, followed by Urdu and Serbian. These students were expected to attain a B1 level upon

completing secondary education.

### Data Collection Instruments

Participants were required to complete a background questionnaire that collected personal information such as age, gender, and nationality. Learners were also asked to provide details about their language experience, including their mother tongue (L1), exposure to L2 both in and out of school, and, if applicable, their L3. The questionnaire, written in Spanish, allowed the students to follow the instructions and answer the questions accurately.

This study investigated lexical availability in Spanish primary and secondary learners using a Lexical Availability Task (LAT) comprising ten common prompts 'Town,' 'Animals,' 'Food and drinks,' 'House,' 'Hobbies,' 'Parts of the body,' 'Professions,' 'Clothes,' 'Countryside,' and 'School.' The analysis focused on three categories: 'Hobbies,' 'House,' and 'Professions.' Learners were given two minutes per category to list as many related words as possible, following standardized instructions and identical task formats. The University of La Rioja's applied linguistics group (GLAUR) administered the task in classrooms as part of a national research project (Grant PGC2018-095260-B-100). Responses were analyzed for order of occurrence and lexical availability index (LAI). The study also explored the universality of the prototype, the idea that learners may produce similar lexical items across contexts. Though underexplored, this principle has been examined in L1 and L2 Spanish and in L2 English lexical availability research (e.g., Šifrar, 2014a, 2016; Author, 2019, 2022, 2024a, 2025).

### Data Analysis and Procedures

Following data collection, word responses were edited, encoded, and lemmatized under criteria established by Jiménez Catalán et al. (2014) and Author (2024a, 2025) within the context of English as a second language (L2). The procedure included correcting spelling errors while retaining grammatical ones, counting repeated words only once per prompt, and lemmatizing regular plurals and verb forms to their base forms unless they represented distinct lexical entries. Unintelligible items, Spanish words, and non-dictionary entries were excluded. Fixed or idiomatic expressions were treated as single lexical units. Lexical validation was conducted using the Cambridge Online Dictionary, WordReference, and Oxford Dictionaries.

Microsoft Excel organized lexical items by semantic category and participant variables, including ID, gender, age, linguistic background, total word count, and specific lexical responses. Word lists for each category were then processed using *WordSmith Tools* (v7.0) to generate alphabetical and frequency-based lists. Further analysis with *Dispogen II* (Echeverría et al., 2005) enabled the calculation of the Lexical Availability Index (LAI) at both individual and group levels. As defined by López González in Jiménez Catalán (2014, p. 147), the LAI considers both the

number of informants who produced a given word and its position in their response lists. The LAI for each word was calculated using the formula by López Chávez and Strassburger Frías (1991), which accounts for word position, frequency across participants, and the lowest appearance rank. *Dispogen II* was used to process this data and identify the ten most available lexical items per category, including their indices and frequencies. The analysis was informed by theories of categorization and prototypicality, particularly the work of Rosch (1975) and Kleiber (1995), highlighting the role of prototypes and hierarchical categorization in lexical organization.

The semantic categories ‘Hobbies,’ ‘House,’ and ‘Professions’ were selected for this lexical availability study for two main reasons. First, these prompts are widely used in L1 and L2 lexical availability research, providing a basis for comparison. Second, they represent two categories: ‘House’ and ‘Professions’ are considered natural and inclusive categories, typically associated with higher cohesion indices (CI), thus offering insight into prototypical categorization (Rosch et al., 1976; Hernández Muñoz, 2006). In contrast, ‘Hobbies’ is a radial-inclusive category, generally exhibiting a lower CI, and aligns with the family resemblance theory, where category membership lacks strict defining features (Wittgenstein, 1953; Lakoff, 1987). The choice of these prompts also reflects their prominence in prior L1 and L2 Spanish lexical availability research and aligns with the study's focus on English as a second language.

## Results

Before discussing the results of the two research questions presented in this study, Table 1 offers an overview of the learners’ lexical availability across the three selected semantic categories.

**Table 1**

*Overall Results of EFL Learners’ Available Lexicon*

S.C	Children					Adolescents				
	Types	<i>M</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	Types	<i>M</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Hobbies	255	9.47	0.37	5.04	.068	288	14.42	0.49	3.72	.004
House	224	12.57	0.56	5.85	.023	192	17.13	0.89	4.80	.200
Professions	169	7.77	0.45	4.31	.006	199	12.59	0.62	3.86	.029

*Note.* S.C: Semantic Category – C.I: Cohesion Index- SD: Standard Deviation- *p*: *p*-value ( $p > 0.05$ : normally distributed,  $p < 0.05$ : non-normally distributed).

Table 1 shows that adolescents retrieved significantly more types than children in ‘Hobbies’ and ‘Professions,’ while children outperformed adolescents in ‘House.’ The mean values showed that ‘House’ had the highest number for both groups and ‘Professions’ the lowest. ‘House’ also

had the highest CI, whereas ‘Hobbies’ had the lowest. The SD was higher in ‘House’ for both groups but lower in the children’s retrieval of ‘Professions’ and in the adolescents’ word production of ‘Hobbies.’ Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed children's data were not normally distributed except in ‘Hobbies’ (.068), while adolescents’ data were normally distributed in ‘House’ (.200) but not in ‘Hobbies’ (.004) and ‘Professions’ (.029).

In response to our RQ1 and RQ2 results in Tables 2, 3, and 4, we found that, despite differences in age and language level, there was evidence of word prototypicality and its universality among the ten most available words in the semantic categories of ‘Hobbies’ and ‘Professions.’ However, the lexical production in the category of ‘House’ differed between the two groups of EFL learners.

**Table 2**

*EFL Learners’ Semantic Prototypes in the Available Lexicon of ‘Hobbies’*

<b>Children’s Responses</b>	<b>LAI</b>	<b>Adolescents’ Responses</b>	<b>LAI</b>
<b>football</b>	0.387448459864	<b>football</b>	0.40923923254
<b>basketball</b>	0.260945260525	<b>basketball</b>	0.310936003923
<b>draw</b>	0.244347810745	<b>sing</b>	0.26812389493
<b>play</b>	0.243625044823	<b>dance</b>	0.253670394421
<b>sleep</b>	0.20674559474	<b>read</b>	0.227791711688
<b>play football</b>	0.172276735306	<b>sport</b>	0.216426789761
<b>tennis</b>	0.171640619636	<b>listen to music</b>	0.189762413502
<b>dance</b>	0.169048070908	<b>paint</b>	0.189762413502
<b>read</b>	0.152892172337	<b>run</b>	0.176931172609
<b>run</b>	0.149168819189	<b>tennis</b>	0.15179733932

In the semantic category ‘Hobbies’ (Table 2), six words—*football*, *basketball*, *dance*, *read*, *tennis*, and *run*—were common among both children and adolescents, with *football* and *basketball* being the most prevalent in both groups, suggesting their role as semantic prototypes. The shared items primarily pertained to sports (nouns: *football*, *basketball*, *tennis*) and leisure activities (verbs: *dance*, *read*, *run*). The most divergent items among the top ten were action verbs, including *listen to music*, *paint*, *sing*, *draw*, *play*, *sleep*, and *play football*, with three of

the children's unique responses (*play football, sleep, and dram*) appearing just beyond the top ten for adolescents.

**Table 3**

*EFL Learners' Semantic Prototypes in the Available Lexicon of 'House'*

<b>Children's Responses</b>	<b>LAI</b>	<b>Adolescents' Responses</b>	<b>LAI</b>
<b>TV</b>	0.460538268089	<b>kitchen</b>	0.609121203423
<b>bed</b>	0.326773792505	<b>bathroom</b>	0.609121203423
<b>sofa</b>	0.322530835867	<b>bedroom</b>	0.580037415028
<b>Livingroom</b>	0.28073772788	<b>Livingroom</b>	0.562611341476
<b>kitchen</b>	0.269406974316	<b>bed</b>	0.410728871822
<b>bedroom</b>	0.253454178572	<b>sofa</b>	0.394043713808
<b>table</b>	0.237449511886	<b>TV</b>	0.342071324587
<b>bathroom</b>	0.214541897178	<b>door</b>	0.305141717196
<b>mom</b>	0.185851812363	<b>chair</b>	0.269122600555
<b>family</b>	0.171424269676	<b>room</b>	0.208042174578

In the semantic category 'House,' seven words—*TV, bed, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, living room, and sofa*—were shared between children and adolescents. However, notable differences emerged in lexical availability. *TV* had the highest LAI among children but ranked lower for adolescents, who identified *kitchen* as the most available word. The top three responses in each group differed, indicating no common semantic prototype. As shown in Table 3, adolescents' responses primarily referred to furniture (*chair, table, sofa, bed, door, TV*) and rooms (*bedroom, bathroom, living room, kitchen, room*), while children also included references to people (*mum, family*) with lower LAIs. Some words, such as *table* in children's list and *mum* and *family* in adolescents' list, appeared just beyond the top ten. Similarly, *door, chair, and room* surfaced slightly outside the top ten in children's responses. Overall, nouns dominated the lexical items retrieved by both groups in this category.

**Table 4**

*EFL Learners' Semantic Prototypes in the Available Lexicon of 'Professions'*

Children's Responses	LAI	Adolescents' Responses	LAI
teacher	0.607157766819	teacher	0.817897856236
police	0.400208383799	doctor	0.436843127012
doctor	0.335648685694	engineer	0.347793221474
firefighter	0.185871839523	nurse	0.269455313683
youtuber	0.182647362351	police officer	0.226149722934
nurse	0.177010551095	lawyer	0.22208571434
vet	0.134535863996	firefighter	0.198293939233
football player	0.109600774944	football player	0.178624898195
basketball player	0.103326439857	electrician	0.146580964327
chef	0.097937881947	actor	0.133047863841

Five prototypical associations were identified in the semantic category 'Professions' (Table 4): *teacher*, *doctor*, *nurse*, *firefighter*, and *football player*. *Teacher* emerged as the most available word for children and adolescents, serving as the shared semantic prototype with the highest LAI. *Doctor* was retrieved by both groups, although it appeared in different positions within the top three. All responses were directly related to professions or occupations. In addition to *teacher*, both groups shared *football player*, which ranked eighth, although the LAI varied. Several non-prototypical words found in the children's list—*police*, *YouTuber*, *vet*, *basketball player*, and *chef*—also appeared in the adolescents' responses, but not immediately after the tenth position. Similarly, adolescents' non-prototypical responses—*engineer*, *policeman*, *electrician*, and *actor*—were found in the children's lists beyond the tenth position. *Lawyer* was the only profession unique to adolescents and absent from children's responses. As in 'House,' the terms produced in 'Professions' were also solely related to nouns.

## Discussion

Although our results showed that EFL adolescent learners produced more words than EFL children learners in two of the selected semantic categories: 'Hobbies' and 'Professions,' there were some lexical differences regarding descriptive metrics (Table 1) between both groups. Our findings in RQ1 concerning evidence of prototypes revealed that the prototypical word

associations found corresponded to the most central and the most representative exemplar in a category, as stated by Rosch (1975), and also lend support to the results found in the studies conducted by Šifrar (2014a); Šifrar (2016); Author (2019); Author (2022, 2024a) since the prototypes found in each research belonged to the most central members of a category or center of interest in a LAT. The findings also demonstrated that word prototypicality was present in two of the three examined categories, namely *football* in "Hobbies" and *teacher* in "Professions."

However, the "House" category yielded divergent results, with children identifying *TV* as the most prototypical term, while adolescents favored *kitchen*. Consistent with Kleiber's (1995) theory, the predominance of short, easily retrievable words among EFL learners supports the notion that such lexical items are acquired and recalled with greater ease. This aligns with earlier studies (e.g., Šifrar, 2014a; Murphy, 2002) indicating that short, basic nouns are central, prototypical members within semantic categories, as posited by Rosch et al. (1976). The data further confirmed the presence of typicality in learners' lexical responses—defined by Rosch (1975) as the extent to which items represent good exemplars of a category—which appears to guide cognitive reference points in lexical availability tasks (LATs). Supporting Hernández Muñoz (2006), the most available and frequently listed words (e.g., *football*, *kitchen*, *TV*, *teacher*) illustrate high word prototypicality. Conversely, words with lower availability rankings, considered atypical, often reflected individual rather than collective recall patterns, corroborating Šifrar's (2014a) findings on lexical prototypicality.

Moving on to RQ2, the results demonstrated a universality in the prototypical responses evoked by EFL 6th and 12th graders. For instance, our findings indicated that *football*, within the category of 'Hobbies,' achieved the highest availability index. This aligns with Gallardo del Puerto and Martínez Adrián (2014), whose research with L1 and L2 English learners showed that *football* in the semantic category of 'Hobbies' was also the most readily available word. This result is further supported by previous findings (López González, 2014) regarding Polish Spanish learners, where the most available word was *football* (*fútbol*) in response to the prompt 'Hobbies.' Thus, these results and our findings reinforce the premise of prototype universality, regardless of language, age, and course level differences (Šifrar, 2016). Similarly, our results harmonized well with the findings of Author's (2022) research involving two groups of young and older EFL learners, noting that both groups agreed in their responses of *football* to the 'Hobbies' category since they were exposed to similar social and cultural backgrounds.

In the semantic category 'House,' notable divergences emerged in non-prototypical associations. While children most frequently associate the category with *TV*, adolescents predominantly link it to *kitchen*. This discrepancy suggests that prototypical associations were not

uniformly observed across age groups in this semantic field. Nevertheless, in prior studies, *kitchen* has been consistently identified as a highly available lexical item among adolescent EFL learners (Šifrar, 2014a; Šifrar, 2016; Akbarian et al., 2020), reinforcing its relevance as a prototypical term in this context. Conversely, the prominence of *TV* in children's responses appears to be a novel finding that is not widely reported in existing literature.

In the semantic category *Professions*, the word *teacher* emerged as the most prototypical response, aligning with findings from prior studies in both L2 English (Gallardo del Puerto & Martínez Adrián, 2014) and L2 Spanish (López González, 2014; Šifrar, 2016). This consistency reinforces the notion of cross-linguistic universality in lexical availability within this category. However, the current results diverge from those reported by Samper Hernández (2014), where *lawyer* (*abogado*) was the most frequently available term. The discrepancy may reflect the influence of diverse cultural and national backgrounds in Samper Hernández's multilingual sample of Spanish L2 learners, thereby challenging the assumption of universal lexical associations in the *Professions* category.

Results also showed differences in the semantic categories of nature (compact and dispersed). For example, 'Hobbies,' a radial-inclusive category, elicits uncommon responses. According to Wittgenstein (1953), the members of a category may be connected without sharing a common feature among them all. This supports the notion of open categories like 'Hobbies,' which generate more variation in learners' responses, as suggested by Samper Hernández (2014).

In contrast, *Professions*' showed greater consistency in the students' responses, likely because it represents a more natural and compact domain. This observation aligns with conclusions reported by Samper Hernández and Jiménez Catalán (2014), who assert that 'Professions' is perceived as a more compact semantic category, given the high percentage of shared words among most informants. Nevertheless, while 'House' falls within compact categories, our study results indicated that responses varied, as children included not only furniture and parts of the house in their lexical production but also words related to family members, feelings, colors, and activities performed at home.

## Conclusions and Implications

This study aimed to analyze the representation of semantic prototypes in the lexicons of EFL learners that vary by age and language level. The results indicated that, regarding evidence of word prototypicality in two of the selected semantic categories, there were lexical prototypes, such as *football* and *teacher*, corresponding to 'Hobbies' and 'Professions.' However, in the category of 'House,' the prototypes differed between the two groups of learners (e.g., *TV* for children and *kitchen* for adolescents). Furthermore, the words provided belong to the basic level of

categorization, which employs short words that are easy to recall when responding to a lexical availability task. Our findings also demonstrated a universality of responses concerning the prototypes identified in the vocabulary production of child and adolescent EFL learners. This principle of universal prototypes suggested that when learning a foreign language, additional variables such as general knowledge and culture influence their lexical production. The EFL learners' word production also showed that responses varied depending on the type and nature of the categories. For instance, 'Hobbies' comprised uncommon responses since this category belongs to dispersed categories. By comparison, Professions included shared responses, given that this prompt is part of the group of compact categories. Our study has pedagogical implications regarding the role of semantic prototypes in vocabulary learning. Likewise, comparative analyses enable researchers to cast light on how EFL learners organize their mental lexicons in response to a semantic category through an LAT. Further research on different categories and variables, such as age, should be considered to broaden the impact that prototypes may have on word production in foreign language contexts.

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## 12.

# The good, the bad, and the ugly of working in call center jobs: perspectives from English philology student-employees.

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### Abstract

For Allan and McElhinny (2017), the fall of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism framed labor tertiarization and emigration between Global North and Global South countries. Although often overlooked, these relationships can be seen in the rise of call centers in the Global South, a popular work option for English-speaking young adults, especially philology students. Seeking to understand the phenomenon from their perspective, this ongoing study explores the relationship between the call center work and the professional identity of philology bachelor's degree students. We aimed at characterizing the reasons for taking a call-center job, describing the learning affordances provided by said environments, and finding the challenges encountered by student-employees. The study follows a descriptive-analytical approach, and the first set of data was collected through a piloted and expert-reviewed survey of 25 prospective philology bachelors. Overall, it can be said that call center jobs help enhance communication skills and finances; however, benefits are undermined by exploitative linguistic relationships and emotional exhaustion. The main perceived benefits of these jobs include economic retribution, linguistic skills development, and work experience acquisition. Nonetheless, prominent negative effects include workplace conditions, job nature, a decline in well-being and mental health, and harmful customer interactions.

**Key Words:** *Call center jobs, communication skills enhancement, work experience, emotional exhaustion, and decline of well-being.*

### Introduction

“My perception of English speakers turned considerably negative because of the fact of having to solve their issues, in their language, with little cooperation and constant mistreatment. Besides, the realization that this industry benefits not only mistreating customers, but also companies that profit and take advantage of their oppressive geopolitical position to hire irrationally cheap hand labour has antagonized me against an intangible figure of American imperialism that I find so closely related to customers, also victims of this system.” Excerpt from

## Esteban's narrative

Our interest in researching the experience of philology student-employees involved in call center jobs arises from one of the researchers having worked as a call center agent and recognizing it as an experience that shaped his perspective about the use of the language and his social relationship with it, not only as a pre-service teacher but also on his use of the language. In said experience, the researcher recognized a threatened speaker identity present when he was asked to suppress the vernacular features of his accent to sound more standardized, therefore fitting better in the requirements of the call-center line. Moreover, despite the increased economic capital, acquisition capacity, and undeniable linguistic performance enhancement, call center jobs were perceived to be permeated with labour unfulfillment, impact in mental health, and increased stress rates. This perceived landscape about the call center industry positively influenced the acquisition of a strengthened teacher professional thrive. The experience previously described led us to question the characteristics of linguistic interactions in call center environments. We also focused on the effects of the call-center phenomenon on peers' professional identities in the Department of Philology at Universidad Nacional.

The different edges of the call center phenomenon have been an object of recent study around the globe, starting from the disciplining mechanisms within the call-center environment (Winiiecki, 2007), neocolonialism and customer-agent relationships (Boussebaa et al., 2014), analysis of the reasons behind the difference in workers' perspectives about their call center jobs based on their self-expectation and perception, with the inclusion of concepts such as transitoriedad (Del Bono & Noel, 2008); others have intended to get an understanding of reasons why pre-service teachers reach for call centers as sources of income which seems to be related to their perspective of the labor market as English language teachers (Perez, 2024).

Nonetheless, despite the increasing tendency of this phenomenon study, there is a dearth of research addressing this issue from the viewpoint of language students in the Department of Foreign Languages at Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Compelling questions that emerge are: What are the reasons behind choosing a job in the call-center industry? How do student-employees conceive of their professional identity after having had this experience? Hence, as part of our learning process in the SIPSLEX seedbed and in commitment with our community to try to understand the contrived relationship between professional identity and call center student-employees, we have joined forces to construct a corpus of these students' feelings and experiences, to entitle Esteban's claims and to listen to what lies on the other side of the phone.

## Research Question

Based on the aforementioned ideas, we put forward the following research question: how does

participation in the call center environment shape learning investment and identity construction of philology students?

### General Objective:

To problematize the phenomenon of call center studentemployees from a language investment perspective and identity construction.

### Specific Objectives:

1. Characterize the reasons to take a call-center job.
2. Describe the learning opportunities afforded by the call centres jobs.
3. Analyze the main challenges encountered by student-employees when negotiating their identities as employees and language learners/future bachelors in philology.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Investment in language learning in call centers

When problematizing how students get involved and sustain an effort in language learning while working in a call center, there is a need to speak about investment. Investment in language learning is defined by Norton (2023) as a sociological construct that focuses on how language learning is configured by social practices, lived experiences, and histories. Therefore, language learning is not only seen as an act of agency but as a complex decision in which identity (in the the sense of who one is in the world), capital (mediums), and ideology (ideas used to analyze the world) intertwine to define what, how, and why a person invests in learning a language. Indeed, all kinds of investments offer compensation. In the case of language learning, the individual pursues different types of material and symbolic resources (Darvin, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Adapted from Darvin and Norton’s 2015 Model of Investment.

To illustrate better how language investment operates in call centers, we adapted the figure used by Darvin and Norton (2015, p. 42). Identity means “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relation is constructed across time and space, and how people

understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 4). The identity shaped by call centers is characterized by hierarchical ways of positioning oneself; one’s relationship with the world and with oneself depends on the post being occupied. Capital, states Bourdieu (1986), represents a form of power that goes beyond just economic capital, encompassing both cultural and social capital. Cultural capital appears in the form of skills and qualifications, while social capital encompasses useful networks (in terms of power). In the case of call centers, these work environments offer economic power by providing income; cultural capital, by offering knowledge (contact with the language and its culture); and social capital, by having connections to networks of power and the positivity of getting a better rank.

Finally, ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 1971, p. 452). With that, we can argue that there is a close ideology-reality relation (e.g., ethics, religion) since both are conditioned, influenced, and manifested by each other. In the call center context, although one cannot establish just one set of ideologies, it is observable that within their practices, there is a pervasive ideology that English is taken as lingua franca that produces an Entrepreneurial self (Allan and McElhinny, 2017). This leads to evidence that the performance is not only perceived as simple labor but as personal achievement. Interactions, in-call time, and other standards create metrics that contribute to the development of a professional personality, such as their “productivity portfolio”, searching for constant improvement. Thus, in the transformation of collective labor into a series of entrepreneurial projects, the employees become self-managed micro-businesses whose permanence depends on intensive self-optimization following the rigid structures of call-centers.

### **Affordances of language socialization in call centers**

The fact that investment in language learning comes with a series of complex implications in the realm of the call center experience does not mean that the said experience is exempt from a positive side. Namely, the language socialization affordances that come from participating in communities of practice like the ones formed in call centers. According to Rama et al. (2012), affordances are the “opportunities for learning or interaction provided by a context about the abilities of the learner” (p.323), a concept that is based on Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. In the call center context, for instance Woydack and Lockwood (2020) highlight that these work environments offer distinct affordances for the socialization and mastering of the language, like various settings to increase communicative competences (thanks to interactions with both colleagues and customers), acquisition of a workplace-related speech and norms, and enhancement of proficiency via the use of scripts and other technological tools.

## Professional identity

Another important item to discuss when analyzing the call-center phenomenon of philology student-employees is the interplay of said job with their understanding and negotiation of their professional identity. Professional identity is a complex and dynamic construct related to how each person perceives, defines and expresses themselves concerning their work, but also, as Watson (2002) says, one must eschew from the fixed traits or static definitions, enacting the urgency of understanding how professional identity is negotiated in a dynamic work environment.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider that in the call center environment, there is a tendency towards organizational control of the identity. There is substantial effort to merge professional identity with self-identity as presented by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) :

“Discourses of quality management, service management, innovation, and knowledge work have, in recent years, promoted an interest in passion, soul, and charisma. These discourses can also be read as expressions of an increased managerial interest in regulating employees ‘insides’ – their self-image, their feelings, and identifications. [...] the employee as identity worker who is enjoined to incorporate the new managerial discourses into narratives of self-identity” (p.622)

If the self is regulated within the boundaries of the entrepreneurial self, student-employees may resign to their individuality to accommodate themselves in an imposed reality, created to satisfy economic needs.

## Emerging Professional Identity of Undergraduate Students

Even before enrolling in call-center jobs, student employees have gotten involved in coursework to become teachers. Therefore, how students conceive themselves as future teachers or how they relate to their teaching self deserves attention.

Teachers’ professional self-image in students is mainly shaped by personal and social experiences, institutional roles, shared practices, and individual interpretations (Chávez Rojas et al., 2023). Moreover, factors such as pedagogical expertise and the internalization of teaching as a vocation (Huang et al., 2022) contribute to this development. In our context, philology students eventually develop a sense of belonging to their role as future teachers. The courses in which they are enrolled and the discourses they encounter permeate their individuality, and, eventually, create a bond with the teacher’s personalities.

The ways in which prospective teachers who have enrolled in call center jobs construct their professional identity is yet to be discussed in the second part of this research project, given that this is molded by a myriad of factors, some of them being the subjects that they take during the major, such as Didactics I and II and the pedagogical practicum. These items will be developed in the second phase of this ongoing research.

## Literature Review

In this section, we address relevant findings regarding the call-center phenomenon in different parts of the world. Key ideas are presented as follows:

Winiecki (2007) examined the technological and managerial techniques used in 4 call centers of the UK to understand the processes of subjectification that 100 employees were immersed in. The author found out that the call centers wished to conduct business in a manner that is “as economical, calculable, predictable, and controllable as possible” (p. 352) Said framework is also applied to employees by introducing disciplining techniques that intend to guide the workers’ conduct such as: concerted compliance, regulatory surveillance, counseling and coaching tactics to orient workers towards a productivity driven mindset.

Through a qualitative and analytical study, Del Bono and Bullini (2008) analyzed the experiences and perspectives of two groups of agents in Argentina regarding call center jobs. They concluded that their perception about the quality of the job was linked to their socioeconomic need, previous working experiences, and their professional perspectives (their potential and ideal job related to their perceived capacities), both groups rejecting long term projection in these jobs.

For 2 years, Boussebaa, Sinha, and Gabriel (2014) analyzed and captured different perspectives within an Indian offshore call center (IT-BPO). In this research project, the concept of "corporate Englishization" refers to English being taken as a lingua franca with “better” varieties and a tool utterly used for economic purposes. Moreover, researchers contend that there is a “mimicry” technique of speaking in the offshore operator. The agents were neglected entrance to the West community and were condemned to just imitate them (Boussebaa et al., 2014).

## Methodology

The current study is rooted in the qualitative approach and in some key principles of grounded theory (Lim, 2024); it follows an inductive approach to data analysis, allowing significant categories of study to emerge organically from the participants' experiences.

Data was collected through an expert-reviewed and piloted survey applied to 25 students of philology at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Seventeen of the respondents were males, while eight were females. The majority of them (21) are enrolled in English philology, 3 of them in French, and 1 in German philology. In terms of socioeconomic background, 60% of them belong to the middle class; 32% belong to the working class, while the upper class covers 8% of the answers.

As the nature of the survey allowed student-employees to write open answers, it became necessary to categorize these answers into emerging patterns of similarity. The process of categorization was assisted by the Gemini AI tool (associated with the institutional account), and

the data was analyzed and related to theories and constructions that answer our research questions. The data analysis method will be grounded in grounded theory, which states developing theories from data systematically collected and analyzed.

Henceforth, readers will understand the perspectives of pre-service teachers from a public university about their role as call-center agents while being active students of the major. The analysis to be performed will be focused on specific questions of the survey, organized as follows: 1) Experience in the call center, 2) Affordances in Language Learning, and 3) Economic dimension.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Experience Working in a Call Center**

When student-employees were asked about their experiences working in a call center, the vast majority (9 respondents) rated it as positive and 7 as highly negative.

When answering the reasons why, we could find 6 highly stable categories: Study and time constraints, workplace environment, financial aspects, anxiety, burnout, pressure, language skills, and satisfaction.

While some participants acknowledged initial advantages such as relatively good pay, straightforward tasks, and flexible scheduling, these were frequently overshadowed by the demanding nature of the work, particularly the constant pressure of metrics and unrealistic expectations that hindered their ability to effectively manage study and work time.

Perceptions of the workplace environment were largely negative (7 answers). Beyond initial positive aspects like compensation, issues such as "favoritism and preferences instead of merit" created dissatisfaction. Participants often described the environment as "very stressful and overwhelming," contributing to feelings of being treated as a number rather than an individual and being degraded in the workplace.

Financial compensation served as the main significant motivator, providing "financial freedom" and enabling students to fund their education and personal goals. However, this financial incentive was often accompanied by a perception of the job being "heavy" and potentially limiting long-term career prospects, with the feeling of being "pigeonholed."

A major concern highlighted in the responses was the prevalence of anxiety, burnout, and high pressure. Participants frequently felt that the demanding workload outweighed the benefits, citing constant pressure to meet metrics, a lack of understanding from employers, and the stress of dealing with difficult clients without adequate support. In some instances, the pressure to achieve targets led to ethical concerns regarding sales practices.

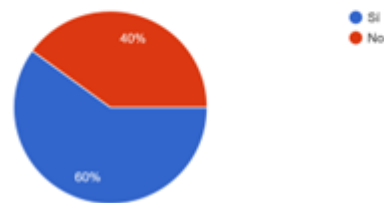
Finally, two notable categories were the development of language skills and job satisfaction. First, participants reported improvements in communication, listening, and speaking abilities,

which were often attributed to interaction with native speakers and the demands of customer service. However, this linguistic growth sometimes came at a cost to their mental and physical health. Finally, job satisfaction was very stable, with all participants in this category (4) highlighting a very “chill” and relaxed work environment.

### Perceived Access to Resources Strengthening Linguistic Competence

When participants were asked if they felt the call center had provided them with resources (courses, strategies, training, connections) to strengthen their linguistic competence, more than half the participants (15) answered ‘yes’ while forty percent (10) said ‘no’.

Como estudiante de Licenciatura en Filología e Idiomas, ¿has sentido que el call center te ha provisto de recursos (cursos, estrategias, entrena...xiones) para potenciar tu competencia lingüística?  
25 responses

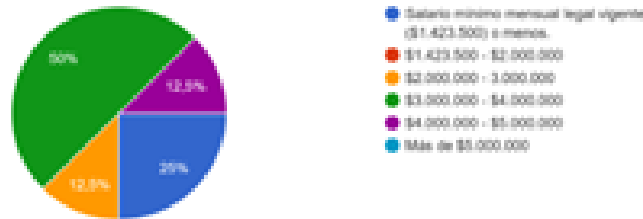


Those who answered affirmatively (15) were also asked to describe the kinds of resources they had gotten to strengthen their language development. The types of answers revolved around different benefits as follows: The strongest perceived benefits observed by at least ten participants are related to language development. The four skills were enhanced like this: Speaking by a) talking with native speakers, developing fluency, and acquiring vocabulary. Listening by a) being exposed to authentic input and b) actively listening while interacting with customers. To a lesser extent, there was also a development of writing by participating in persuading customers to buy a product. A student employee also mentioned a soft skill benefit related to acquiring knowledge of tools' use. Another one reported a socialization benefit related to getting feedback from peers and colleagues. Finally, one participant reported a cognitive skills benefit of having developed multitasking abilities.

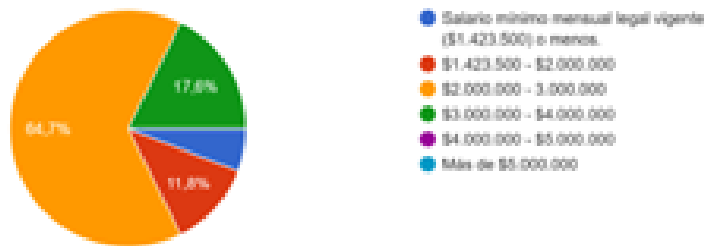
### Salaries at the call center

The two figures below contain information regarding student-employees' salaries when enrolled in call centers. The first chart shows data about student-employees who do not work in call centers anymore, while the second chart depicts data from student-employees currently employed in call centers.

¿Cuál es tu sueldo base? (Sin Bonos)  
8 respuestas



¿Cuál era tu sueldo base? (Sin Bonos)  
17 respuestas



In the first chart, the most common answer is the range from 2'000.000 to 3'000.000 COP, while in the second chart, the most common answer is the range from 3'000.000 to 4'000.000 COP. Even when salaries in the Call Center industry are extraordinarily high in the general landscape of labor opportunities in Colombia, especially for a job that does not require any professional background and is flexible in terms of experience acquisition, the truth is that these offshore contracts benefit hiring companies the most.

When a conversion from the two most answered salary ranges to USD is performed, the salary difference between US and offshore agents becomes clear. 2'000.000 to 3'000.000 COP is equivalent to 476- 714 USD, and 3'000.000 to 4'000.000 COP translates to 714- 952 USD. These are outrageous numbers, taking into consideration that agents located in the USA get paid at least 1,250 USD for performing the same job as Colombian agents.

## Discussion

Because the main objective of this paper is to problematize the phenomenon of call centers in student-employees, departing from a language investment and identity construction perspective, it can be said that the three main themes that characterize this landscape are:

### The Good: Language Improvement and Return to a Prospective Teacher Identity

Firstly, participants reported improvement in communication, listening, and speaking abilities, often attributed to interaction with native speakers and the demands of customer service. The linguistic gains obtained by language learners enrolled in call center jobs back up former research by Woydack et al. (2020), who state that participating in job-related tasks leads to language

learning opportunities. Drawing on socio-cultural theory of language learning, it can be said that by experiencing job-related activities, student-employees are newcomers to these call center communities and, to keep the job, they need to succeed in accommodating to patterns of talking, routines of active-productive listening, where they have to interact with more proficient speakers of the language such as the customers.

Besides the mentioned benefits of call center jobs in economic, linguistic, professional growth, and networking, we want to establish that the main benefit from call center jobs for student employees is the corrective role that the call center experience plays. Student-employees' exposure to raw, non-engaging corporate work with low cultural capital rewards, negative transactional conversations, and emotional exhausting environments, guides them towards more enriching experiences attributable to their teacher professional identity path.

### **The Bad: Commodification of Language and Emotional Exhaustion**

As language investment permeates the individual, a phenomenon concerning the capital sphere emerges rapidly: there is an imbalance in them. Since call centers monitor the use of different language varieties, said varieties are being commodified (i.e, monetized) and organized by their capacity of producing wealth. Thus, the capital sphere acquires a paramount role in deciding what language should be learned, obscuring the individual and, at the same time, modifying the ideological sphere. On the other hand, the ugly includes a symbolic mediation of language present in call-center environments, represented by standardized scripts, training sessions, and the appropriation of language as a tool of power. Language, in said environments, is seen as a profitable tool by which companies benefit, meant to be controlled, replicated and standardized, not to be treated as a social complex element.

As formerly mentioned, contact with customers in a foreign language is useful for the acquisition of authentic experience in real life communication. However, the contact received in call center environments is often harsh and issue-based, which has demonstrated to emotionally load agents, bringing a detrimental effect on their mental health and stress levels.

### **The Ugly: Cheap Hand Labour**

Even when student-employees do not conceive their salaries to be low, the conversion of hand labor prices responds to a whole socioeconomic background movement in the customer service industry: Labor Arbitrage, in which the ones that get the most benefited, as described by Malibran (2012, p. 9), are “Companies [which] can immediately reduce their labor cost by laying off employees at home and hiring workers in developing countries where wages are much lower than in the U.S.” The fact that student-employees perceive a benefit economically speaking normalizes the discourse that cheap labor can be found and benefited from in the Global South.

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# 13.

## Implementing authentic evaluation to develop communicative competencies

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### Abstract:

In this talk, I will present the projects I proposed for my two cycles of Action Research to obtain my master's degree in Competencies for Teaching Performance. The main point of my thesis was to prove that we can use examination guides from international certifications -In my case, I used the GESE (Graded Examinations in Spoken English) by Trinity College London. And use them to train students with fun, attainable, activities that will accustom them to the certification tests, though implementing authentic evaluation and at the same time developing communicative competencies.

In the first cycle, I assigned two projects: the first was to create a video to introduce themselves using a card they wrote in class, in the second, through a match-the-pairs exercise online, students would ask and answer questions in a video.

With those two activities I covered Grade 1 of the GESE exam, the study was carried out with 40 second-semester major students. I also used an authentic evaluation tool; a self-evaluation rubric in the first activity and a co-evaluation rubric in the second.

In the second cycle, students worked on a journal that compiled four activities, a piece of homework, and three projects. In the diary, students stated their thoughts and feelings about the learning process.

**Keywords:** *Projects, Authentic evaluation, Communicative competencies.*

### Introduction

To define my research question, I began by exploring some points of personal interest in my teaching practice:

- A. Assessment of language skills without resorting exclusively to a written test or exam.
- B. Generating interest in my subject (English).
- C. Use of the language outside the classroom.

Here, I present the consequences of having deficiencies based on the different points discussed above.

**A.** Students dislike taking written exams, which generates rejection. However, the only way to legitimize English proficiency is through a certification. In the case of Cambridge English, it assesses four skills: speaking, writing, listening, and use of English (grammar and vocabulary).

**B.** Despite using various teaching strategies, many students still perceive the subject of English as just another subject they have to pass, so there is no meaningful learning. They tend to forget topics and don't review them, which leads to poor performance in the later levels.

**C.** I would like to implement certain language strategies outside the classroom, such as surprise phone calls, listening to a talk at a conference, or interacting with people who speak the language, so they can have first-hand experience using the language.

Finally, I developed a question that would define my research problem:

How can I generate greater interest in students from different undergraduate programs to facilitate English language learning so they can use it in their daily lives, both at school and at work, without using a written exam as an assessment?

The problem I decided to address is based on my experience as a teacher diversifying the assessment method for my subject. This is because, currently, one of the most common ways to demonstrate English language proficiency is through international certifications, such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and the Cambridge English Language Assessment. These tests are translated in the classroom as a very similar assessment to accustom students to these types of exams. However, I would like to create an alternative proposal to implement an assessment that doesn't solely use the exam as a means of assessing students.

The problem with focusing exclusively on an exam or a written test is that it can neglect the development of certain important skills when it comes to language proficiency, such as speaking. It's also a rigid instrument that doesn't allow reviewing the learning process throughout an entire semester and focuses on final results. This negatively impacts students because they rely on a single final test instead of a formative assessment, which is why they tend to have low grades and high failure rates. Having only the exam as an assessment tool results in a higher percentage being awarded, and if the student fails the exam, he or she fails the subject.

Another problematic situation that arises in my teaching practice is poor teaching situations that promote mechanical and decontextualized learning. Evidence of this is that I regularly assign the workbook for the unit reviewed in class. The exercises are focused on the topics covered, but sometimes they are taken out of the students' real-life context, and the answers are usually mechanical and easily reproducible. Therefore, when I review the assignments, I find that students skip these types of exercises, and there is only one or two exercises where they have to write examples from real-life situations.

### **Methodology Design.**

The design used for this research was an action research methodology, as it is used to improve practice and involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection, as well as changes in

practice based on the evidence obtained. It is based on specific situations and contexts. Knowledge is created through action to the point of being applicable, and action research can solve real problems if the solution leads to the improvement of educational practice.

According to Latorre (2003), there are three types of action research. This paper will focus on practical action research. This is because the active protagonist is the teacher, who selects the research problem and oversees the project. Latorre (2003, p. 30) defines it as follows: "Practical action research implies a transformation of participants' consciousness, as well as a change in social practices."

### **Population.**

This research focused on two of the groups I was in charge of: the first is the bachelor's degree in the teaching and learning of mathematics, and the second is the bachelor's degree in the teaching and learning of chemistry (2022 program). I selected these groups because they both have 20 students each and are first-year students. I left out the third and fifth semester groups because students drop out as they progress through their studies. Therefore, the total population that was subjected to the intervention will be 40 students. The school has around 200 students in the different bachelor's degrees, so the sample represents 20% of the total population.

### **Context.**

The school is located in *Iguala de la Independencia*, in the state of *Guerrero*, in Mexico, where there is no real need to communicate in English. This is because we have little international tourism compared to other places like *Taxco de Alarcón* or *Acapulco de Juárez*. Although several students have relatives in the United States, they communicate in Spanish.

### **Intervention.**

Action research works in cycles. For the first cycle, I implemented two communicative activities in real-life situations and an authentic assessment proposal. As a reference, I used the Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE), which is the exam for certifying non-English speakers at levels A1-C2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of Trinity College London.

Trinity College London is a leading independent educational charity in examinations since 1877. Its specialty is the examination of communicative and performance skills in the areas of music, drama, and the English language. With more than 850,000 candidates per year, in over 60 countries, Trinity exams are specifically designed to help students progress in language proficiency. They aim to inspire teachers and students by creating exams that are enjoyable to prepare for, rewarding for teachers, and that help students develop necessary life skills. This test is structured into 12 graded exams (G1-G12). The justification for choosing this

instrument is that it has realistic objectives for listening and speaking practice with native speakers. In contrast to the TOEFL ITP test, which consists only of listening, structure, and reading.

The progress of the GESE is marked by:

- Increasing evidence of the use of communicative skills.
- Increasing linguistic demands are categorized under the functions of language, grammar, vocabulary, and phonology.
- An increasing degree of independence that allows the student to initiate and take control of the interaction.

The test is administered with a candidate and an examiner, either in person or online. At each stage, the test replicates everyday exchanges in which information is communicated, ideas and opinions are shared, and typical problems are discussed.

While the TOEFL ITP requires no interaction of any kind, it is a written exam consisting of 130 multiple-choice questions lasting two and a half hours.

Based on the G1 criteria, two activities were proposed to cover the entire exam and transform the certification-type exam into projects for students to complete, in addition to an authentic assessment proposal.

**Activity 1** (<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/GECEQM3dL6I?app=desktop>)

Students will create a card with the information in **Figure 1**. They will then record a video in which they present this information and complete a self-assessment exercise using a rubric created based on the GESE criteria.

Students will practice writing (the information on the card), speaking (reading the information), and grammar and vocabulary skills to express their name, phone number, and email address. It is important to emphasize that all information must be authentic and to inform students that this information is the most common type of information requested, for example, when filling out a form or making a reservation by phone.

**Activity 2** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vig4NsYHCWQ>)

In pairs, students will start a video call and play the game I prepared on the educaplay platform, available at: ([https://es.educaplay.com/recursos-educativos/13507647-activity\\_ii.html](https://es.educaplay.com/recursos-educativos/13507647-activity_ii.html)), in the background. It's a memory game that has, on one side, some questions or commands, and on the other, reference images.

Once they start matching the pairs, for each pair solved, the student must ask an additional question and their partner must answer, taking turns until the 5 minutes are up. At the end of the activity, they will complete a peer assessment exercise, that is, they will grade their

partner using the criteria from the rubric I sent them. Between both activities, the entire first grade of the GESE is covered (See **Figure 2**).

In the second cycle, the action plan consisted of creating a reflective journal, which the student completed after four activities (a piece of homework and three projects). The activities were completed using a Google Docs document to format it as a journal. The activities are described below:

1. A piece of homework: Present Continuous. This task consisted of completing an online exercise (<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/present-continuous-exercise-3.html>) by sorting out 20 questions in the present continuous, then translating them, writing whether the structure is used to describe an action that is happening now or in the future, and finally answering the questions.
2. Project: Writing. The student had to write 20 sentences about what an educational worker (teacher, principal, student) does based on the information gathered during the week of observation in secondary schools.
3. Project: Video. Using the sentences from the previous project, the student made a video to explain what an educational worker does in their daily routine. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33frOKNyBxo>)
4. Project: Oral Presentation. The student presented his "Dream House" to the group, describing the rooms and objects found there. He used a map or model to explain his ideas. At the end, one of his classmates asked a question based on what he had presented, which the student responded to, and the teacher did the same. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqM2Yr0HSZE>)

These activities were chosen because they are scheduled in the course syllabus (projects). The homework assignment was a review of a topic covered in the previous semester. I thought that since it was a previously covered topic, it would prompt the student to reflect on whether they had truly learned the topic, whether they had any questions, and how I could help them facilitate their learning.

The reflective journal was chosen as an assessment tool because, as Córdoba (2013, p. 14) points out:

It is a tool whose objective is to understand what, how much, in what way, and how the teaching-learning process is being carried out to constantly enrich it. Its purpose is to build knowledge through reflective practice, which places the student at the center of the learning process and develops critical thinking and metacognition.

The reflective journal is a dialogue with ourselves in which we learn from our mental processes by questioning what we have learned from each task.

The questions that were used, in general, in the four tasks are:

- What did I learn, and what will I take away from the assignment I completed?
- What steps did I follow to complete the assignment?
- How can I apply what I learned in my daily life?
- Do I still have questions about the topic?
- What could the teacher improve to make it easier for me to learn the topics?

## Findings

What results are reported in the action research? An improvement in educational practice through reflection.

The first change was learning that projects can be used for assessment, instead of traditional exams, with exercises similar to certification tests. Although having the certificate is important, it is more important to assess the learning that occurs in students and that goes beyond standardized tests; for example, the commitment to self-assessment in the first project, which involved 16 students, and the second project, which involved 19 students. Evidence of this first change is the implementation of two projects—a presentation video and a memory game—that replaces the exam in the assessment of learning.

The second change was learning that it is important to communicate to students how they will be assessed, since when they are not informed, they can become confused. Having the assessment tools before completing the projects allows them to know what will be assessed and, if they have any questions, clarify them so they can complete their project. As evidence of this second change, the assessment rubric was uploaded to the classroom along with the project instructions. It was also shown in class, and questions were asked about the product. The third change was learning that it is important to encourage self- and peer-assessment so that students can assess their progress rather than rely solely on the teacher's perspective. This is one of the principles of authentic assessment, as it fosters self-management in students. Based on their self-assessment, they will know which areas to work on. Evidence of this third change is the self-assessment rubrics for the first project and the peer-assessment rubrics for the second.

According to the information I collected from the students' journals from the second intervention cycle, and after categorizing and coding the information, I found the following findings:

From the first journal, students reported using different tools to review topics when they were unclear, for example, watching videos or searching for information online. They wrote that they had questions, but they were not explicit in their journals, so it can be assumed that they were embarrassed to ask questions, even though some students wrote that the teacher was accessible to

answer questions. However, this could also indicate a process called academic self-management, which Revueltas (2008) defines as an awareness of what it means to study, expressing the need to practice at home. They later reported that they also seek help from other students, so we can talk about collaborative or peer learning.

Another important point is that students are shifting from memorizing texts to understanding them and retelling them as the task progresses. This is most clearly seen in Journal 4, as, according to them, when they saw the model, they remembered the written sentences, and it was easier for them to give the presentation.

One of the most important aspects that the students write about in their journals is mobilizing prior knowledge and extrapolating it to the project. For example, in the video where they describe the routine of an educational worker, they remember the verbs they saw in class and were able to use them to form their sentences in the video. Similarly, when they presented their house, they used the vocabulary and structures learned in class to describe their dream home.

Another important aspect is that students recognize the use of the language outside the classroom, both for recreational purposes, such as reading a book or watching a video in English, and for academic purposes. They argue that knowing a second language is a tool that can help them enhance their professional profile and teach in two languages, thus increasing their job offers.

Although almost all students reported feeling nervous when presenting their dream home, they believe this type of activity is important because it will help them develop their teaching skills and overcome their fear of speaking in front of a group during their secondary school internships.

In general, students believe the projects help them develop their skills in front of groups, communicate effectively, review structures, and overcome their fear of speaking in front of their classmates. Almost all of them mention feeling nervous and afraid because they might forget pronunciation, but one of the goals of the last project is to help them overcome their fear of communicating in a second language. If they forget a word, they can act it out, draw it, or point it out, but make themselves understood, ultimately becoming able to communicate in a second language.

Most students report progress through the various journals, in grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Those who gave themselves low scores believe they can improve their level by studying.

The students considered the "Dream House" project appropriate and believed the teacher explained the topic well and that they understood it, as they had to review the structures, create a card to guide their presentation, and review their pronunciation and fluency. Regarding communication, most understood their classmates' questions, but they had trouble answering.

Some students didn't understand my questions, probably because I have a higher level.

## Discussion

The indicators selected to demonstrate improved practice were the following:

- Communicative activities.
- Real-life situations.
- Authentic assessment.

The degree of compliance with the proposed objectives and the first activity carried out by first-semester students will be measured using the indicators of improved practice.

Communicative activities. Strictly speaking, this activity was not communicative, as the students recorded their video, and I later reviewed it and gave them some feedback, but there was no real exchange of information. For this activity to be truly communicative, the students would have had to work in pairs, as they did in the second activity, or they would have had to present it in person so there was a real exchange of information, meaning a partner would write down some information while the student spoke it, or if some information wasn't understood, they could ask for clarification. I have done this modification, now they present it in the classroom.

Real-life situations. I believe this point was met, since, as I explained in the activity, there is nothing more real and authentic than one's own information, such as, in this case, the student's name, phone number, and email address.

Authentic assessment. Regarding this point, a rubric was created to evaluate the video according to the guidelines proposed by the GESE-G1, and three categories were created: excellent, good, and needs work. Some of the advantages of this instrument (See **Figure 3**) are that it minimizes the teacher's subjectivity, making it a fairer assessment tool. Adding to this, the fact that the student engaged in self-assessment gives us a broader perspective on student performance.

Among the results obtained, it is worth highlighting that only 16 of the 29 students who participated in the activity submitted their self-assessment; this is because it is not a common practice for students. However, in subsequent class sessions, I highlighted the benefits of this type of instrument, allowing them to see the process of acquiring language skills and identify areas for improvement. Regarding the results, those who submitted their self-assessment received an average of 9.2, while I gave them a 9.29. This indicates that, overall, they did not overestimate their performance or communication skills.

The degree of compliance will be assessed according to the indicators of improved practice, as outlined in the second activity.

Communication activities. In the second project, it was a communicative activity, as

students exchanged information in real time in pairs or trios. However, the instructions asked them not only to answer the questions posed, but also to create a new one. This is the most difficult step in the second language acquisition process: creating a question based on previously obtained information. 23 of the 29 students who submitted this assignment were able to do so.

Real-life situations. Regarding this aspect, the topics covered in class had to be combined with the language requirements of the GESE and, in addition, questions had to be created that were familiar to all students. Some of the questions that use real-life information are:

- What is your town like?
- What is the weather like in Iguala?
- What are you wearing?

Authentic assessment. Regarding this point, a rubric was created (See **Figure 4**) to evaluate the video according to the points proposed by the GESE-G1, and three categories were created: excellent, good, and needs work. In this second project, there was more participation in peer assessment than in the previous project (19 of the 29 students participated), but since the pairs were created by the students, the tendency was to favor each other. Although interesting observations were made, such as: "The student only had a few errors in pronunciation; she is recommended to practice her vocabulary". Once again, in subsequent sessions, we reflected on this point because, as future teachers, they will have to promote the use of this type of assessment, so they were encouraged to do so as fairly and impartially as possible.

## Conclusions

One of the most transcendental changes that this work generated in me is the change from grading to evaluating, apparently two similar concepts but reading the expert authors, there is a gigantic world of difference since grading is limited to, normally, placing a number, while the evaluation opens to an important range of tools such as self-assessment, peer assessment and various instruments that can be applied to measure the competencies that I try to develop in my students. Having used various evaluation instruments will allow me to resort to them in the future so as not to fall back on a single test, such as the written exam, which is normally used to grade; This is due to the tradition that languages have of using it as the only way to certify a person's level, instruments normally designed in the United States or Europe to homogenize content and somehow classify students and potential workers in the mastery of different languages and that in Mexico is perpetuated with the National Certificate of Language Level (CENNI), which according to the text Questions and Answers CENNI (2023, p. 3) is a "document that allows reliably and objectively referencing the level of knowledge of a given language, both in general, and as far as possible, specifically in various linguistic skills." And although it continues: "The National

Certification of Language Level will be voluntary, and its use will be optional for the different authorities, institutions and users of the national education system." It is the only instrument that the Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública: SEP) allows to hire foreign language teachers. Therefore, to enter the Mexican educational system, the SEP requires a free certification, but that requires a foreign certification. So I wonder if we could change this system and create a Mexican or Latinoamerican certification aligned with the CEFR that doesn't use an exam, but rather projects to determine a student's level. This would be innovative since it doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, and I believe it's something that can be achieved only by aligning the objectives of each level with the skills developed by the student in the four areas to be assessed: listening, reading, speaking, and writing while developing communicative competencies.

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## Figures

**Figure 1.** Card used to do activity 1 of the first cycle



ENGLISH CLUB APPLICATION	
First name	<input type="text"/>
Middle initial	<input type="text"/>
Last name	<input type="text"/>
Phone number	<input type="text"/>
E-mail address	<input type="text"/>

Source: Taken from Touchstones 1. Student's book. P.7.

**Figure 2.** GESE 1 checklist, in yellow, topics covered by activity 1. In green, topics covered by activity 2 of the first cycle.

Language requirements	
<b>Language functions</b>	
› Exchanging greetings	
› Giving personal information, eg name, age	
› Identifying and naming items given in the lexical list below	
› Leave-taking	
<b>Grammar</b>	
The candidate is expected to demonstrate the ability to understand:	
› Imperatives for common actions, eg go, come, show, point, give, touch, stand up	
› Question words what? how many? how old?	
› Demonstratives this, that, these, those	
The candidate is expected to demonstrate the ability to understand and use:	
› The present simple tense of the verb to be	
› Common nouns in singular and plural (regular and irregular), eg shoe/shoes, foot/feet	
› Simple adjectives, eg small, tall, green	
› Determiners a, the, my, your, his, her	
› Pronouns I, you, he, she, it, they	
<b>Lexis</b>	
The candidate is expected to demonstrate the ability to understand and use vocabulary related to:	
› Personal information	
› Immediate surroundings including classroom objects	
› Basic parts of the face and body	
› Common animals (domestic, farm and wild)	
› Cardinal numbers up to 20	
› Colours	
› Everyday items of clothing	
› Words relating to the language functions listed above	

Source: Trinity College Londo (2021). Exam information: Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE). 12<sup>th</sup> printing, P 15.

**Figure 3.** Rubric to assess the first project (Self-evaluation)

Criterio	Excellent (10 points)	Good (8 points)	Needs work (6 points)
<b>Lenguaje</b>	El estudiante realiza un saludo y despedida además de presentarse correctamente.	El estudiante no realiza el saludo o despedida además de presentar problemas al presentarse.	El estudiante omite el saludo y despedida además de no poder presentarse.
<b>Gramática</b>	El estudiante utiliza el verbo <i>to be</i> y el vocabulario de <i>determiners</i> y <i>pronouns</i> de manera correcta.	El estudiante utiliza el verbo <i>to be</i> o el vocabulario de manera incorrecta.	El estudiante utiliza tanto el verbo <i>to be</i> como el vocabulario de manera incorrecta.
<b>Léxico</b>	El estudiante pronuncia correctamente el vocabulario del léxico de forma correcta.	El estudiante tiene algunos errores al pronunciar el vocabulario del léxico de forma correcta.	El estudiante tiene muchos errores al pronunciar el vocabulario del léxico de forma correcta.
<b>Fonología</b>	El estudiante habla de forma fluida.	El estudiante habla de forma poco fluida.	El estudiante no habla de forma fluida.
<b>Escritura</b>	El estudiante escribió de manera correcta su tarjeta.	El estudiante cometió algunos errores al escribir su tarjeta.	El estudiante cometió muchos errores al escribir su tarjeta.

Source: Adapted from GESE G1 criteria.

**Figure 4.** Rubric to assess the second project (Peer-evaluation).

<b>Criterio</b>	<b>Excellent (10 points)</b>	<b>Good (8 points)</b>	<b>Needs work (6 points)</b>
<b>Lenguaje</b>	El estudiante realiza un saludo y despedida además de responder acerca de la información que le fue preguntada.	El estudiante no realiza el saludo o despedida además de presentar problemas al dar la información dada.	El estudiante omite el saludo y despedida además de no poder contestar a la mayoría de preguntas.
<b>Gramática</b>	El estudiante utiliza el verbo <i>to be</i> y el presente continuo correctamente para poder contestar las preguntas además de utilizar la estructura correcta para poder formular preguntas.	El estudiante tiene problemas para poder formular preguntas o respuestas con las estructuras gramaticales correspondientes.	El estudiante no puede formular preguntas o no puede producir respuestas suficientes para entablar una conversación.
<b>Léxico</b>	El estudiante pronuncia correctamente el vocabulario del léxico de forma correcta: - objetos del aula - animales - números - colores y ropa	El estudiante tiene algunos errores al pronunciar el vocabulario del léxico de forma correcta.	El estudiante tiene muchos errores al pronunciar el vocabulario del léxico de forma correcta.
<b>Fonología</b>	El estudiante habla de forma fluida.	El estudiante habla de forma poco fluida.	El estudiante no habla de forma fluida.
<b>Duración</b>	La conversación dura 5 minutos.	La conversación dura 3 minutos.	La conversación dura 1 minuto.

Source: Adapted from GESE G1 criteria.

## 14.

# I am a black female English preservice teacher. An autoethnographic perspective on teacher education

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### Abstract

This autoethnographic research explores my existence as a black female preservice English teacher in a white, male, cisgender bachelor's degree program at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Bogotá. According to Fanon's (1967) *Zone of Non-Being* and my own Testimonios, I uncover how colonial and epistemic violences make black bodies, feminities, and knowledge insidiously absent in curricula and institutional discourse. Subject to disciplinary colonial norms that whiteness and maleness hierarchize, I used identity-masking strategies to navigate spaces where my being was constantly devalued. Through narrative inquiry, I map the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and coloniality, and place storytelling as a practice of epistemic resistance and healing. Informed by hooks' (1994) theory as practice of freedom and Gutiérrez's (2008) conceptualization of border spaces as spaces of transformation, manuscript calls for the construction of affirming epistemic communities that celebrate Black female ways of knowing. Through my own lived stories, I challenge exclusionary educative discourses and suggest another epistemology that affirms and empowers black teachers.

**Keywords:** *Black, Female, English Teacher, Identity, Teacher Education.*

### Introduction

Defining what it means to be black, and more specifically, a black female English preservice teacher, is neither simple nor straightforward. It is not complex because I lack the conceptual foundations or the command of the English language to do it; but because I am not a female, but a black female; a black woman who has been dispossessed of her possibility to speak and think in academia but has here chosen to resist by, paradoxically, speaking from within the same system that has both erased my female black ways of knowing as existence. It is a system that not only has imbued superiority and privilege over some social, political, and economic groups but has also made us (i.e., those who inhabit the border) invisible. I speak then from this zone of non-being (Fanon, 1967) in which my female black body has become wounded by the disciplinary colonial narrative that dictates that English teachers must be white (not necessarily in the flesh)

(Kubota, 2006). Moreover, a system in which Black teachers must change accents to avoid being stereotyped (Manara, 2018).

My experience as a black female English preservice teacher at a bachelor's program in foreign languages has been characterized by having mostly white and cisgender male educators who, in some ways, have consciously or unconsciously forced me to resort to coping strategies such as identity masking<sup>1</sup> (Nabukeera, 2022). I have had to mask who I am to avoid disrespect, pretending I am invisible and that I belong. I must say that from seminars to the curriculum in general, black bodies, black femininities, and black epistemologies are absent. They are nonexistent not because they are not “included” but because their loci of enunciation are distorted. The “inclusive” discourse, as managed by those visible lines in teacher education (i.e., stakeholders, etc.), is violent and grotesque. It is not only a discourse rooted in multiple forms of oppression (Battiste, 2013) within educational settings (e.g., racial, epistemic), but also a discourse that has imprisoned teachers’ and student-teachers’ identities within the disciplinary domain (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021).

At the beginning of my life, never did I question whether I was different from my classmates or not; I did not need to know it, but due to various experiences lived in my black flesh, I started to realize that people just “accepted” black people around them, but never did they think of *being/ becoming* with them. Historically, black people had to adapt their ways of being to how white people had structured society; according to hooks (1981), this was not done voluntarily but was a survival strategy forced on institutions that preferred Eurocentric looks and behaviors. Black cultural expressions were devalued or repressed so that, for one to be considered socially acceptable, one had to conceal actual existence. The way the world has structured its borders and who lives where, it has made me feel uncomfortable in my own skin. These behaviors have also allowed nowadays the reproduction of violent discourses that built society and permeates and support borders that separate everyone. This is why, in this manuscript, I choose to bring my locus of enunciation to resist (Sugiharto, 2022) those hidden but visible discourses that continue to dispossess my own existence. It is then that I choose to produce my own reality (Gatti, 2015) so it can be a source of epistemological reflection, but at the same time a source of healing (hooks, 1994) for those others who might also be living in a zone of non-existence.

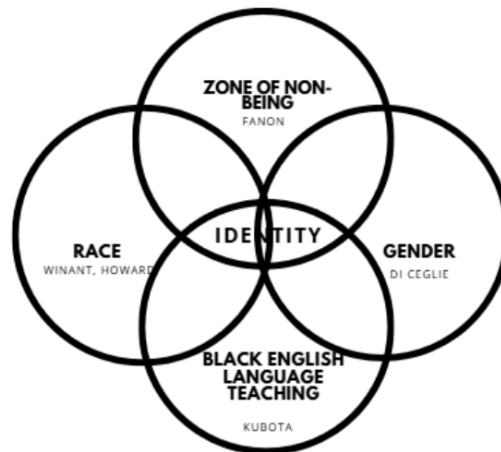
### **Theoretical Framework**

The following constructs are intertwined, meaning they are not understood as isolated, but rather as interconnected orientations in their epistemological and ontological dimensions. I am interweaving Fanon's Zone of Non-Being with race and gender experiences interjectionally, along with a personal conceptualization on Black English Teacher Identities since these might exist

beyond capitalist and colonial norms. By bringing in my own voice as a black female preservice teacher, I am engaging in a “recovery project” (Nakhid Chatoor & Butcher Lashley, 2022, p. 21) to bring my own existence as a means to disrupt, put pressure and challenge the structural isms (i.e., racism, sexism, etc.,) that have historically pushed me to the margins.

### Figure 1.

*Representation of the interconnection between the constructs*



### Zone of non-being

The Zone of Non-Being has drawn a political line that defines who is considered “human” (i.e., white) and who is not (e.g., black, indigenous, homosexual, etc.)(Guzmán Ramírez, 2019). It serves as both a conceptual and epistemological lens through which lives like mine, relegated to margins by hegemonic notions of race, gender, and identity, can be understood (Collins, 2000). Within my identity construction process and all the stages, I have been through, this framework helps me recognize and reframe the struggles I face as a black female preservice teacher, revealing how deeply entrenched systems of oppression shape my daily experience. As Medeiros and Vieira (2019) argue, even in the face of dehumanization, black female teachers must speak their truths in educational spaces to begin dismantling the structures, to start the process of turning the power dynamics that lead us to live in the zone of non-being. Power is exercised along an invisible line that defines who is heard, valued, and represented. By sharing our lived realities in academic settings, we resist that erasure and assert our presence. Seen from within, the Zone of Non-Being is a space of exclusion but also a space of possibility. It maps how those of us at the intersections of race and gender move across and beyond those dividing lines (du Plessis, 2018).

My enunciation from this Zone would be a strategic act of resistance, one that opens a place for others like me, the "invisible" ones, to live, exist, and begin to heal together, to allow us to participate in the creation of knowledge for everyone.

## Race & Gender: Intersectional Lens

Gender and racial identities intersect in the construction of the self. However, there are various yet murky definitions of what they are or mean. Gender is a social construct composed of conceptions, activities, and work that societies have encoded during centuries consider ideals regarding "masculine" and "feminine" personality, appearance, and profession (Di Ceglie, 2018). Race is a societal construct more involved in politics, which points to bodily distinctions and "racial formations" developed by society through time to privilege some individuals at the expense of others (Omi & Winant, 2015). Neither race nor gender can exist independently but rather intersect in complicated ways to form our personal experiences of discrimination and privilege. Therefore, it is created, inhabited, and redefined over time depending on the way society shapes this "racial formation" and, consequently, permeates the historical power among certain groups. In other words, social categories are not static; they are intertwined to determine who holds power and who is marginalized. Crenshaw's (1989) understanding of intersectionality demonstrates how race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identities intersect in everyday life. Instead of centering on a single variable (e.g., racism or sexism), intersectionality reveals that they interact with one another in complex and multifaceted ways. Intersectional perspective allows me to pinpoint the challenges I have experienced as a black female preservice teacher. Thus, as an individual who is marginalized based on race, I may also encounter other forms of discrimination based on gender, class, or other features of my identity.

## Black English Language Teacher Identities

English education has been influenced by a succession of theoretical paradigms. Kubota (2006) has argued that it is essential in English Language Teaching to examine how social, racial, political, economic, and class dynamics merge to construct the identity inherent in the teaching-learning process. Supporting this view, Maldonado-Torres (2011) states, "There remains a void that permeates the power relationships and conceptions about race, gender, and levels of importance" (p. 1), underscoring the importance of mapping an uncharted field where traditional power structures still obscure critical issues. Consequently, if black identities are to be fully acknowledged in English Language Teaching, educators must move beyond the socially constructed frameworks imposed by historical practices, necessitating a reevaluation of epistemological approaches. Consequently, each concept within the theoretical framework presented above provides a critical lens to examine the feelings of invisibility and dehumanization that I, as a black female preservice teacher, have experienced in academia. These demonstrate the knowledge shapes both the methodology and content of English teaching and impacts teachers' modes of communication, pedagogic practice, and self-presentation, thus bringing out the

complex web of identity, power, and pedagogy operating within classrooms.

### **Context: *Myself as a Participant***

My name is Karla Ortiz. I am twenty-one years old and was born in Bogotá. I am currently studying for a bachelor's degree in languages at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, a public university. I must say that who I am is not the same as who I am being/becoming since I am now aware that I have been perceived differently. My body, my identity, and even my own femininity has been packed within racialized discourses (e.g., "I'm not racist, but you are pretty even if you are black"). I am a black female preservice teacher who has begun to integrate her identity as a black female to challenge academic dispossession. I was labeled based on my skin color. A very narrow and violent perception of who I was in the eyes of others.

I remember one day, when I was in eighth grade, after school, I went to the park with my friends, and we played and laughed. An old woman approached us and asked if we were okay. She thought I was robbing them. Her excuse for such a hurtful comment was that people of my kind (i.e., black people) had been robbing good people like her (i.e., white people). I was shocked to see how my friends burst out laughing. Nobody stood out for me, not even myself. Years later, I was given access to university; I applied for a type of "benefit" called "Cupo especial," which is a requirement of the government for public universities, basically consisting of all universities must have *minority* quotas (e.g., Afrodescent, Indigenous, and displaced populations). Currently, I am not only a woman but also a minority. Never did I think about myself in such terms, but I am subjected to them.

My process through university has been challenging, I have at times felt alienated from academic discourses and curricula. I am the only black person in classes; the materials that teachers use in their classes are by far the whitest things they can find. I read about white scholars (e.g., Chomsky, Douglas Brown, D. Krashen). I have been *whitened*. In 2021, I was invited to participate in a research seedbed<sup>2</sup>. Since then, I have begun to do something I thought was impossible: that is, to engage in affirming praxes. It has meant to see that academia is also a space for healing. I echo here hooks (1994), who "saw in theory [...] a location for healing" (p. 59). Like her, I consider that I can theorize based on my embodied experience. It can assist me in providing an argumentative framework for the autoethnographic perspective I am about to engage in.

### **Autoethnography as Research Method**

This study employs an autoethnographic lens to explore, interpret, and elevate my voice as a black female English teacher. As Sahling and De Carvalho (2021) suggest, autoethnography provides an essential platform for marginalized voices to be heard and validated within academic spaces. This approach aligns with my journey as both a black female English teacher and an

emerging researcher, challenging the traditional, hegemonic frameworks that have often excluded non-dominant voices. By re-centering my own experiences, I adopt a methodology that contrasts with detached, “objective” research practices, which tend to reinforce colonial hierarchies and power imbalances. Through autoethnography, I can engage in self-reflection and introspection, allowing me to critically examine my personal experiences and the broader sociocultural contexts that shape my identity, narratives, and perspectives.

Autoethnography, as a research method, allows me hereby to explore my experiences of struggle, resilience, and dispossession, providing a unique perspective that other Black educators may find resonant and valuable. In this line of thought, I concur with Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), who argue that autoethnography blurs the lines between researcher and subject, foregrounding the researcher’s lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge. In embracing also my subjectivity as a black female researcher, I seek to counteract the narratives that have historically constructed individuals like me as incapable of theorizing or contributing to scholarly discourse. This approach challenges the hierarchical assumptions that personal narratives lack academic value, emphasizing the significance of lived experience in meaningful research (Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012)

### **Analysis of my Female Black Experience: testimonios**

I am offering pivotal memories of my existence as a Black woman in the form of Testimonios. These are surreal recounting of the ways racism and sexism have inscribed themselves onto my body and self. According to Gatti (2015), testimonios reside in the "gap" where things fall apart from words, recording that desperate need to speak when silenced. These narratives are not about victimizing me but about opening the hurt and finding healing in the fractured language. By doing so, I take back my voice as a black female preservice teacher, transforming wounds into witness and strength. Each memory unfolds along a path marked by childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, shaped through education, and social interactions tracing the layers of my being/ becoming. I deploy testimonios to reveal the naked racial recollections that I have endured as a child, those flash scenes of initially learning to set boundaries to weather the pain I could not speak. Referencing the work of Lorde (1984) and Fanon (1967), who discussed self-identification and "gaps" within language through which trauma fractures our language, I draw attention to the way all testimonies are a pain and a gesture toward claiming power.

### **In My Own Words: A Child's Journey through Exclusion**

I feel lost and at a disadvantage, and I'm unsure how to navigate these feelings. I never realized that just being perceived as "different" could be that heavy. I was only twelve years old when people started accusing me of things I had not done, like being a thief in a store without

even try it or a troublemaker just because of my skin color. I was never taught what it means to be "different"; they showed me, and now it feels like the weight I bear on my shoulders is just a price for being a Black woman. Sometimes, this body of mine seems like a political battlefield, forced to stand in opposition to the so-called "normalized" standards imposed by society.

My name is Karla Ortiz. I was eleven years old, and I just realized that I am a black child. It started in my classroom with my classmates. I am different from them. I know it; I don't know how, but I know I am. I was in sixth grade the first time that I felt the prejudice of my skin and how it can be used as a weapon to hurt me. I had a few classmates who didn't like me, and I was fine with that. Nonetheless, it made them mad, and then they started calling me "Betún Cherry<sup>3</sup>" out of the blue. They started to compare the color of my skin to a product they could use to polish their shoes. I was shocked at first because I commented something, and they just yelled at me, "Shut up, Betún Cherry," and started laughing like I was a joke.

Nobody came to me to ask how I felt, so I told a teacher what was happening. She got angry about the situation and called a meeting with the whole class. She started to say how unbelievable the behavior was; she said the right thing until she said, "If she is Betún Cherry, then we are Griffin," and then I just felt ashamed. What was the need of that? It felt like withdrawing the seriousness and the problem of the situation; it felt more like a joke for them and a point to signalize me, like I was the problem.

These raw accounts follow my path of contradiction and change, as I again and again construct and reconstruct my sense of self. I was "othered" based on my complexion as a child, internalizing daily microaggressions, trying to bury them in the back of my mind in my process of growing up. Innocent-seeming humor left deep psychological wounds that distorted my self-image and sense of belonging, resonating with institutionalized racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Under the assiduous "white gaze," I wondered if I was flawed by nature, assuming respect to be a function of compliance with others' expectations. I learned to submit to the premise that value and dignity were based on the performance of hegemonic cultural norms. By claiming, reclaiming and naming these injustices, I challenge the singularity they breed and demand their acknowledgment in being myself and the shortening of myself into a two-dimensional, consumable object and assert my right to be and to instruct unapologetically and truthfully.

### **From Silence to Empowerment: A Young Woman's Quest for Identity in Life**

I always felt an enormous lack of belonging; I was thirteen years old when I felt that even my friends would not be able to understand how something as innocent as a laugh could cut deep into my memories and perspective of life. I was with two of my closest friends at the time; we had just got out of school and decided to play a little bit in the park nearby. We were playing

“montonera,” and I was at the top of the pyramid, when a woman approached us, almost running, she seemed really worried, and we just stared at her until she started to speak. She proceeds to look at my two friends and ask them if they were okay, and they answered her with a confused gaze that yes, indeed they were fine; then she looked right at me saying that it was a relief because she thought that I was robbing them because “the people like me, were robbing too? much”. I was shocked when they started laughing; I couldn't believe what had just happened and how they seemed to find it amusing that the comment was so violent. I was in my uniform, it was obvious that I was a child, nonetheless, it was possible that I was robbing them just for being black.

My identities of race, gender, and profession are completely intertwined in a struggle for harmony against expectations of who I "should" be. As I begin to teach, I ask myself: Do I need to withhold pieces of myself to fit into the picture of what an English teacher "should" be? Do I need to erase part of my Blackness, my identity, to be accepted? Wherever I go to where the whites are, they keep asking me, "Where are you really from?" meaning I am not supposed to be here. Let me tell you about a new experience; I was once in a class at the university where we were asked to perform a presentation in which we had to speak English the whole time, I was just starting to learn the language, so I prepared for two weeks what I was going to say and I did it, the teacher congratulated me and feel powerful, then a classmate approach to me to tell me the score that the teacher gave me, that was the higher one, and she just say to me “You do not deserve it, don't you see how you speak?” and it feels like my effort did not count. Of course, I have an accent; my parents are from Choco, and I live with them; did she just expect that I erased them from me?

In this testimonio, I try to answer the questions that I had as a child and demonstrate how society's long-standing racial biases, ignorance, and prejudice continue to impact me as a pre-service teacher today. These experiences I see as the beginning of learning about how power operates in my life. According to Foucault's (1994) ideas, it is evident to me how "otherness" is created by naming and referring to people like me as "others" who are under constant surveillance and regulation. In my life, this continuous observation and control not only reinforced the feeling of exclusion but also limited my potential to create my own counter stories. I am constantly moving in a double sense of self double between the white world that challenges my heritage and the black world where sometimes I am too foreign. In the classroom, I do not silence aspects of myself just to be the "acceptable" teacher. Du Bois's "double consciousness" (1903) echoes with me: viewing myself through others' eyes while keeping who I am. This constant tension is my everyday battle and my reminder to remain authentic, resisting forces that attempt to erase my identity.

### **Self-Reflexivity: Theorizing and Analysis**

In the previous *testimonios*, I tried to answer to the vulnerability of my Black body in a world

that so often regards it as "other" as burnable, disposable, and extraneous. This visibility is testimony to a centuries-long struggle against Black communities, one grounded in the cultural alienation that colonial and white-dominant societies have imposed. As observed by Valdés García (2007), "such structures instill in Blacks a profound feeling of disconnection wherein identity is a site of struggle, a name bestowed by others and a social rejection" (p. 25). Through these testimonios, I have been engaged in internal struggle but in solidarity with others, both past and present, who experience the same. Essentially, I am working to "Blacken" my own story. It is a political undertaking: borrowing from Césaire's (1979) corpopolitical concept, I take possession of my black body as an epistemic space of comprehension and counter-hegemonic counteraction to restrictive narratives forced on me. With each testimonio that I have written to my younger self, that comprehension gets reconstructed, evading imposing restrictions, paying homage to our history, language, and culture.

### Conclusion

In telling my experiences, I am not simply narrating personal accounts but engaging in an epistemic practice that resists the silencing machinery of the academy. hooks (1994) says that "theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end" (p. 61). My story, then, is not merely a testimonial; it is method, theory, and refusal. By speaking from my position of enunciation, I make it difficult for the hegemonic epistemologies that have made the black female subject illegible in teacher education. It is not inclusion into a particular system but about creating new modes of knowing grounded in experience and affect. In doing so, I place at the forefront a condition of being and cognition that has been consciously forgotten but exists as a form of resistance.

Secondly, this manuscript operates not only as a subversive instrument but also a healing space. Gutiérrez (2008) reminds me that border spaces, while conceived in tension and conflict, are also fertile ground for knowledge making and transformation. From the space of non-being, I write both to survive and to reclaim. A history of epistemic dispossession burdens my narrative, but it also illuminates collective recognition. By naming these bodied truths, I hope to create epistemic cracks in the mainstream discourse and invite others who, like me, have been rendered invisible to look at themselves not as deficit, but as knowers, thinkers, and change makers.

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## 15.

# Teachers and undergraduate students' perceptions on intensive synchronous online English courses: effect on oral communication

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### Abstract

This study examines teachers' and students' perceptions of intensive synchronous online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course at a private university in Bogotá, Colombia. In accordance with national bilingual policies, university students must achieve a B1 or B2 level in English, as outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), to graduate. Among the

available course formats, many students opt for intensive online courses lasting fewer days, with daily instruction. While these courses are designed to develop all language skills, concerns have emerged about their effectiveness in promoting oral communication. This qualitative case study, situated within an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm, collected data from five teachers and thirty-five undergraduate students through questionnaires, focus groups, and field notes.

Participants valued the flexibility and accessibility of online learning but noted challenges such as technological limitations, distractions, and reduced opportunities for spontaneous oral interaction. Students reported discomfort speaking in front of peers, while teachers emphasized the need for interactive strategies to maintain engagement. Findings indicate that pedagogical design, student participation, and institutional support are key to improving speaking outcomes. The study offers insights for improving online EFL programs and supporting learners' oral proficiency in digital environments.

**Keywords:** *English as a Foreign Language, oral communication, online learning, higher education, student perception, synchronous instruction*

### Introduction

In Colombia, university students must demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language, mainly English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as a graduation requirement for undergraduate and postgraduate programs. National bilingual policies (CESU, 2014) aim to position Colombia as a multilingual nation, and one strategy for achieving this is through the enforcement of language

proficiency standards outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2022). As a result, students are expected to reach a B1 or B2 level in English to graduate. To meet this requirement, universities offer a range of language-learning formats, including face-to-face, blended, and synchronous online courses allow students to choose according to their needs and circumstances.

In fact, the rise of online learning has offered students greater flexibility in terms of time, access to resources, and learning tools. In particular, intensive synchronous online EFL courses have gained popularity for their convenience. These courses typically run for 22 days, with four hours of instruction per day, and aim to develop all language skills equally. However, despite their structured design, several challenges have emerged, especially regarding the development of speaking skills. Some students have reported discomfort with active oral participation in virtual sessions due to the lack of opportunities to engage in spontaneous oral interaction.

In these online settings, the use of technology can also influence the learning process. It can potentially reduce students' reliance on their own linguistic abilities, while environmental distractions and limited requirements for camera or microphone use (due to inconsistent internet connectivity) may also hinder their engagement. While digital platforms offer valuable resources to support learning, they also introduce constraints that can negatively impact oral communication development.

The main problem addressed in this study is that, in intensive synchronous online EFL courses, limited instructional time and reduced opportunities for interaction may hinder the development of students' oral proficiency. While digital platforms offer various tools to facilitate communication practice, the extent to which these virtual environments effectively support the growth of speaking skills remains uncertain. We underscore the need to analyze learners' current oral performance and identify specific conditions that foster improvement in online contexts.

Therefore, our research question is: *What are teachers' and students' perceptions about the effect of intensive synchronous online EFL courses on students' oral communication skills development?* We aimed to identify how teachers and students perceive the influence of these courses on the learners' opportunities to engage in oral interaction, to examine the perceptions of the effectiveness of these courses in enhancing students' oral communication skills; and to explore the strategies and resources teachers and students rely on to promote oral interaction during synchronous online lessons.

By investigating this topic, this research offers insights that can help language instructors and institutions redesign these programs to better align with students' communicative needs and preferences. Additionally, the findings can support national educational goals related to

bilingualism and digital inclusion, while also contributing to global discussions on best practices for enhancing speaking proficiency in online EFL environments.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Online Learning Environments**

Online learning comprises synchronous, asynchronous, and blended modalities. Synchronous learning involves real-time interaction between teachers and students, while asynchronous learning allows learners to progress at their own pace without simultaneous participation. Blended learning combines both approaches to foster flexibility and autonomy (Lowenthal et al., 2009; Richardson et al., 2014). Each format offers distinct benefits and challenges based on institutional resources, learner profiles, and instructional goals.

Advantages of online learning include flexibility, time management, content accessibility, and technological engagement. However, issues such as lack of real-time interaction in asynchronous settings, digital inequality, and the need for digital literacy present notable obstacles (Jamil & Muschert (2024, Tulsiani; 2024; Joyner et al., 2023; Sualehi, 2023; Öztürk, 2021). Research by Khojasteh et al. (2022) affirms that online learning can match the quality of traditional models, while Hamza et al. (2022) highlight its potential to reshape educational delivery despite connectivity and motivation challenges. Alwasidi & Alnaeem (2022) emphasize the importance of curriculum design and teacher support in fostering learner autonomy and engagement in online contexts.

### **Interaction**

Interaction is defined as the relationships human beings build with one another, and through these interpersonal interactions, learners participate in teaching, learning, comprehension, conversation, dissent, agreement, criticism, and the ongoing process of negotiating identity. These social actions do not merely reflect individual identities; rather, they are collaboratively constructed within social contexts (Sert, 2015).

In L2 learning environments, interaction is crucial for developing communicative competence and constructing linguistic knowledge through social engagement with peers and instructors. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners advance language skills through scaffolded support from more proficient interlocutors. Long (1996) emphasizes the role of interaction in facilitating language acquisition by providing learners with opportunities for negotiation of meaning and feedback, which are essential for internalizing new linguistic forms. Additionally, Swain (2000) highlights collaborative dialogue as a key mechanism through which learners notice gaps in their language use and co-construct knowledge to achieve greater linguistic accuracy and fluency. Therefore, fostering meaningful

interaction in L2 classrooms promotes both cognitive and linguistic development, as well as identity construction as language users.

### **Oral Communication**

Oral communication in a foreign language involves clear expressions of ideas through voice, pronunciation, intonation, and the use of an extensive vocabulary combined with correct grammar. Achieving fluency and effective communication in English requires learners to engage frequently in meaningful interactions and conversations. Nguyen et al. (2022) emphasize that developing strong oral communication skills demands instructional approaches that prioritize active communication, promote conversational participation, and incorporate diverse interactive learning activities. Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2022) highlight the crucial role of integrating technology-based tools that support speaking practice, which can improve learners' fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Tavakoli and Saeedi (2023) further argue that digital tools not only foster oral skills but also increase learners' motivation and autonomy by providing varied and authentic communicative experiences.

Together, these perspectives underscore the importance of combining communicative teaching methods with technology-enhanced learning to effectively develop learners' oral communication abilities in English.

### **Methodology**

This study was carried out at a private university in Bogota, Colombia and involved forty participants. The participants were thirty-five undergraduate EFL students enrolled in intensive courses, ranging from levels A1 to B2, representing diverse academic programs within the institution, and five FL teachers who are part of the language center staff and who teach these intensive courses. The research followed an interpretative, qualitative case study design, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Data collection was conducted through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Thematic analysis was employed for data coding and interpretation, following open, axial, and selective coding procedures as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), facilitating the identification of core themes and patterns within the data.

### **Analysis**

After collecting and analyzing the data, 3 categories and 4 subcategories emerged. The analysis is presented as follows.

**Table 1**

**Question and categories**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
What are teachers and students' perceptions about the effect that synchronous intensive online EFL courses have on the students' oral interaction?	Opportunities and challenges for oral communication in intensive EFL courses	Opportunities Challenges
	Perceptions on the oral communication skills development	
	Strategies and resources to promote oral communication	Pedagogical Strategies Technological and Interactive Resources

**Opportunities and challenges for oral communication in intensive EFL courses**

**Opportunities**

The intensive EFL courses present numerous opportunities for oral language development, particularly through their structure of daily sessions. These regular and consistent encounters support students to stay engaged, reinforcing vocabulary and grammatical structures, and steadily improving their fluency. Repeated oral practice in each session helps students build confidence and develop speaking routines that foster automaticity in communication.

Furthermore, these course environments may provide safe spaces for shy or introverted students to participate and take linguistic risks, as they may feel less pressure compared to traditional face-to-face classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2022). Learners also benefit from asynchronous resources such as recordings and other digital tools, which allow for continued oral practice and self-regulated learning beyond class hours (Tulsiani, 2024; Joyner et al., 2023).

Motivated students are observed to take full advantage of the intensive format, often demonstrating significant improvements in their oral skills over short periods. Both teachers and learners report that noticeable gains in pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency are achievable during the course when students are consistently engaged. Moreover, frequent and positive feedback from instructors during speaking activities plays a critical role in increasing learners' self-confidence in their communicative abilities. These combined factors contribute to a dynamic and supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to actively use the language, take initiative, and develop greater oral competence in a relatively short timeframe.

QSP-S25 “Es un proceso en el que se aprende de manera más rápida y eficaz, pues al dedicar más tiempo todos los días el conocimiento adquirido es más fácil de poderlo mantener y recordar teorías.”

## Challenges

Despite the clear opportunities presented by intensive EFL courses, several challenges hinder the consistent development of students' oral communication skills. One major difficulty lies in the uneven progress among learners, as some students, particularly those with lower prior proficiency or reduced speaking confidence, struggle to keep pace with the rapid instruction.

The fast-paced nature of these classes, often combined with large group sizes, limits opportunities for individual oral production, resulting in interactions that are frequently brief and superficial. Consequently, lessons tend to shift toward a teacher-centered dynamic, reducing student agency in the learning process. Technological barriers such as poor internet connectivity

further disrupt communication, causing frustration and missed opportunities for speaking practice. Moreover, the absence of nonverbal cues like body language and eye contact, essential components of natural communication, can impede understanding and make online exchanges feel less authentic and engaging.

The intensity and speed of the courses can also overwhelm students, who may find it difficult to concentrate specifically on developing oral proficiency. Both teachers and students observe that while short-term gains are possible, sustaining and deepening these skills requires continued effort beyond the course duration. Limited peer-to-peer interaction, especially outside of class time, restricts learners' chances for spontaneous, meaningful dialogue, a key factor in communicative competence (Sert, 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2022). In group work or breakout rooms, some students dominate while others remain passive, revealing the need for better balanced participation and structured interaction. Teachers also express concern over the inconsistency in pedagogical approaches and feedback styles across instructors, which can disrupt the continuity of oral skills development. These observations underscore the need for more purposeful and scaffolded speaking activities that ensure equitable participation and long-term progress in learners' communicative abilities (Tavakoli & Saeedi, 2023; Vygotsky, 1978).

QTP-T4 “Entre desventajas... el número de estudiantes ya que si es muy alto este puede afectar el tiempo que los estudiantes tienen para interactuar, practicar, retroalimentar o afianzar cualquier lección o tema. La adaptación al uso de herramientas tecnológicas para estudiantes mayores o que no tengan facilidad con recursos tecnológicos. El dispositivo desde donde se tome la clase ya que no es lo mismo desde una pantalla que desde un celular”.

## Perceptions on oral skills development

Students' perceptions of their oral skills development in intensive EFL courses vary significantly, reflecting diverse learning experiences and outcomes. A portion of students report high development in areas such as pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence. These learners

often attribute their progress to the consistent use of interactive teaching methods, personalized feedback from instructors and access to audiovisual materials that allow for reinforcement beyond synchronous class time. Such resources and feedback not only help internalize linguistic patterns but also support learners' ability to self-monitor and adjust their speaking, leading to greater autonomy and confidence in oral communication (Nguyen et al., 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2022). These students tend to be more engaged, take risks during oral activities, and benefit from the immersive nature of intensive instruction, which offers repeated, focused speaking practice in a compressed timeframe.

However, not all students report the same level of success. Others describe only moderate gains, explaining that while their fluency and accuracy have improved to some extent, they continue to face difficulties with spontaneous speaking, limited vocabulary, and anxiety. These students often recognize the supportive learning environment and teacher encouragement, yet they still feel that time constraints and the fast-paced course rhythm do not always allow for deeper practice and consolidation.

Additionally, a third group of participants reports low development, citing persistent struggles with vocabulary recall, speaking inhibition, and a lack of sufficient opportunities to practice orally during class. For these learners, the rapid progression of content, along with speaking anxiety and a fear of making mistakes, inhibits participation and confidence. These varying perceptions highlight the need for more differentiated instruction, stronger scaffolding, and opportunities for low-stress oral interaction to meet the diverse needs of learners in intensive EFL contexts (Tavakoli & Saeedi, 2023; Vygotsky, 1978).

QSP-S34 “La rapidez, por el poco tiempo en cada tema, no hay cabida para el desarrollo de más cantidad de ejercicios sincrónicos que permitan el afianzamiento de conocimientos.”

### **Strategies and resources to promote oral communication Pedagogical Strategies**

Regarding strategies and resources, the participants reported a range of pedagogical strategies to encourage oral communication. Breakout rooms are commonly used to facilitate small group discussions, which help reduce learners' anxiety and promote more spontaneous speaking. Role-plays and simulations of real-life situations are also widely used, as they provide contextually rich scenarios for students to practice meaningful communication. Guided questions and prompts help structure students' ideas, allowing them to organize their thoughts before speaking. Peer feedback and collaborative tasks foster a supportive environment where learners can learn from one another and feel more confident expressing themselves. Besides, the teacher's emotional and instructional scaffolding plays a critical role in motivating students to participate actively and take risks during oral tasks.

In addition, technological and interactive resources enhance students' engagement in speaking activities. The use of multimedia tools and visual aids stimulates discussion and makes speaking tasks more appealing. Also, interactive platforms like Mentimeter, Padlet, Kahoot, Flip, Nearpod, Quizlet Live, and Google Slides encourage student participation and collaboration. Other tools, such as Edpuzzle, Wordwall, Voicethread, and Miro, allow learners to brainstorm, exchange ideas, and perform tasks in more flexible and less pressured settings. These platforms help create structured interaction that supports students in developing confidence through consistent and reflective practice. Excerpts from teacher interviews indicate that the inclusion of multimedia and gamified tools addresses diverse learning styles and contributes to a more dynamic speaking environment. Finally, recorded speaking tasks are an increasingly valued strategy. These allow learners to self-monitor their oral production, reflect on their performance, and practice at their own pace, fostering autonomy and personalized progress. Teachers observe that when students have opportunities to review and revise their speaking tasks, they show greater awareness of pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary use. These strategies and resources, when combined, contribute to a more inclusive and effective approach to developing oral communication skills in virtual EFL courses, responding to students' varied needs and promoting sustained engagement in the learning process.

QTP-T4“En mi opinión las ventajas del aprendizaje a través de cursos virtuales... Trabajo colaborativo y cooperativo a través de mini proyectos en clase utilizando salas de grupos.”

## **Conclusions**

This study underscores that oral interaction is essential for second language development; however, both teachers and students acknowledge that authentic, spontaneous speaking moments are often constrained in intensive online EFL courses due to limited instructional time and the fast-paced structure. While some learners thrive in interactive, technology-supported activities, others experience fatigue and diminished participation due to the intensity and screen-based nature of these sessions. Nevertheless, effective pedagogical strategies, such as the use of breakout rooms, student-led discussions, and scaffolded speaking tasks, can help mitigate these limitations and promote more meaningful oral interaction. Although digital tools like Zoom, Flip, and Kahoot contribute to learner engagement, participants agree that they cannot fully replicate the richness and flexibility of oral communication developed in longer, face-to-face or semester-based courses.

Given these insights, it becomes clear that adapting course design to better align with students' communicative needs is critical. Teachers are encouraged to create more balanced pacing, incorporate diversified speaking tasks, and increase opportunities for peer interaction. Consistency in instructional approaches and feedback is also essential to provide clarity and coherence across

intensive courses. Pedagogically shifting away from teacher-centered models toward collaborative learning environments not only enhances student engagement but also empowers learners to take greater responsibility for their own speaking development. Besides, creating a supportive atmosphere where students feel emotionally safe to express themselves can further reduce anxiety and foster confidence, ultimately leading to more effective oral communication outcomes in online EFL contexts.

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## 16.

# Latinx language teachers' *acuerpada* teaching narratives on gender construction in cross-cultural contexts.

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### Abstract

This narrative research, using a qualitative paradigm from an *Acuerpamiento* feminist lens, was developed by considering the narratives of Vanessa, Lorena, and Rebeca, three Latina language teachers working in a cross-cultural context. The objective of this research was to reflect and explore what the cross-cultural language teaching experiences narrated by three Latin female language teachers reveal about the impact of the construction of gender. The results reveal that the construction of gender is universal by patriarchal discourses, which set expectations that intersect with gender. Indeed, the experiences narrated are embodied and shared as they are not isolated, but there is a collective struggle, resistance, and negotiation in their cross-cultural experience.

**Keywords:** *Gender, intersectionality, gender stereotypes, cross-culturalism, acuerpamiento.*

### Introduction

Teachers' teaching practices and experiences are influenced by hegemonic pre-packed practices of colonized ways of being and performing them (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021). Suppose one considers the variety of cultural and social dimensions brought into educational scenarios (Villarreal, 2020). In that case, it appears essential to reflect upon teachers' practices and pedagogical experiences since the educational environments (e.g., classrooms) are embedded within institutions (e.g., University) that reinforce and maintain biased roles given by society (e.g., gender). In this line of thought, it is worth mentioning that in specific cross-cultural language teachers (e.g., English and Spanish) do not escape this logic since they are also part of the systems of power (e.g., patriarchy). Therefore, a critical position against the socially predominant oppressive ideologies (i.e., colonial frameworks of existence) is needed.

Patriarchal ideologies (i.e., discourses of domination concerning bodies, identities that are permeated in bodies,) (Von Werlhof, 2015), for example, are also present in teaching practices. For Castañeda-Peña (2018), “English language teaching and learning are [still] [...] European/capitalist/ military/Christian/patriarchal/white/heterosexual/male ideolog[ies]” (p. 27) that continue marginalizing experiences that do not conform to the canonical gender roles. As a matter of fact, teachers navigate them based on social, cultural, emotional, and personal factors.

Specifically, teachers, through their academic lives, experience contexts that are professionally fixed through interactions with the academic community. As a result, these ideologies continue to reinforce patriarchal ideologies in a variety of cultural contexts. The cross-cultural perspective permits a wider view of what the experience of female Latina teachers explores in a North American context, which highlights not only how they perform in their classes but also in how they make sense of the pedagogical setting and situate the experiences in their bodies.

### **My Locus of Enunciation as a Colombian Female Teacher**

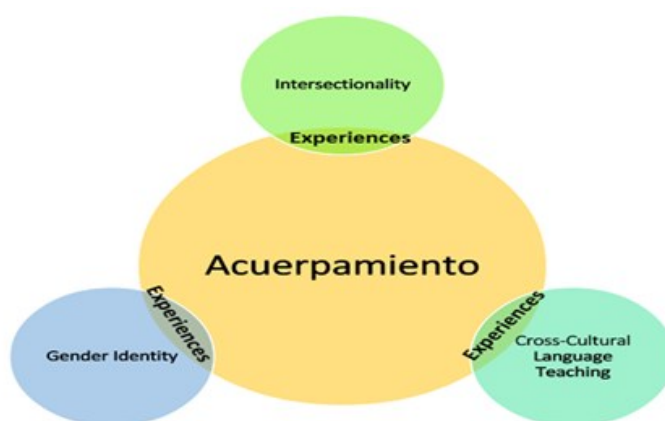
As a cisgender woman, I have been shaped by specific criteria that society has framed in the female body for what a woman should be. I grew up trying to fulfill the standard of being a girl that my mother and father tried to set for me. Since then, I attempted to fit into the shoes they told me I should. Currently, I have been working in a public school in South Dakota, United States. There is still a stereotypical gender perception that is packed and embedded. Indeed, my life has been in different stages as I tried so hard to fit into the shoes patriarchy told me I could fill and was afraid of stepping out of those paradigms. It has been a long path to understanding that those stereotypical gender roles have been harmful to my way of understanding the world and relating myself to what I should or can do.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The following figure represents, through a Venn diagram, the way that the Theoretical Framework was understood and interpreted to develop gender, identity, cross-cultural teaching intersecting with Acuerpamiento.

**Figure 1**

*Intersecting Theory*



### **Acuerpamiento**

Embodiment or “Acuerpamiento” is a multifaceted concept which comes from Latin America and encloses a political act of putting our bodies to protect and support. It allows to gather strength to fight injustice practices that our and others’ bodies might face, and it works as

a way of personal and collective resistance of our bodies. In this sense, through embodiment, people resist oppressions imposed by patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism or racism. Not only is it a way of fighting such oppressions, but also a way of showing solidarity and mutual support for others' bodies. Acuerpar is a form of political participation that allows us (i.e., Latina women) to gather strength and engage our bodies through mutual help in understanding how the world works and what moves us as humans. The term Acuerpar moves us away from colonizing models and highlights the importance of creating worlds that are well disposed of being (Cabnal, 2010). Embodiment is an invitation to a collective world in which we question forms of oppression while bringing us together, as women, to feel heard and supported. As women, we have been objectified and sexualized in a patriarchal and heterosexual reality, I bring Acuerpamiento as an act of resistance to what we have experienced in our bodies, reflecting on how Acuerpamiento is an act of healing together of our rage and indignation in being Acuerpadas because "Tú soy yo y yo soy tú" (Cabnal, 2019).

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is an interpretative lens to comprehend how various aspects of identity intersect and interact (i.e., Gender or race). These categories intersect, creating forms of social discrimination and privilege (Weldon, 2008). Indeed, although other systems of power might also intersect, these do not stand on their own but are interconnected. Traditional social approaches had considered forms of discrimination in isolation; however, they overlap. Intersectionality is not only about the variety of forms of discrimination (e.g., body politic, geopolitical, etc.) but the analysis of how they interact in complex ways (Carastathis, 2014). Crenshaw (1991) developed intersectionality among women of color as a lens to analyze discrimination. Indeed, focusing on only essentialist notions of race or gender limits the reality that social individuals face when they experience significant and various axes of marginalization. Adding to this, Hill and Birge (2020) argued that intersectionality encompasses power relations of race, class, and gender, which affect all aspects of the social world as intersectionality disrupts traditional social inequality. For example, the three women in the study share gender and race, but they come from different cultural backgrounds, and their embodied ideas are individual. Furthermore, Bhabha (1994) explores cultural identity and postcolonial experiences. Bhabha stated that there is more than a singular identity. However, they are formed in the intersection of factors such as gender, nationality, or race, resulting in new forms of expression that go beyond binary oppositions.

### **Cross-Cultural Language Teaching**

Cross-culturalism refers to the interaction and blending of different cultures. By approaching variations in beliefs, behaviors, language, or gender roles, it appears possible

to comprehend cultural variations and their impact on various personal and social configurations (e.g., identity, gender, etc.). When one begins to analyze culture across societies, the construct can become even more elusive due to the causes of cultural variations (Holliday, 2011). However, it is important to consider Pennycook's (2007) ideas since he exposes that culture is not a fixed, stable institutional reality that individuals belong to, culture is a process of adaptation and identity formation (e.g., in language use integrated with other semiotic systems). In language teaching education, cross-cultural contexts ensure the complexity of interactions. Language and culture are related to each other, so one cannot exist without the other. Indeed, culture is always in the background, ready to be unsettled. Language and culture are intertwined; for example, teaching a language will include the culture(s) of its speakers, its gender, historicity, and personal experiences as these are embodied and performed across contexts; however, there can be an overlap of cultural elements that do not strictly adhere to traditional categories.

### **Gender Identity**

Defining what gender is or means is not an easy task. Nor is it easy to frame it under given categories or concepts. Butler (1999), for example, defined gender as a fluid construct constituted through performative acts rather than a stable condition. This has meant that gender, as a construct, has been influenced by different interpretations that portray it not only as a discursive category but also as embodied (Fausto-Sterling, 2019) since gender is contingent upon one's own enunciation (Ribeiro, 2017). Additionally, Lugones (2008) defines gender as a social construction that is related to dynamics of power that go beyond biological differences. Consequently, the current system of colonial idea of gender has been influenced by coloniality of power, which suggests that gender is not a static idea, but it is in a constant construction (Ribeiro, 2017). Identity occurs on a large political scale and through the social interactions in which bodies are reflected concerning societal gendered expectations. The perception of a stable gender identity is an illusion as it is a performance that is repeatedly constructed in a society to build and reinforce heteronormative notions of femininity and masculinity. Consequently, Lugones (2007) describes that gender identity is interconnected with other identities such as race and class.

### **Methodology**

The following section outlines the research paradigm, the research methodology, the context, and the target population that will participate in understanding what the cross-cultural language teaching experiences narrated by three Latin female language teachers reveal about the construction of gender. As the purpose of the study is to reflect upon Vanessa, Lorena, and Rebeca's construction of gender through narratives, having *Acuerpamiento* as a feminist lens that is embedded in this narrative approach.

## Research Paradigm

As the purpose of the study involves exploring the pedagogical experiences through the narrative of three language teachers (Vanessa, Lorena, and Rebeca), it will embody a feminist perspective to reflect on the interplay of multiple factors that can be encountered in these women's lives by approaching feminist research. The current study adopts a qualitative paradigm from a feminist perspective. This means that it highlights the life experiences and narratives of Vanessa, Lorena, and Rebeca by considering their gender, culture, and power dynamics in the pedagogical practices from a cross-cultural setting through an interpretative lens (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Specifically, this qualitative orientation addresses research that examines cultural and social dynamics that shape women's lives and their context.

## Type of Study

This study adopts a narrative perspective by reflecting upon Vanessa, Lorena, and Rebeca's experiences as women and as teachers in a cross-cultural context. This said, I argue that it is through telling stories that we can bring personal experiences into research. The feminist lens helps us to understand the gender context of women in their identities, expose gender inequalities, and advocate for social transformation (Hesse-Biber, 2014). My choice to access their experiences through a feminist Narrative inquiry is rooted in reflecting what the cross-cultural language teaching experiences narrated by Latin female language teachers reveal about the impact of the construction of gender. As our voices as women need to be heard, I think of a feminist perspective in narrative analysis to be close to lived experiences, and avoid unwarranted assumptions about people's experiences (Cabnal, 2010).

## Figure

2

*Three Dimensional Scale Acuerpada*



This model suggests a path to analyze life-story interviews. In this model, "story" (in lowercase) refers to the embodied inner emotions and thoughts of the teachers in their context (e.g., cross-cultural context). The second level, Story (with a capital S) goes beyond the immediate

interpersonal context. It emphasizes wider scale interaction (e.g., their institutional policies on their construction of stereotypical gender roles). Last, STORY (all in capital letters) serves to identify refer to the broader sociopolitical contexts in which teaching and learning take place (Barkhuizen, 2016). Additionally, the analysis of the study will intersect with my own path of analysis by adding my feminist narrative perspective.

### **Otras Cuerpas**

Vanessa, Lorena, and Rebeca are language teachers who are currently working in North America. Vanessa is a Peruvian female teacher who is from Lima. She is a teacher who has been living in the United States for about 24 years and has worked in public schools for more than 12 years. She is an English teacher who taught English in Perú; however, she has been teaching Spanish in the United States. Lorena is a Colombian female teacher who is from Bogotá. Lorena has worked in the school for 6 years and has lived in the United States for around 6 years. She is teaching Spanish as a second language. Rebeca is a female language teacher from San Salvador, El Salvador. Rebeca has been in the school for a year now.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

#### **Multimodal narratives**

Multimodal is a type of narrative that permits to creation of an enriching and immersive experience, allowing a more complex and complete expression of ideas and feelings. A specific axis of multimodal narrative is visual Elicitation, in which the visual texts used are usually photographs and drawings (Henwood et al., 2020). Drawings can be used as a stimulus to enrich the interviews and evoke memories that can be hard to express with words (Barkhuizen, 2017).

#### **Life-story interviews**

Telling stories is brought to our lives as a way of making sense of the world. In the past, stories were the source of maintaining and transmitting timeless elements. People's lives are full of circumstances or events that can be archetypes for human existence, for example, stories and shared human behavior. Life story interviews allow them to have a deeper understanding of their life experiences in regards their understanding of gender ideological construction

#### **Data analysis**

The data collection was developed in a protocol of two stages following Barkhuizen's model and integrating the multimodal narrative to trigger the narrative. The narratives are here analyzed by adapting the three-dimensional narrative scale and focusing on macro, meso, and micro based on Barkhuizen's model and Acuerpamiento. For this research paper, only Vanessa's narrative is shown; however, the whole analysis of the three Latina teachers is in my research project for my master's degree.



In the following section, the selected excerpt Vanessa talks about how she views education in Perú and now in North America by highlighting elements that were part of her pedagogical process.

Lizet: La verdad que retador toda esa experiencia. Para mí ha sido diferente vivir en un nuevo país porque hay cosas en las que aún no me adapto, pero ¿Te ha gustado estar aquí?

Vanessa: Vivo en este país hace 20 años, y me mudé a los 31, lo cual para nuestra sociedad es vieja. Una mujer que se mude a los 31 años ya está pasada en años, como dicen ya la dejó el tren porque ya uno debe estar con hijos y casada. Ya una vieja que debería estar casada y con hijos... y yo apenas explorando, me sentía que estaba pasada en años. [ Sic] (Vanessa, life-story interview)

Vanessa mentioned the internalized societal expectations (i.e., Story) on what a woman at 31 years old should have achieved (e.g., marriage and kids), which reinforces expectations for women. The macro (STORY) societal discourses, as in the metaphor “ya la dejó el tren” brings to the front a rooted patriarchal discourse that reinforces gender oppression in the ways women should see marriage and motherhood at a certain age. Indeed, metaphors reflect ways in which individuals conceptualize experiences; metaphors serve not only as a linguistic element but also as a foundation to cognition as they express how we interact with the world in our pursuit of cultural understanding (Kövecses, 2017). Vanessa delved into a personal story that created an impact on her life as the way she could perceive herself at the time but highlighted the societal expectations that are set on women’s bodies, such as the pressure of having children and getting married.

In Colombia, women’s femininity has also been constructed based on stereotypical discourses such as age (Córdoba et al., 2012). The metaphor “Dejar el tren” is also related to me as a Colombian woman, as it shows a discursive pressure for women to follow traditional life paths, leading women to wonder whether they are failing to meet imposed societal expectations. “La dejó el tren” represents a deeply ingrained societal stereotype that shapes reality in society (Story). Also, it is found in education, as teachers at a certain age are perceived as less capable. Aging in this case is set as a socially constructed identity that intersects with gender (Mason &

Chik, 2020).

## Findings

The experience narrated by Vanessa reveals that teachers need to navigate throughout different layers of identity in which is intertwined with power and social expectations (Crenshaw, 2017). The construction of gender is universal by a patriarchal discourse that exposes expectations that set Vanessa into fixed categories that they need to fulfill based on their gender and cultural background. These narratives reveal how patriarchal norms are adapted and produced in a cross-cultural context in which gender intersects with culture. Consequently, her body is involved in dominating discourses about being a woman in which adaptation and resistance are still contingent upon patriarchal discourses in which it is still feared to acknowledge who you are, which remarks a transformative space of resistance, in a third space (Bhabha, 1994).

## Conclusions

The cross-cultural experiences have shown that there is a universalization of patriarchy that is read in our female bodies. Indeed, patriarchy has a common narrative in the Latina female bodies as they set heteronormative ideologies and expectations on our bodies by framing us; however, there is a space of resistance in which we recuperamos our stories and the indignation as an act of healing of these patriarchal ideologies.

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## 17.

# Teaching anglophone culture through critical history and interculturality

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### Abstract

This paper presents a pedagogical experience developed in the course Anglophone Culture II at a public university in Pereira, Colombia, as part of an English teacher education program. Drawing on frameworks of critical pedagogy, decolonial theory, and critical interculturality, the course aimed to move beyond superficial and celebratory approaches to culture and foster a deeper, historically grounded understanding of Anglophone societies. Through the study of bottom-up history, non-congratulatory cultural content, and student-led inquiry, learners engaged with issues such as colonialism, racism, gender inequality, and resistance movements. The experience revealed high levels of student engagement, emotional investment, and ethical reflection, with learners expressing greater awareness of global injustices and their relevance to local contexts. This experience highlights the transformative potential of cultural education when approached as a site for questioning dominant narratives and cultivating critical, socially engaged language teachers.

**Keywords:** *Critical interculturality, Critical pedagogy, decolonial pedagogy, social history.*

### Introduction

Language and culture are typically depicted as intertwined (Kramsch, 1998), so that the former cannot or should not be learnt without the latter. Therefore, it is expected of language learners to learn about the target culture. In the case of English learners, it is envisioned that they learn about the culture of English-speaking countries, often from the inner circle (Kachru, 1985), the powerful Anglophone countries, that is, mainly the US and UK, but also Canada or Australia. Not only has it been expected from them to learn about the target culture, but hopefully to embrace it without question.

In this sense, language teachers are supposed to become *ambassadors* of these countries, promoting their cultural contents and values. Consequently, the cultural approach that is often expected of language teachers is congratulatory and superficial (Gómez, 2015), focusing on the four Fs (Fairs, Feasts, Food and Fashion) as if cultures were static and straightforward. This disregards the complex and deep nature of culture and the possibility to critically analyse one's own and other people's cultures (Jaramillo et al. 2019).

Not only is this a reductionist approach to studying culture, but also a functional one

(Walsh, 2009) since it promotes an uncritical appreciation of cultures that end up favoring existing unequal relations between dominant and subordinate ones. McLaren's (2015) critical pedagogy urges us to see this not as a pedagogical flaw, but as a reflection of how schooling can serve to maintain existing ideological hierarchies unless disrupted by critical and transformative practices. So, McLaren and Crawford (2008) define critical pedagogy as a fluid and transgressive discourse and practice that aims at understanding the world as it is and should be, hoping to make learners agents of social change.

That is why advocates of critical interculturality and decolonial education (such as Walsh, 2009; Granados-Beldrán, 2016; and Gómez, 2015, McLaren, 2015) have urged to go beyond this functional and congratulatory view of culture to a more critical one that examines the way culture- and certain intercultural relationships, may serve to perpetuate unjust relations of power, ultimately aiming towards a more equitable exchange among people from different cultures. This involves confronting not only visible cultural differences but also invisible structures of oppression, such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism. To promote this critical interculturality is not an easy task, and it requires a thoroughly designed decolonial (or anticolonial) pedagogical experience that involves, among other things, a critical understanding of history (Díaz, 2010).

In this sense, bottom-up or social history becomes an opportunity to explore cultures in more depth and criticality. In Colombia, there is no tradition to learn about history; it is not fostered in the school system. When it is approached, it is taken from an official nationalistic perspective (Zinn, 2003). So is also the case when English language teachers normally learn about Anglophone history, it is normally through the lenses of official top-down accounts of historical events, and little or no ethical engagement is promoted in doing so. This reinforces what Trouillot (1995) called "silencing of the past," where the voices of the marginalized are erased and the structural violence of the system is obscured in official memory. In this way, he claims, history is the product of power, but it can be used to unveil its roots. Yet, in order for it to reveal them, a critical bottom-up approach to the study of history must be embraced.

By teaching history "from below," centering the perspectives of enslaved peoples, colonized communities, and social movements, educators can equip learners with historical thinking skills and foster a critical intercultural consciousness capable of unveiling and challenging unjust systems. Therefore, a class about Anglophone history and culture framed within critical-intercultural lenses was devised. It poses a great opportunity *not* to reproduce official narratives of hegemonic ideologies or *Americanism* but to raise historical thinking skills and critical intercultural competence (Walsh, 2009). This could be a means to critically approach other cultures and one's own, to disclose uneven structures of power and oppression, and to contribute to the

transformation of such structures.

In light of this, a comprehensive curriculum encompassing alternative historical accounts, including the voices of marginalized communities and the experiences of subaltern groups, can provide an effective counterbalance to the perpetuation of dominant cultural narratives. This inclusive historical approach, which highlights grassroots movements, (anti-colonial) resistance, and struggles for social justice, fosters a deep understanding of the interplay between power, culture, and socio-political dynamics.

This paper reports on the experience of the course Anglophone Culture II (ACII) for future language teachers from a public university in Pereira. This course has aimed at promoting critical intercultural awareness from the study of bottom-up/social anglophone history and non-congratulatory culture, promoting learner's critical sensitivity towards both the so-called "target culture" and their "home culture". To do so, Anglophone culture was explored through alternative yet rigorous historical accounts (e.g., Zinn, 2003), critical cultural inquiry, and student-led projects. The following sections describe how this pedagogical design was implemented and discuss the transformative potential it generated among students preparing to become future language educators.

### **Methodology**

To embrace the challenge of teaching the course ACII through critical and decolonial lenses, a series of steps were followed. First of all, a question had to be asked: What do Colombian language teachers in development need to know about English-speaking countries' history? This question is important because if you are not careful, you may end up designing a history and cultural course as if you were teaching people from those countries, and there would be a sense of alienation in it. Besides, the question invites connections between the "target culture" and the Colombian or Latin American one. Additionally, you notice that there is no need to teach history in an official way, that is, through the narrative that is sometimes promoted by the governments of those countries. Therefore, you can take a critical stance where non-congratulatory aspects like the Corollary Monroe Doctrine, the Manifest Destiny, or the Platt Amendment are critically examined.

Another aspect that had to be considered was the assessment process since it reflects much of the philosophy of the course in relation to learning. Sometimes, these types of courses are assessed through memoristic tests where students are expected to remember several names, dates or cultural "facts". Yet since the course acknowledges the dynamic nature of culture and focuses on history as a series of social processes rather than isolated events, such tests are rendered inappropriate. The assessment process of the course may change to some extent

every semester based on reflections and students' insights, yet the latest approach will be presented.

The course has three main assessment moments. One of them is a group interview in which students are asked critical-thinking questions about previous classes. They should offer answers, support ideas, and state their position on the matter. Since it is a group interview, they can complement each other's ideas on the different questions they get. Another assessment process is a cultural stand, which is presented during an institutional event (hence beyond the classroom). The purpose of this assessment task is for learners to deeply explore an author they are interested in. During the stand, they provide a historical context, a brief literary analysis, and some fragments of their work. Lastly, as a final product of the course, learners should identify a cultural issue that may be better understood by going back in history. They come up with a question and carry out a short inquiry on their own with the professor's guidance and advice. By the end, they present a short inquiry paper and share it in class. All the papers are collected into an informal journal, and they are shared with the whole community.

Another aspect to consider was the preparation resources for students. The idea is that every class would require a sort of preparation so that they would be more participative during the sessions. The selection of the resources followed two main criteria: the promotion of a critical understanding of the matter and some diversity in the format of study. Nonetheless, reading was retained as a powerful tool for learning and language development. Two main books were selected, and they were complemented by a series of articles and curated movies. The main books were "A People's History of the United States" by Howard Zinn (2015), and the adaptation "A Young People's History of the United States" (Steffoff & Zinn, 2009). These books are outstanding resources that step outside orthodox history-telling and embrace an account of history that aims at awakening "a greater consciousness of class conflict, racial injustice, sexual inequality and national arrogance" (Zinn, 2015. P. 686). Additionally, movies that addressed critical issues of black history, women's struggles, or non-apologetic or anti-war movies were selected. Since watching movies in class would take a lot of time that could be used for interaction and reflection, some of the movies were assigned to watch at some while others were projected in an extracurricular space called "Cine-Bites".

### Impact

This pedagogical experience has been enriched in many ways. To start with, I have evidenced that students have responded positively to a bottom-up approach to history since they are more emotionally and morally involved when the topics are not so congratulatory or where the views and experiences of marginalized communities are shared. For instance, in a survey I

applied by the end of the course, one learner reported that they “loved how much we focus on the consequences faced by the Indigenous communities such as the Cherokees” (Student A). Similarly, another one highlighted as memorable the emphasis that was given to “The role of women in certain eras and how people's lives were very different due to slavery, as well as topics covered in class that broaden knowledge and perceptions about colonialism and everything that happened in the past” (student B). These responses reflect the type of critical intercultural awareness that authors such as Gómez (2015) and Walsh (2009) advocate—one that centers empathy, self-reflection, and historical depth. Hence, it is expected that the course has raised sensitivity towards the oppression of minoritized groups like indigenous groups, black communities, women and workers' movements, as well as the victims of colonial policies and wars around the world. Such as the report of Student C to the survey: “Some topics awakened something in me that appealed to empathize with past and present events”.

Besides, students showcased on several occasions their personal investment in the course, such as during the cultural stands or the final projects. The fact that they were to present their cultural stands in an institutional event, either at the faculty or university level, made them committed to the task. They became highly engaged with the literary authors they selected, demonstrating deep understanding and creativity in their research, presentation design, and even in their attire. Many students even reported reading the author for the first time and liking them. This kind of agency and authorship resonates with Freire’s (1981) notion of education, where learners are co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients.



Note: Picture from one of the cultural stands

Finally, the student's criticality and curiosity were especially showcased during the first and last assessment procedures. As the professor of the course, I could identify that they would argue more and provide more support ideas and positionalities during group interviews, in which they could talk to each other, than during paper-based argumentation questions (which was the approach of the first semester). Most also reported preferring the oral format to the written one. Additionally, during the last project, they identified current cultural issues on their own and, with

guidance, they explored the historical causes and implications of such problems. The short papers were a great opportunity for them to take responsibility for their learning process, check the sources, articulate coherent problems, develop answers to their inquiry questions, and finally come up with reflections and possible solutions to such issues. The fact that this product would go beyond the classroom, since papers would be compiled into an informal cultural journal, made it more relevant for students to engage with.



Note: portrait of the journal

Student interests were very diverse and relevant. Some of them wanted to inquire about human trafficking, the war on drugs, migration, school shootings, child abuse, xenophobia, fast fashion, cultural production, and stereotypes. During the socialization of the different inquiries, students seemed very invested in the topic, and they appreciated the learning they obtained from the project. It is expected that this cultural journal will be published soon so that future learners can explore their partners' inquiries before formulating their own.

Overall, it is hoped that these pedagogical experiences contribute to the overall sensitivity of students towards people's struggles in other cultures and their own. Additionally, It is expected that they see themselves as agents of change. As one of them reported, the course "exceeded my expectations in terms of content comprehension. Not only did I fully understand the content, but it also helped me see history from a different perspective and become aware of its importance in our daily and academic lives." (Student D).

## Conclusion

This pedagogical experience attempts to show the potential of critical pedagogy and a critical approach to history learning in a more holistic English language teacher's professional development process. By framing the course Anglophone Culture II through the lenses of critical interculturality, decolonial pedagogy, and bottom-up history, students were encouraged not just to

question hegemonic narratives but also to recognize the way those narratives may shape our collective cultural understanding and how it could be reshaped. The emphasis on conversation-driven assessments, student agency, inquiry, and the engagement with marginalized voices of the past and present may foster greater ethical engagement, critical thinking, and a sense of agency in the influence they may have through their praxis. Far from promoting alienation from their realities, this approach encouraged learners to draw meaningful connections between global injustices and local contexts. This experience affirms the value of teaching culture not just as a sum of facts and traditions, but as a space of inquiry, resistance, and transformation.

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## 18.

# Sigla a critical intercultural pedagogical experience through carnival

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### Abstract

Arguing that language and culture are inseparable and that art transcends cultural barriers, the proposal introduces the "SIGLA Carnival" at Fundación Jorge Otero de Francisco y María Liévano (FOL) as an innovative, arts-based strategy promoting Critical Intercultural Communicative Competencies (CICC) among English as a Foreign Language learners (EFL). Carnivals provide a meaningful context for exploring diverse art forms and addressing socio-cultural issues like gender inequality, aligning with FOL's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, proposed by UNESCO (2015). This research addresses what the SIGLA carnival reveals about EFL learners' CICC development in a non-formal setting, observing current CICC implementation, reflecting on promoting interculturality, proposing carnival creation, defying hegemony and oppression, and assessing its pedagogical effectiveness. This seeks to empower learners to become critically aware global citizens with strong intercultural communication skills, moving beyond decontextualized instruction to foster deeper engagement and social empowerment within FOL's unique educational environment. In the results, it was found that through artistic and free-expression sessions, a stronger connection was established among participants and with the second language. Additionally, these sessions helped enhance communicative competencies and foster diverse learning environments and collaborative work.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, Critical Intercultural Communicative Competences, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Global Citizenship, Non-formal Education.

### Introduction

Intercultural competence is increasingly recognized as an essential skill in today's globalized world, particularly in language education. The SIGLA (Significant Intercultural Girls Leading in Action) project at Fundación Otero Liévano (FOL), where the population is girls, sought to address the need for a pedagogical approach that focuses on language acquisition and the development of critical intercultural competence. SIGLA used the creative and cultural practice of carnival as a tool to engage students in a dynamic learning process that intertwined English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with the exploration of cultural identity and emotional

expression. Through an arts-based approach, this research aimed to challenge traditional language learning methodologies, which often focus solely on grammatical and linguistic competence. Instead, the project adopted a more holistic perspective, emphasizing the integration of emotional, social, and cultural development. This article outlines the theoretical foundations of the project, the methodology used to gather and analyze data, the key findings that emerged from the implementation of SIGLA, and the pedagogical implications of using carnival as an arts-based learning tool to foster critical intercultural engagement and language learning.

### **Statement of the problem**

When people think about learning a language, it is not common to imagine colors, costumes, masks, dances, or music. However, those elements that can be found in a carnival may serve as a pedagogical tool to achieve some language learning-teaching objectives, in culturally and linguistically meaningful ways. That is what SIGLA proposed, given the context in the current realities of the world. Society has formed a globalized world in which English has become the *Lingua franca* for many countries, so that Colombia has been trying to adapt to these realities that imply thinking of new strategies to develop linguistic competences. Nevertheless, However, Colombia has often adopted foreign educational models without critically considering the country's own cultural and sociolinguistic diversity (Guerrero, 2010; Usma, 2009).

In Colombia, official discourse emphasizes multiculturalism and even uses the language of interculturality in policies and curriculum design. But the truth is that in practice, these terms are frequently reduced to superficial celebrations of cultural diversity, lacking a critical engagement with structural inequalities and power relations (Walsh, 2009; Granados-Beltrán, 2016). Critical interculturality, as a pedagogical perspective, is still largely absent in language education, particularly in non-formal settings where marginalized youth could benefit most from alternative, artistic, and culturally relevant approaches. There is a need to create educational spaces that acknowledge and value local cultures and identities while promoting critical reflection, dialogue, and communicative competence. SIGLA was born from that necessity, to generate meaningful language learning experiences rooted in learners' cultural backgrounds and artistic expression, using the carnival as a pedagogical and intercultural framework to foster Critical Intercultural Communicative Competence (CICC) in EFL learners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation of SIGLA lies in the intersection of Critical Intercultural Communicative Competence (CICC), arts-based learning, and social learning theory. Intercultural Communicative Competence, as defined by Byram (1997), involves not just an awareness and understanding of cultural differences, but also the ability to reflectively engage with those

differences in meaningful ways. The CICC framework goes beyond simple tolerance or respect for other cultures; it calls for the capacity to engage in critical dialogue, reflect on one's cultural assumptions, and navigate intercultural communication with empathy and understanding. SIGLA aims to develop these competencies by immersing learners in activities that require them to confront their cultural identities and engage with those of others.

By integrating CICC into the EFL curriculum, SIGLA fosters not just linguistic proficiency but also a deeper understanding of how language and culture are interwoven. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their own identities, engage with cultural representations through carnival, and practice intercultural communication in authentic contexts.

Arts-based learning, particularly through activities like carnival, allows learners to explore and express their emotions, identities, and cultural backgrounds in ways that are often more immediate and personal than traditional classroom activities. According to Eisner (2002), the arts allow students to express complex ideas and emotions that might not be accessible through words alone. In the context of SIGLA, arts-based learning served as a vehicle for self-expression and intercultural exploration. Students were able to use the process of creating carnival masks, costumes, and performances as tools to communicate their cultural identities and understand others.

Carnival, as a cultural practice, is inherently inclusive and diverse, providing students with the opportunity to participate in a creative, collaborative space where their voices can be heard. Through mask-making and performances, students had the chance to explore their identities and construct narratives about who they are and how they relate to others.

Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1960), emphasizes the role of observation, imitation, and modeling in learning processes. SIGLA applied this theory by encouraging students to observe and learn from each other through collaborative carnival-related activities. The process of creating and performing together fostered a sense of community, where learners could share experiences, reflect on cultural differences, and build intercultural understanding. Through role-playing and group activities, students also developed social skills and emotional intelligence, further enhancing their ability to navigate intercultural encounters.

## **Methodology**

Within the methodology, several components are included. The first is the line of research proposed by Unimonserrate, called BILSOC, which stands for bilingualism, society, and culture. Therefore, this research seeks to explore the connection and influence between bilingual education and cultural understanding. Based on this, the socio-critical paradigm is included, which aims to conduct research with the potential to transform participants' perspectives and realities.

On the other hand, the approach is qualitative, as it is not possible to quantify knowledge of CICC, and it is thus guided by relationships, opinions, and the perspectives of the girls. In addition, the study takes an interpretive stance, as it also emphasizes the importance of subjectivity and personal experience. Furthermore, the investigative study is guided by action research, promoted by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), who specify that the Action Research Methodology is a way to achieve reflective inquiry involving participants in the research process. Therefore, the importance of interviews, field notes, and artifacts is highlighted.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employed qualitative research design, based on some principles from the Grounded Theory (Creswell, 2007), which allowed for the inductive development of categories and themes from the data. Data was collected through multiple sources, including field notes, interviews with participants, and artifacts created during the carnival process. The study followed a systematic approach to coding and categorizing data:

Open coding is the first step involved in identifying initial themes and concepts from the data. This process was largely inductive, as the researcher identified emerging patterns without preconceived ideas. While in axial coding, the researchers grouped related concepts into categories. This stage aimed to identify relationships between concepts and begin forming broader themes. Finally, in the final stage, selective coding, the researchers synthesized the categories into overarching themes. This process involved refining and integrating the data into a coherent narrative.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Intercultural Understanding & Representation**

One of the primary themes that emerged from the data was Intercultural Understanding & Representation. This category encompassed how the carnival allowed students to explore and represent their cultural backgrounds through the creation of artistic products following Byram's (1997) model of intercultural competence through expressions in their masks, costumes, and performances. For example, a participant shared how creating a mask inspired her to think deeply about her cultural heritage and how she could express her experiences through art.

The carnival activities provided students with the opportunity to represent their identities visually and symbolically, allowing for a form of communication that went beyond language. This process of cultural representation was central to the development of intercultural competence, as it encouraged learners to think critically about how they perceive themselves and others.

Additionally, cultural awareness emerged through shared experiences, observations, and peer learning, aligning with Bandura's (1960) Social Learning Theory. As

students identified cultural similarities and differences, they developed greater empathy and appreciation for diversity within their group.

### **Social Engagement & Affective Development**

The second category that emerged was Social Engagement & Affective Development. The carnival-based activities fostered a sense of community among the learners, promoting collaboration, empathy, and emotional awareness. The Critical Intercultural Communicative Competences (CICC), according to Byram (2011), is presented as a key tool to understand how people, through the emotional connection and intercultural sensitivity manage to reach collaborative coexistence. The process of creating carnival costumes together, for instance, was not only a chance for students to practice teamwork but also to develop emotional intelligence by understanding and responding to each other's feelings and perspectives.

Field notes revealed how students formed strong emotional bonds throughout the project. One student expressed that the carnival allowed her to feel more connected to her peers and to understand others' feelings more deeply. This emotional engagement was crucial to the development of intercultural competence, as it encouraged learners to not only appreciate cultural differences but also empathize with others' experiences.

### **Communication & Expression**

Finally, Communication & Expression emerged as a key category. While students initially faced challenges in communicating in English, the use of carnival allowed them to express themselves creatively and build confidence in their language abilities. The arts-based activities created a safe and non-judgmental space for language learners to experiment with English, facilitating a more natural and organic language learning process.

One participant shared that the carnival performances provided her with a sense of accomplishment, as she was able to communicate her ideas through both the language and the art of carnival. This example highlights the potential of arts-based learning to enhance both language proficiency and intercultural communication skills. It also reveals what Bakhtin (1933) stated in one of his works about how the process of carnivalization and the use of masks generate new forms of communication, not only verbal but also physical, thus highlighting a hidden self within one's monotonous reality.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study suggest that arts-based interventions, like carnival, can significantly enhance Critical Intercultural Communicative Competence by providing learners with a multifaceted approach to language and cultural learning. The creative process of designing and performing in the carnival allowed students to express themselves, reflect on their identities, and

engage with others in meaningful ways.

Incorporating CICC Byram (2011) into the EFL curriculum through arts-based practices like SIGLA encourages students to go beyond the superficial aspects of language learning. By promoting self-reflection, cultural exploration, and emotional engagement, the project exemplifies how language education can foster critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural dialogue.

## Conclusions

SIGLA demonstrates the potential of combining arts-based learning with Critical Intercultural Communicative Competence to foster meaningful language learning experiences. The use of carnival allowed students to express themselves creatively while engaging with cultural differences in ways that were both emotionally and intellectually enriching. This approach not only improved students' English language skills but also deepened their understanding of their own cultural identities and those of others.

The findings of this study suggest that non-formal educational settings, such as the one at Fundación Otero Liévano, can play a pivotal role in promoting intercultural competence and language learning. The carnival experience exemplifies how creative and culturally responsive pedagogy can transform the learning environment and enrich students' personal, linguistic, and intercultural development.

As teachers and researchers, it is necessary to highlight that implementing the arts and different ways to teach are helpful not just for students but also for teachers because allows exploring and grew in professional and personal way, as a way to represent that the SIGLA carnival has its webpage where is possible to find information about the project and the girls' artifacts and comments.

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## 19.

# Speaking through stories: radioteatro as a tool for language empowerment and community engagement

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### Abstract

This pedagogical experience explores the use of radioteatro (radio theater) as a tool to empower students linguistically and foster community engagement. The participants are twelve students from a Modern Languages program at a Colombian state university. These participants were involved in radioteatro performances that were presented in rural high schools and nursing homes. Through these presentations, students showed enhancement in the language skills in English, Spanish and French while connecting with diverse audiences. The findings of this initiative highlight that pre-service teachers not only improved their linguistic skills but also enriched their empathy, creativity, language empowerment, and social responsibility. It is important to mention that participants engage in collaborative scriptwriting, rehearsals, and performances; hence, this helped them to bridge cultural divides, tell stories through radioteatro, and foster important relationships with community members. Additionally, the results demonstrate that participants enrich their educational journey as future language teachers and the lives of their audiences.

**Keywords:** *community engagement, language learning, linguistic empowerment, radioteatro, social responsibility.*

### Introduction

Language learning in contemporary education is no longer limited to the mastery of grammar and vocabulary within the classroom, it has become a multidimensional practice, shaped by real-world interaction, creativity, and a growing awareness of social responsibility. This paper reflects on a pedagogical initiative that attempts to meet these challenges: the integration of radioteatro (radio-theater) as a medium for language empowerment and community engagement.

Based on the idea that language is a lived and social experience, the project involved twelve undergraduate students from a Modern Languages program in Colombia. The opportunity to work on scripts, rehearse voicework and perform for live audiences allowed students to go beyond practicing English and French; it helped them develop their public speaking abilities and to see these languages as real, tangible things they can interact with.

The choice of radioteatro as a pedagogical tool draws from drama-based pedagogies and informed by critical and sociocultural educational theories, radioteatro offers students a platform to live the language and engage with it in emotionally and socially meaningful ways. Unlike other more traditional classroom exercises, this format allows learners to explore language through character, dialogue, emotion, and audience interaction. This process cultivates a sense of agency as students become active creators in their target language, shaping content that resonated both within and beyond academic contexts. Moreover, the performative nature of radioteatro opens new affective dimensions of learning. As students rehearse and perform their pieces, they report feelings of curiosity, joy, nervousness, and pride. As research has shown, these emotions contribute significantly to deeper learning and long-term motivation.

This paper argues that radioteatro, as implemented in this pedagogical experience, offers a powerful framework for rethinking language education. It shows that through creative, collaborative, and socially engaged practices, pre-service teachers can develop not only linguistic competence but also the ethical and emotional sensibilities required of educators in today's world. Therefore, the main objective of this pedagogical experience is to examine the impact of radioteatro (radio theater) as a pedagogical tool for linguistic empowerment, community engagement, and the development of socio-emotional skills among pre-service language teachers. The following sections will outline the theoretical grounding of the project, describe its implementation, and analyze its impact on student learning and community engagement. In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing conversations about the role of language education in addressing both personal development and collective well-being.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The following concepts are considered the foundational aspects for the development of this pedagogical experience.

#### **Radio theater as a tool for language empowerment**

In the evolving landscape of language teaching, various pedagogies have emerged to support learners in developing their full potential. In this context, Odriozola (2015) defines radio theater as a pedagogical tool within drama-based pedagogies. Its main purpose is to enhance language development, creativity, and learner autonomy. According to Higashida (2024), radioteatro, as a performative medium, enables students to experiment with voice modulation, intonation, and emotional expression, thereby strengthening their communicative competence in multiple languages.

Besides, when students are involved in scripting and performing radio theater, they are empowered to be active creators of language rather than passive recipients. This aligns with Freire's

(2016) notion of critical pedagogy, where learners engage in dialogic and participatory methods to reclaim agency over their linguistic and educational development.

Beyond its cognitive and linguistic benefits, radioteatro also plays a key role in the development of positive epistemic and achievement emotions. As Pekrun (2006) suggests, emotions such as curiosity, interest, and enjoyment contribute to deeper cognitive engagement, while emotions like pride and satisfaction enhance motivation and persistence. Radioteatro allows students to experience language in an emotionally meaningful way through performance, creativity and collaboration: working on scripts together promotes curiosity and enjoyment, while successful presentations, in front of an audience of their peers, teachers and loved ones, generate pride and reinforce learners' sense of linguistic self-confidence (Oades-Sese et al., 2014). These positive emotional experiences enhance both memory and long-term motivation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), making radioteatro a complete approach to language education that supports emotional and academic development.

### **Sociocultural Theory**

We cannot deny that the act of learning is a socially mediated process in which interaction and collaboration play crucial roles in cognitive and linguistic development. Accordingly, Vygotsky (1970 cited in McLeod, 2025) explains that learning should take place hand in hand with society. Without it, learning becomes disconnected from society, and therefore, it is not realistic.

Taking into consideration Vygotsky's ideas, it is pertinent to state that radioteatro aligns with this perspective since they are engaged in collaborative scriptwriting, rehearsals, and performances. Through these activities, learners co-construct knowledge, negotiate meaning, and refine their language skills in English, Spanish, and French within authentic communicative contexts.

Furthermore, the communal nature of radioteatro performances, particularly in rural high schools and nursing homes, extends learning beyond the classroom, reinforcing the idea that learning a language is deeply connected to social and cultural practices (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). The interaction with diverse audiences allows students to not only practice linguistic structures but also develop intercultural competence, bridging cultural divides through storytelling.

### **Community Engagement**

The integration of radioteatro in community settings highlights the role of education as a vehicle for social change. Kızıldağ (2023) emphasizes that education, particularly language education, must prepare pre-service teachers to address issues of social justice and to become agents of change (Velásquez Hoyos & Villegas López, 2024). Community engagement is evident when, in this initiative of radioteatro, students perform in rural high schools and nursing homes.

In these performances, students apply their linguistic and pedagogical skills in different ways, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between universities and society.

What students do in radioteatro also resonates with the principles of social responsibility and service-learning pedagogy (Jacoby, 1996), where academic objectives are integrated with community service to foster civic engagement. Zeatier (2023) demonstrates how radioteatro transforms language learning into an act of solidarity, enriching students’ professional development and the lives of their audiences.

### Description of the pedagogical experience

Allegros is a radio-theater group affiliated with the University of Caldas, dedicated to exploring voice-based performance as a central artistic medium. While it primarily focuses on audio productions, the group also stages theatrical performances that incorporate costumes and scenery. The radio-theater format has proven particularly advantageous, helping overcome financial limitations and enabling creative expression without the need for a stage. Allegros is composed mainly of students at different stages of their academic journey and is supported by professors José Fernando Morales, Ángela Patricia Velásquez, and María del Rosario Valencia. The group meets on a weekly basis and regularly holds workshops with theater and voice professionals to strengthen its members’ acting and vocal performance skills. The group is open to all students at the university, although most of its participants have come from the Modern Languages program, and continues to benefit from the involvement of alumni who remain committed to the project and contribute out of a shared passion for its mission. In the past, Allegros has centered its work on adaptations of classic literary pieces, such as *The Mystery of Allegra*, *The Canterville Ghost*, and Molière’s *Le Mariage Forcé*.

In recent years, however, the group has shifted its focus toward the translation and adaptation of Colombian folk stories, including well-known ones like *La Llorona* and *Juan Machete*, thus contributing to the preservation and reinterpretation of national oral traditions. This shift to folklore has also allowed participants to have more input on the scripts themselves. In the group this year, 11 participants are part of this pedagogical experience. The following table describes their profile.

**Table 1**

*Participants’ Profile*

Participant	Academic Program	Semester
Participant 1	Modern Languages Program	First semester
Participant 2	Modern Languages Program	Second semester
Participant 3	Modern Languages Program	Second semester
Participant 4	Modern Languages Program	Second semester

Participant 5	Modern Languages Program	Second semester
Participant 6	Modern Languages Program	Second semester
Participant 7	Modern Languages Program	Second semester
Participant 8	Modern Languages Program	Sixth semester
Participant 9	Modern Languages Program	Sixth semester
Participant 10	Modern Languages Program	Tenth semester
Participant 11	Modern Languages Program	Graduate student

Source: Own Design

For assessing the impact of this pedagogical experience, we collected the testimonies of the participants in a video and a questionnaire. It is important to clarify that this experience is still in progress.

### Results of the pedagogical experience

After implementing this pedagogical experience for more than three years, it is possible to highlight some results in participants' language development and community engagement. The first result is that radioteatro enhances multilingual skills and emotional engagement. The second result is that community performances foster social responsibility.

#### Radioteatro Enhances Multilingual Skills and Emotional Engagement

This pedagogical experience found that participants involved in radioteatro performances demonstrated significant improvement in their language skills across English, Spanish, and French. Since the participants in this project are mainly first-semester students, they tend to struggle with their linguistic skills. However, participating in radioteatro has allowed them to gain linguistic empowerment, as the rehearsals in the project have helped them feel more confident using the language. The following excerpt is taken from a promotional video of the project, in which participant 2 alluded to this: "Radioteatro allows for the practice of foreign languages: English, Spanish and French. It is a good way to gain more fluency and improve pronunciation."

Additionally, the collaborative and performative nature of radioteatro fostered positive emotions—such as curiosity, confidence, and enjoyment—which reinforced motivation and long-term language retention. For instance, in the promotional video, participant 3 mentioned this: "Radio theater encourages you to get involved, participate, and speak. This is how you improve your English and build confidence, as it truly helped me to become more confident."

This result agrees with the ideas of Pekrun (2006) and Vygotsky (1970 cited in McLeod, 2025) when they explain that language learning and learning tools such as radioteatro are deeply enriched through social interaction and emotional engagement.

## Community Performances Foster Social Responsibility

This pedagogical experience revealed that performing radioteatro in rural high schools and nursing homes helped pre-service teachers bridge cultural gaps while strengthening their sense of social responsibility. These presentations allowed participants to become more aware of the social commitment that universities should have toward society as indicated in the following excerpt:

“In these contexts, people are usually very grateful for everything we can offer them, and we are willing to teach, help, and entertain with all our presentations. This can have a great impact on children in rural schools and may motivate them to learn a second language.” (Participant 3).

During the presentations, participants not only practiced their linguistic skills, but they also developed empathy and social responsibility; participant 3 made reference to this: “We can help and inspire many people, and that allows us to connect with them”. Thus, this pedagogical experience highlights how radioteatro serves as a transformative pedagogical tool, connecting academic learning with community engagement and reinforcing the role of language education in promoting social change (Freire, 2016; Velasquez Hoyos & Villegas López, 2024).

## Conclusions

This pedagogical experience demonstrates that radioteatro serves as a learning tool for language empowerment in foreign language learning. Since participants engaged in scriptwriting, vocal performance, and collaborative rehearsals, they developed stronger linguistic and communicative skills, increased confidence, creativity, and a stronger sense of agency in their language use. Additionally, the emotional and creative aspects of radioteatro fostered deeper emotional engagement which allowed participants to reinforce language skills and collaborative work.

The radioteatro presentations in rural schools and nursing homes allowed students to apply their language skills in real-world contexts where they connected with diverse audiences. Through these presentations, participants improved their linguistic confidence, developed empathy, and boosted a sense of social responsibility highlighting the importance of extending language learning beyond the classroom.

Finally, this experience highlights the value of collaborative learning in radioteatro. Participants co-created scripts, rehearsed together, and performed as a team, demonstrating that knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction (Vygotsky (1970 cited in McLeod, 2025)). For teacher education programs, this pedagogical experience suggests that collaborative, performance-based activities should be prioritized to prepare future educators for social transformation.

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## 20.

# Developing learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom

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### Abstract

The development of autonomy since childhood when learning a foreign language is a current topic and places the student as responsible for their own learning. This presentation has as main objective to investigate how the autonomy in foreign language acquisition can be thought within the perspectives of Vygotsky and the psychoanalysis of Freud and Lacan (1985), bringing examples of an 'autonomous classroom'. Firstly, the concept of autonomy was studied, mainly from the point of view of David Little (2017) and Benson (2013). They propose three pedagogical principles: learner involvement, learner reflection and appropriate use of the target language. A bibliographic study was developed, addressing foreign language teaching and learning with a focus on student autonomy, describing the autonomous classroom of Leni Dam (2017). Finally, there is a need for more studies on autonomy focusing on the student's peculiarities and on the way each one exercises control over their own learning, considering issues raised by the notion of the unconscious, more specifically by the subject's body. In this respect, the research indicates that both perspectives bring important contributions, pointing to the need for autonomy to be discussed through the psychoanalytic view. Finally, thinking about an autonomous classroom in a more informed way is still necessary.

**Keywords:** *Autonomy, English Language, Acquisition, Vygotsky, Psychoanalysis*

### Developing Learner Autonomy in the Foreign Language Classroom

Autonomy is "the capacity to take control over one's own learning" (Benson, 2013, p.58). The author chooses the word *control* as more open to empirical investigation, encompassing various dimensions of the learning process. Autonomy in foreign language learning has been studied since the 1980s, and other authors have proposed their own definitions.

Among these researchers are Leni Dam and David Little (2017). The former had a successful practical experience in 1984, using the communicative approach to teach English to children in the Danish equivalent of Brazilian primary school. David Little (2007), on the other hand, presents a more reflective body of work, based on Dam's experiences and drawing theoretical support from Vygotsky's socio-interactionism.

David Little (2007) proposes three pedagogical principles for the development of learner autonomy. The first is *learner empowerment*, which involves the student taking responsibility for their own learning, thereby gaining control over the learning process. The second is *learner reflection*, which encourages the student to think about their learning – for example, by evaluating strengths and areas for improvement. The third relates to *appropriate target language use*, i.e. the ability of students to use the language they are learning for communicative purposes.

Within the theme of autonomy, no authors were found who sought to examine it through the lens of psychoanalysis. However, Revuz (1998) offers important reflections on foreign language learning from a psychoanalytic perspective, which can be used to reflect on autonomy. According to the author, each person undergoes different experiences in language learning, leading to a new possibility of self-expression. This has significant implications for one's relationship with their mother tongue, among other aspects discussed in this study.

The aim of this literature review is, therefore, to investigate how autonomy in foreign language acquisition can be conceptualised within the perspectives of Vygotsky and the psychoanalysis of Freud and Lacan. We will also present Leni Dam's (1995) example of the autonomous classroom.

Studying and investigating this topic is important, as research suggests that English language learners in various contexts are reluctant to take control of their own learning (Little, 2007, p. 17), as they are used to the passive approach schools continue to adopt in the learning process – under the assumption that children are not yet ready to take on such responsibility. For many teachers (Benson, 2013, p. 120), the barriers to adopting practices that promote learner autonomy lie more in the difficulty of changing teaching and learning routines – already established both politically and socially – than in the learners' ability to develop autonomy.

Both perspectives discussed offer valuable contributions to the debate on autonomy in English language acquisition, despite a clear need for further studies from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. The dimension of “control” over one's own learning, as contained in Benson's (2013) definition of autonomy, may also be a concept worthy of further investigation in future research – especially within the field of psychoanalysis.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Benson (2013), autonomy is the capacity to take control of one's own learning. It is not a method, but rather the way in which the learner (the subject) approaches the learning process. Benson also seeks to establish which aspects of the process the learner should be able to control learning objectives, content and progress, the selection of methods and techniques, the monitoring of acquisition procedures, and the evaluation of learning.

Benson (2013) explains that he opts for the term “control” in his definition because it is more open to empirical investigation, unlike “responsibility” or “taking charge.” He further argues that it is neither necessary nor desirable to expand the definition of autonomy beyond this, as “control of learning” can take different forms across various dimensions of the learning process. Autonomy is thus a multidimensional capacity, which takes different shapes depending on the learner and the context in which it is developed.

Little (1991, p. 4) stresses that autonomy in language learning cannot be separated from autonomy in language use. For Little et al. (2017) autonomy is an essential pedagogical requirement, and successful language learning depends on the learner’s ability to act autonomously. The gradual development of target language proficiency is inseparable from the learner’s autonomy, which is seen not only as an individual but also as a collective capacity, stimulated through social and interactional processes between students and teachers.

For Little (2004, 2007), the theory of autonomy rests on three main pedagogical principles: “learner involvement,” “learner reflection,” and the “appropriate use of language.” These principles are applicable to formal education, although their implementation may vary depending on the context.

“Learner involvement” refers to taking responsibility for one’s own learning, with the teacher acting as a mediator of knowledge and peer interaction playing a vital role in the construction of learning. In other words, over the course of the programme, the teacher guides learners towards the centre of the learning process, encouraging them to choose content, evaluate their own progress, and select activities and materials collaboratively. However, Little (2007, p. 23) warns that this requires great skill on the teacher’s part to employ techniques and processes that will enable learners to optimise their learning from the very first day.

The second principle, “learner reflection”, involves the ability of learners to self-assess. This means that they must take responsibility for setting goals, choosing materials and activities, and recognising their strengths and weaknesses within the scope of what has been studied, so they can focus on improvement in the next phase. It differs from the first principle in being a deeper reflection on both the process and the content learned (Little, 2007).

These first two principles are interdependent, in that one cannot control one’s own learning without reflection, nor can one reflect meaningfully without exercising some degree of control (Little et al., 2017, p. 14). Moreover, these principles relate to the general development and exercise of autonomy and may be applied beyond the domain of foreign language acquisition, in any subject matter.

Finally, the third principle concerns the “appropriate use of language” (target language),

which demands that the teacher possess the skills to conduct classroom activities in such a way that students can use the language communicatively. In other words, if the aim of the learner is to acquire a foreign language for communicative purposes, it is more productive that the language be used as the principal medium through which learning occurs.

Little (2017, p. 14) clarifies that regardless of the second language acquisition theory one adopts, the communicative use of the language plays a central role in the development of communicative competence, since language acquisition is necessarily a dialogical process. Language input is rendered ineffective without interaction, and both written and spoken output are crucial, as they require deeper language processing and greater mental effort.

Drawing on classroom experience and observations of English language teachers, it is possible to agree with Little (2007, p. 25) when he states that “teachers often complain that it is impossible for students to use the target language to organise and (especially) reflect on their learning.” Nonetheless, despite this initial difficulty, Little argues that it is indeed possible to promote the use of the target language from the outset, through group work activities and by considering Vygotsky’s principles of interaction.

## **Discussion**

The confrontation between the two perspectives – the Vygotskian and the psychoanalytic – regarding autonomy, essentially reveals differences, insofar as the core concepts underpinning each framework are characterised by a radical divergence. According to Benson (2013, p. 73), there is considerable evidence suggesting that learners naturally exert control over their learning. However, this control is “something they exercise of their own accord”, without any specific training. Accepting the view that autonomy is a multidimensional capacity which manifests differently in each individual, it follows that autonomy must be built upon capacities that emerge naturally for most (if not all) learners in the foreign language classroom.

In psychoanalysis, on the other hand, the subject is of the unconscious, and this unconscious is “structured like a language” (Lacan, 1982), forming the central driving force of human action, and therefore impacting the issue of autonomy/control. From this perspective, although the subject may appear to be in control of their actions, there are moments in which signs emerge indicating a lack of such control. Thus, from this conception of the subject, the exercise of control over the dimensions proposed by Benson, as discussed above, would be driven by the unconscious.

## **The Autonomous Classroom**

Dam (1995), as reported by Little (2007), began developing a model of the autonomous classroom in 1984 with children at a Danish school who had different proficiency levels in English.

She used the communicative approach and, in just one year of work with these students, she enabled them to achieve a high level of fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy in English, being recognized as competent users of the language. In this context, Little (2007) highlights six key aspects of Dam's (1995) pedagogical approach, which he considered fundamental to her students' success: 1. use of the target language (English) from the very beginning by both teacher and students; 2. students' involvement in searching for activities, which were shared, discussed, analysed, and evaluated with the entire class; 3. each student set their own learning goals and chose activities, which were also discussed and evaluated in class; 4. goals were also defined collaboratively in small groups; 5. all students kept a learning notebook with lesson plans, projects, vocabulary lists, and texts they had written; 6. the teacher engaged students in regular evaluations of individual and class-wide progress.

In analysing Dam's approach, Little (2007) emphasizes that autonomy can also be developed in children, not only in adults, as her students clearly had control over their own learning. Additionally, it became clear to him that autonomy is not something students develop alone — it also involves interaction and collaboration. Thus, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory effectively explains Dam's approach and the successful development of learner autonomy in foreign language learning — in this case, English.

### **The role of the mother language**

Socio-interactionism conceives the mother tongue as something to be acquired outside the subject; that is, language is regarded as a tool that helps the child to solve problems and serves as one of the means through which the child relates to others. Psychoanalysis, in contrast, addresses a specific bond that the subject has with the mother tongue — the language of desire — the one that has woven their unconscious and constitutes their very being.

In the psychoanalytic perspective of Revuz (1998), the experience of learning a second language differs for everyone, giving rise to distinct strategies for approaching foreign language learning. The author suggests that these strategies — of proximity or distance in handling the various aspects of the foreign language (different phonetic systems and different ways of constructing meaning) are opposed along two axes:

(...) the greater or lesser autonomy of bodily learning in relation to intellectual control, and the greater or lesser acceptance of distance in relation to anchorage in the mother tongue. This distance, a source of anxiety for some and of pleasure for others, equally marks the encounter with the way in which the foreign language produces meaning. (Revuz, 1998, p. 222)

Thus, from this perspective, it may be said that the development of autonomy does not merely involve offering “choices” to students, but rather entails considering the particularities and

needs of each subject in the classroom. Learning a foreign language means opening up a new space for the subject's expression, as well as questioning the pre-existing relationship between the subject and their first language. In foreign language acquisition, the foreign language can be seen as impacting the unconscious relationship that the subject maintains with their mother tongue in two ways: in the different phonetic systems and the different ways of constructing meaning (Revuz, 1998). This stands for a new approach to foreign language acquisition, as it acknowledges that each learner brings with them a unique history with their mother tongue, which will in turn affect their approach to the foreign language.

It is possible, in a way, to identify a certain alignment – at least on the surface – between this view and that of Revuz (1998, p. 215), who states that the foreign language is “learned later and with reference to a first language, that of early childhood”, since Dam’s (1995) experience does not overlook the fact that one can only learn a foreign language insofar as one has already had access to language through the first language. In her experience, Dam promotes activities that allow for an inevitable encounter between the first and the second language, one that “brings to consciousness something of the very specific bond we maintain with our own language” (Revuz, 1998, p. 215).

Furthermore, when Dam (1995) uses translation activities that encourage students to speak about themselves, this echoes Revuz’s (1998) idea that the new way of naming things introduced by the foreign language may produce a sense of estrangement in the learner by presenting a new “cut-out of reality”. Revuz argues that this sense of estrangement in using the signifiers of the foreign language may represent a loss, a renewal and relativisation of the mother tongue, or even a space of freedom. Perhaps the range of choices and opportunities for reflection offered by Dam to her students turned the foreign language into a space of freedom and revealed new ways of seeing the world.

## **Conclusion**

This work began by discussing the concept of autonomy and the three pedagogical principles that underpin it. It has also discussed the dimension of control when developing learner autonomy. As Benson points out, further studies are needed on how each person exercises the different dimensions of control over their own learning—especially control over the object of learning, that is, the foreign language. In terms of control, the theory of autonomy in foreign language learning prioritizes the development of general skills for all students, often disregarding individual specificities.

One aspect mentioned within Benson’s dimension of control in autonomy that the learner, in exercising their autonomy, should be able to choose activities with their own goals for foreign

language learning in mind. Here, we see Vygotsky's conscious subject—capable of making choices, reasoning, and thinking—who controls their own learning and develops their own autonomy. As for the unconscious subject from psychoanalysis, further research in this area is still needed; hence, Revuz's proposal is worth recalling. The author suggests that the “self” who speaks a foreign language may approach language learning in different ways, and if the teacher keeps this in mind, they may find ways to help more students “break through” potential barriers in their learning process.

In the example by Dam that was presented, we observed a successful case of moving toward an autonomous classroom based on aspects of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. However, this work tried to offer a possible psychoanalytic view on the role of the mother tongue in foreign language learning. This is because Dam does not discard the mother tongue as an ally in the classroom, and according to Revuz, in psychoanalytic terms, the foreign language is learned with the mother tongue as a reference.

Finally, the relationship between the mother tongue and the foreign language gained special emphasis. This is because, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the mother tongue implicates the learner's body in its manifestations (rhythm, sounds, melody), highlighting it as a key element in foreign language learning. The body and its manifestations, however, are not considered in the Vygotskian line of thought. Still, this difference produces effects that could be developed in the classroom by seeing each student as subjects affected in different ways by their mother tongue.

Thus, we invite foreign language teachers to consider how autonomy could be reframed by the learner's bodily manifestations that escape the learner's control, from a psychoanalytic perspective. Another question for reflection would be regarding what effects might the issues raised by the learner's bodily manifestations—viewed from a psychoanalytic standpoint—have on studies that investigate the notion of autonomy in foreign language learning, particularly those within the Vygotskian framework, such as the work of Leni Dam. These questions point to a new path in the long journey of research into the issue of autonomy in foreign language learning.

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## 21.

# Self-care strategies in English classes for sixth graders to strengthen executive functioning skills at institución educativa la armonía in Mosquera

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### Abstract

This research refers to the development of executive functioning skills focusing on emotional regulation and self-regulation in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class using self-care strategies such as mood meter and mindfulness, at I.E La Armonía a public school, located in Mosquera, Cundinamarca. This research is in nature qualitative, and it is an action-research design with a total of 4 stages: Diagnosis, creation of 6 lessons plans, implementation, and analysis. A review of 35 articles from the literature revealed that it is feasible to focus on emotional regulation at an early age within an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context class as in the case of Suarez and Romero (2023); Guapacha (2022) and more. After nearly two years of research, the study focused on how self-care strategies, like mood meter and mindfulness, influenced emotional regulation and self-regulation in sixth-grade students at La Armonía School, leading to improvements in behavior, empathy, and decision-making. Additionally, the implementation of these strategies helped enhance students' confidence and oral English skills, as it fostered a supportive environment that encouraged emotional well-being and self-expression.

**Keywords:** *executive functioning skills; emotional development; emotions; self-regulation; EFL; self-care strategies; mindfulness; sixth-grade students; oral English skills; self-expression*

### Introduction

The present research refers to the development of executive skills in sixth grade focusing on Emotional Regulation and Self-regulation using the English language as a medium in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class. The medium includes strategies such as encouraging emotional expression in English by implementing mindfulness techniques, where specific emotional vocabulary is taught. In addition, providing constructive feedback in English, and encouraging creative activities and group discussions about emotions in English with a specific focus on observable improvements in communication might lead this research project to a sustainable formal project not only for the class but for other grades at the school. On the other hand, this research seeks to: first, analyze how the implementation of self-care strategies in English

class influences the regulation of emotions in sixth graders from La Armonía School, which is a school that is going through the process of becoming bilingual; second, gather in-depth insights into how these strategies could influence not only students' self-regulation but self-regulation for a whole community starting with the students, like a chain of knowledge about how to deal with emotions; third, identify improvements in student's oral skills in English.

The participants in this research were children aged between ten and thirteen years old. The school was selected for two reasons, first; the school is becoming bilingual for which students need to feel free and safe with the language, and the second reason is due to the difficulties and challenges that primary to secondary school face. The strategies include displaying posters with the vocabulary of emotions, conducting classes on how to process both comfortable and uncomfortable emotions in connection with teamwork, and incorporating mindfulness and breathing exercises. The strategies used in this study are:

- Moodmeter is a tool used to know how students feel during the class, it will have two important moments, after the class start and at the end.
- Mindfulness, to help them regulate their emotions in the classroom during their performance in the class. Also, mindfulness will help them to focus further on the class and in the moment, raising their confidence and as a result their speaking production feeling more comfortable speaking in a foreign language

To start the project, I carried out a diagnosis in a triangulated manner with three different agents in the school: students, the head/English teacher, and the counselor. For this purpose, I implemented interviews to check students' English levels and their feelings about the English class. I also employed observations to check their behavior during the classes to relate it to their emotional intelligence. Finally, I administered a Mesquite test which is a test that place children in hypothetical situations where they need to answer what they would do if... whose purpose was to place the students in hypothetical situations to measure their emotional intelligence.

In addition, this thesis aims to support and implement two important Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed in the agenda 2030. In the first instance, SDG number three is about health care and the motivation of well-being and SDG number four quality education. Proposing new strategies for the students and their learning process including SEL is one way to achieve quality.

### **Theoretical framework**

To understand better this research, I will provide a couple of definitions according to different authors which will lead the path to understanding better the background of this research.

## Self-care strategies

The term 'self-care'—defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) as “the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider” (p.1). Another definition more focused on my thesis is provided by Global Self-Care Federation (s.f) where they mention the importance of taking the reins of the way you feel and the way you interact with others. Also, self-care is described for Rudaz et al. (2017) as “self-initiated practices that enhance health and positive well-being” (p.4). All these definitions are helpful to build sort of a bridge about this research. Now that the definition of self-care is there. I will show four more definitions that are inside the definition of self-care.

## Mindfulness

When mindfulness is defined, many concepts appear, according to Sanivarapu (2016) mindfulness cultivates well-being to focus on the here and now, it is focused on the self besides the adversities that life can bring. Also, it combines paying attention and breathing in a particular way. Also, Garey (2023) states that the goal is to give enough distance from disturbing thoughts and emotions to be able to see them without reacting in a violent way.

## Mood-meter

As a tool in the classroom, and a self-care strategy Fuentes (2022) defines mood-meter as a helpful practice not only for the teacher but for students to better identify the emotions running in the classroom and therefore to regulate it properly. Also, Mood Meter, “is just a simple tool to help people keep track of and describe how they are feeling and learn strategies to manage the full range of emotions” (Heller, 2017, p.22).

## Executive Functioning Skills

When referring to these skills the best term is that “executive function encompasses cognitive abilities that enable us to hold information in mind in working memory, to inhibit highly automatic responses to stimulation, and to shift the focus of attention between related but distinct aspects of a given task” (Blair, 2017, p.3). Inside executive functioning skills we have a couple of more definitions that are important to have full perspective of this research.

## Emotional Regulation

When emotional regulation needs to be addressed, it is important to think about two crucial factors: The emotion that is being felt, and what people do with that emotion. As a result, it is essential to first get to know which emotions exist and the different ways they show up in the body. Second, the action plan will come across to start working on emotional regulation. “We use the term emotion regulation to refer to the variations in what a person can do depending on

different contexts” (Goldsmith & Davidson, 2004. p 391).

### **Self-regulation**

Self-regulation is defined for Montroy et al., (2014) as the deliberate use of skills to respond to demands of the environment in a contextually appropriate way and to achieve desired goals, it can be either in an academic context or in a personal one.

### **Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

The concept of emotional intelligence has gained great popularity in recent years. Most likely after the pandemic, when people realized the importance of mental health, thus, emotional intelligence is a pillar to building mental health, “when we talk about Emotional Intelligence (EI), we mean the ability to understand, use, and manage our own emotions in ways that reduce stress, help communicate effectively, empathize with other people, overcome challenges, and lessen conflict” (García-Bullé, 2022, para 3).

### **Socio Emotional Learning (SEL)**

Váradi (2022) states that teachers play a key role in modeling emotional intelligence, as addressing emotions in learning supports self-regulation, awareness, and healthy relationships.

### **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

The term of English as a Foreign Language is defined by Toprak-Yildiz (2022) as a language that is not the mother tongue, and it is not spoken in the country as an official language.

### **Speaking Skill English as a foreign language**

Speaking in English, according to Dueñas et al (2015), is the most important skill among all the four language skills to communicate well. Also, they mention that speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations and per se the reason why it is important to work on speaking production.

### **Methodology**

For this research, a qualitative approach will be implemented since it allows an understanding of the effects of a given phenomenon, in this specific case, how the implementation of self-care strategies could strengthen executive functioning skills at sixth grade from Institución Educativa La Armonía, in Mosquera. The reason why this approach was selected is because it involves uncontrolled study variables, which exist because research, especially in social sciences, deals with human behavior, emotions, and external influences that cannot always be isolated. Such as (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

It was decided to work with action research as it provides step-by-step the actions to be carried out to solve the problem of emotional intelligence using self-care strategies. According to Elliott (2007), Action Research is explored from a range of perspectives, related to both theory

and practice. The study was conducted at Institución Educativa La Armonía, a public school located in the urban area of Mosquera, Cundinamarca. Another important aspect to mention is the transition the school has been going through to become a bilingual school, which was one of the main reasons to start this study in this school. On the other hand, participants were sixth grade students, a total of 42 students participated in the study since the interventions were done during the English class, but for the research only 40 students were part of the research to analyze their progress, with 23 males and 17 females, ranging in age from 10 to 13 years old.

The study employed a triangulation approach, combining focus groups, the Mesquite test, and a logbook to comprehensively analyze the results. This method provided in-depth insights into participants' emotional regulation and speaking performance during English class. The focus groups, designed specifically for this study, included questions to verify their understanding of emotions and their perceptions about pedagogical interventions. Also, the Mesquite test was implemented during the diagnosis stage and was implemented again after the pedagogical interventions to check the before and after. Finally, students collected paperwork made in class to place it in a Logbook as evidence of their process.

### **Findings**

These results reinforce the importance of addressing emotional well-being within academic environments, supporting the notion that emotional regulation is closely linked to academic performance. The improvements noted in this study align with research by Rojas (2022), which emphasizes the importance of working on emotional regulation from an early age, in that case from fifth grade, although I decided to work it on sixth grade based on the needs of the school and the gap of emotional intelligence in 601 grade.

### **Conclusions**

After almost two years of research, from the beginning to the end, from planning the research project until it was applied, now I can answer the questions proposed at the beginning of this research. During this section, I will answer the questions and add information I consider important based on this topic as well as how this can be an addition to knowledge for the educational field.

I decided to use mood meter and mindfulness techniques, and therefore the question that came to my mind was how might the implementation of self-care strategies in the English class influence the regulation of emotions in sixth-grade children from La Armonía school? From the beginning, my students showed easy fights and lack of empathy in some situations, after the implementation my students showed improvements not only in their behavior but also in their decisions. Regarding self-regulation, students showed an understanding of taking ownership of

their emotions and managing uncomfortable feelings. For instance, during the lesson on strategies for handling emotions, they provided examples of different emotions and discussed healthy ways to cope with them.

I implemented self-care strategies aiming to boost their emotional intelligence using mood meter so they could learn about their emotions and how to manage them; as well as mindfulness using a mantra with affirmation for the day. After the implementation it was possible to show a good performance in how they managed their emotions related to their classmates and to themselves, this boosted their confidence while using English in the class, if they were too nervous to speak, they could use techniques that we practiced on class. Surprisingly, it is possible to create a healthy and comfortable environment to expect good results in speaking skills.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of emotional regulation and socio-emotional learning in the classroom, demonstrating how these factors contribute to a more positive learning environment, improved student well-being, and greater academic success. By integrating self-care strategies into English classes, students not only enhanced their emotional awareness but also developed skills that can support their long-term personal and academic growth. However, while the results indicate promising improvements, further research is necessary to explore the long-term impact of socio-emotional learning interventions.

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## 22.

# The impact of genre-based language education on the written English proficiency of bilingual deaf learners in Recife, Brazil

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### **Abstract:**

This research addresses the emerging area of third language education for deaf learners, a crucial yet underexplored topic following recent attention to additional language learning for this community (Moraes, 2015, 2018; Almeida, 2021, 2023, 2025). This research analyzes the impact of genre-based language education on the written English proficiency of bilingual (Brazilian Sign Language/Portuguese) deaf students in Recife, Brazil. Drawing on action research (Burns, 2015) with a qualitative approach (Triviños, 1987), the data were generated during my PhD. The theoretical framework integrates Bakhtin's (1986) genre theory, Grosjean's (2010) bilingualism perspectives, and insights from Moraes (2015, 2018), Almeida (2021, 2023, 2025), and Vygotsky (1981), among others. Findings indicate that deaf learners can successfully acquire written English when their linguistic needs are met. Specifically, Johnson's (2004) dialogic model of speech genres, alongside visual aids and translanguaging between Portuguese, English, and Brazilian Sign Language, proved beneficial in facilitating acquisition.

**Keywords:** *Writing Acquisition. English language. Deaf. Language education. Bilingualism.*

### **Introduction**

The landscape of deaf education has witnessed a significant shift in recent years, with increasing recognition of the importance of additional language learning for deaf individuals (Moraes, 2015, 2018; Almeida, 2021, 2023, 2025). While this growing body of research has illuminated the processes and possibilities of bilingualism, typically involving a signed 1 This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil (CAPES) – Finance Code 001. language and a written/spoken language, the subsequent frontier of third language education for deaf learners remains largely uncharted.

This paper ventures into this crucial yet underexplored territory, focusing on the potential of genre-based language education to foster written English proficiency among deaf students who are already bilingual in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) and Portuguese.

Situated in Recife, Brazil, this paper is an extract from my doctoral investigation and delves into

the application and impact of a genre-based approach tailored to the unique linguistic profiles of these learners. Employing an action research framework (Burns, 2015) with a qualitative lens (Triviños, 1987) and guided by the methodological principles of Johnson (2004) and Bardin (2011), this study analyzes the impact of genre-based language education on the written English proficiency of bilingual (Libras/Portuguese) deaf students in Recife, Brazil. For this end, apart from the introduction and references, it is divided into three parts: theoretical framework, methodology, and conclusions.

This research demonstrates that deaf learners, when provided with appropriate linguistic support and pedagogical strategies, can successfully acquire a third language, specifically written English. The findings highlight the efficacy of Johnson's (2004) dialogic model of speech genres, coupled with the strategic use of visual aids and the explicit exploration of translanguaging between Portuguese, English, and Libras, in facilitating this acquisition process.

### **Theoretical framework**

As Souza and Pereira (2021, p. 136) aptly point out, it is crucial for English language teachers "not to become complicit in a culture of domination, but to seek ways to foster, in their teaching practice, the students' agency within society". Subjectivities must be considered in the teaching and learning processes, as they significantly reflect the students' language acquisition. Indeed, "the subject's subjectivity is partially constructed by their social identity, as a reflection of the treatment received from others, they consider significant" (Souza & Pereira, 2021, p. 138).

In other words, the inputs and materials used in the classroom help to (re)construct and (re)signify student and teacher identities. Language acquisition is a complex endeavor; therefore, "various configurations, arrangements, and interventions can hinder or facilitate the process, but they do not exclusively determine it" (Souza, 2021, p. 129). Also, mediation is a vital element, as it enables a less solitary process of knowledge acquisition in which various individuals are involved and responsible for the outcomes (Barbosa et al., 2018).

As indicated by the Brazilian National Common Curriculum (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018), it is necessary to consider students' social reality to provide them with more meaningful learning experiences. My own experience corroborates Souza and Pereira's (2021, p. 136) observation when they state that "reflecting on education is a complex task, as such action involves the multidimensional complexities of the individuals who participate, simultaneously, in different societal contexts". Therefore, it is essential to consider the realities of these individuals so that we can provide them with a more meaningful education, and it would not be different for the deaf.

In the process of English acquisition by deaf individuals in Brazil, there are at least three languages present: Brazilian sign language, used for communication; Portuguese, preferably

in its written form; and English, a compulsory language for elementary and high school by the BNCC (Brasil, 2018).

In this process, translanguaging might emerge. Translanguaging refers to the pedagogical practice where multilingual learners strategically alternate between their languages to enhance understanding and expression within the same learning activity (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). It recognizes and leverages the learners' full linguistic repertoire as an integrated resource, rather than treating their languages as separate and compartmentalized systems (García & Li Wei, 2014). This approach can involve receiving input in one language and producing output in another, or even fluidly mixing languages to make meaning.

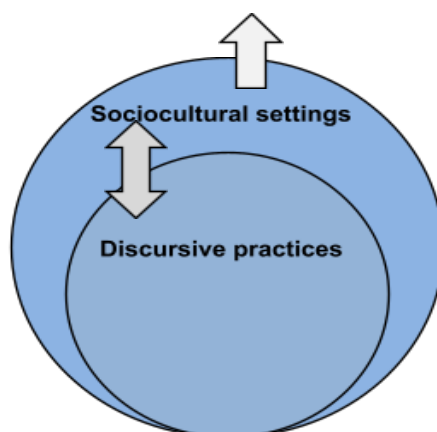
As Grosjean (2010, p. 143) points out, “it is well known that a first language that has been acquired normally, be it spoken or signed, will greatly enhance the acquisition and use of a second language”, which signals the positive impact of additional language acquisition for deaf individuals. Not only does Grosjean's (2010) observation dispel the notion held by some that Brazilian deaf individuals could not acquire languages beyond Libras and Portuguese, but it also shows that it is positive for these individuals.

Kupske (2018) notes that deaf students may transfer Libras parameters when learning Portuguese, and parameters from both Libras and Portuguese during the acquisition of English. For this reason, Kupske (2018) emphasizes the importance of professionals involved in this process to know the linguistic particularities of these students and their languages.

Moraes (2018, p. 156), in his doctoral dissertation, further specifies the moments in which he observed this linguistic transfer among deaf students: deaf students resorted more to Libras during the English language learning, mainly for the construction of meaning, which we believe is due to their greater proficiency in their L1 and the fact that they feel more comfortable in this language; they resorted to the Portuguese language for comparison between L2 and L3 due to the similarity of modality between them, in addition to them being "foreign" languages, to compensate for what they do not know in the English language.

Grosjean (2010) also suggests that the use of sign language in the classroom can be helpful in various situations, namely: to clarify doubts, explain activities, summarize texts and stories, provide metalinguistic explanations, etc. In this context, I believe in the dialogic model proposed by Johnson (2004) offers a promising avenue for teaching English to deaf students. Johnson (2004) suggests a new model of second language acquisition in which the interaction of all participants involved possesses privileges, status, and rights. Language acquisition becomes more democratic and uses the presuppositions of Vygotsky's (1981) sociocultural theory and Bakhtin's (1986) dialogism and heteroglossia as its praxeological basis.

Image 1 – Local second language ability



Source: Johnson (2004)

Johnson (2004) considers that individuality, intentionality, and socio-historical and cultural contexts are involved in cognitive development. Furthermore, she argues that individuals interpret realities differently, as they have been exposed to different contexts throughout their lives. This factor consequently affects their perceptions of the world and the social exchanges that occur within it.

By paying special attention to particularities rather than generalizing phenomena on a large scale, I believe this model (Johnson, 2004) can positively contribute to teaching English to deaf individuals. It was not developed with a specific focus on this population, yet research (Almeida, 2021, 2023) has shown this to be an interesting model for language acquisition since it considers language in its use. In this sense, the complex processes involved in language acquisition are not located in the mind but in dialogic relationships, social exchanges, and the different cultural contexts of individuals. And it is these social phenomena that produce and resignify language.

This conception of language as a social practice, which is constituted with and by subjects, is what I adopt in my study. With this said, I will discuss the methodology and some data generated during my doctoral research in the next sections.

### Methodology

Aiming to account for meanings, motives, beliefs, and values, the research is qualitative and follows the postulates of Triviños (1987). It is also action research, since, at the same time that it systematically investigates a given social situation, it helps to promote democratic changes, as well as collaborative participation (Burns, 2015).

The research was conducted in a public school in Recife, Brazil. The choice of this institution is justified by the presence of the English subject in its curriculum and the enrollment

of deaf students in its student body, constituting a propitious locus for the investigation of the proposed theme.

The participants consisted of three deaf students, regularly enrolled in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades of elementary school and the 1<sup>st</sup> year of high school. The inclusion criteria for the participants were: being users of Libras as their primary means of communication and being formally enrolled in the English language classes offered by the institution.

Following the ethical principles of research involving human beings, all participants and their legal guardians (when minors) signed a Consent Form, formalizing their voluntary authorization to participate in the study, with the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality.

Content Analysis (Bardin, 2011) was adopted to systematically analyze the textual and observational data. This methodology proved pertinent as it enables the organization and categorization of the empirical material collected, making a subsequent in-depth and interpretive analysis feasible. The choice of this approach is based on its ability to “seek to know what lies behind the words on which it focuses” (Bardin, 2011, p. 50), allowing the identification of patterns, meanings, and inferences relevant to the understanding of methodological possibilities in teaching written English to deaf students.

## **Discussion**

This section summarizes the analysis of the meetings held in the multifunctional resource room with the deaf students Roxo and Azul, focusing on the English language teaching through discourse genres (Bakhtin, 1986). Four meetings were carried out, each lasting between one hour and one hour and twenty minutes. Despite the limited number of sessions, the initial results point to the potential of using genres in teaching written English to deaf students.

The data analysis reveals the explicit engagement with three distinct genres within the English language workshops: self-introductions, forms, and profiles. The approach to each genre was tailored to the deaf students' linguistic background and evolving English proficiency, highlighting the pedagogical strategies employed to facilitate their understanding and production.

The initial exploration of self-introductions emerged organically from the students' curiosity about the instructor's role. While they demonstrated fluency in Libras self-introductions, the introduction of written English equivalents through a Jamboard Google's Jamboard is an interactive digital whiteboard that, collaboratively, allows users to interact with each other exploring visual aspects, writing and reading skills, creativity, etc.

The platform was discontinued on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. According to Decree No. 6,571/2008, a multifunctional resource room in Brazil is a specialized school setting equipped to offer Specialized Educational Assistance (SEA). It is designed to provide students with disabilities

with the resources they need to succeed. The complete analysis is available in Almeida (2023). activity exposed a lack of prior knowledge. The instruction followed a scaffolded approach, beginning with basic elements like "name" and progressively expanding to include phrases like "I am...". The analysis underscores the influence of the students' first language, Libras, and their second language, Portuguese, on their initial attempts at English self-introductions. For instance, Azul's recognition of "name" due to its cognate relationship with Portuguese "nome" illustrates translanguaging.

Furthermore, Roxo's initial residence description, mirroring Libras' object-subject-verb order, highlights the presence of linguistic transfer. The successful construction of basic self-introductions by the end of the initial sessions suggests the efficacy of visual aids, modeling, and explicit instruction in introducing this fundamental communicative genre.

The workshops later transitioned to the form genre. This genre presented a more complex set of linguistic and conceptual challenges. The students encountered difficulties with understanding the purpose and specific vocabulary associated with various fields in a form, such as "telephone number," "postcode," "first name," and "surname." The analysis emphasizes the necessity of collaborative explanations, often involving the Libras instructor, and using visual aids to bridge the gap between the students' existing knowledge and the conventions of English forms.

The protracted discussion surrounding "postcode," a concept unfamiliar to the students in both Portuguese and Libras, underscores the importance of addressing potential gaps in background knowledge alongside linguistic instruction. Similarly, the nuanced understanding of marital status options and the appropriate use of "single" in a formal context required careful explanation. The repeated revisiting of concepts like "surname" and "postcode" in subsequent sessions highlights the need for spaced repetition to aid retention.

Despite initial difficulties, the students ultimately demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the form genre, its functionalities, and its nuances, suggesting the effectiveness of patient, scaffolded instruction and the integration of translanguaging strategies in navigating this genre.

In addition to these primary genres, the analysis also touches upon the profile genre through a reading activity involving short texts describing individuals. This activity focused on identifying specific information such as names, age, nationality, and occupation. While not explicitly taught productively in these initial workshops, the students' engagement with these texts provided the linguistic features and organizational patterns common in profiles. The challenges encountered, such as distinguishing between first name and surname and understanding age expressed in written words, further underscore the need for explicit instruction on genre-specific

conventions and vocabulary.

Overall, the analysis of genre engagement within the workshops reveals a pedagogical approach that prioritizes accessibility for deaf learners by leveraging visual aids, translanguaging, and scaffolded instruction. The progression from the more personal and immediate genre of self-introduction to the more information-driven genres of forms and profiles demonstrates a thoughtful sequencing of learning tasks. The insights gained from the students' interactions with these genres provide valuable information for tailoring future English language instruction to the specific needs and learning styles of deaf individuals.

## Conclusions

According to Borges and Paiva (2011, p. 343), “as with any complex system, language is an open system, constantly incorporating new elements that lead to its ongoing change and self-organization; nothing within it is fixed”. With that in mind, although not determinant, I argue that a genre-based language education approach holds significant potential for fostering written English proficiency among deaf learners. The analysis of the initial workshops, focusing on the self-introduction, form, and profile genres, demonstrated that when pedagogical strategies are sensitive to the deaf learners' needs, they can successfully engage with and begin to produce more written materials in English.

My objective here was to investigate the impact of genre-based language education on the written English proficiency of these learners, which has been addressed by examining their interactions with specific genres and the pedagogical techniques employed. The findings indicate that Johnson's (2004) dialogic model, which emphasizes inclusive participation and consideration of individual and sociocultural contexts, provides a valuable framework for teaching English to deaf students. Coupled with the explicit exploration of translanguaging connections between Libras, Portuguese, and English, this approach facilitated initial acquisition within the studied genres.

This research underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the existing linguistic repertoires of deaf learners in third language acquisition. By adopting a genre-based approach that is attuned to their unique learning styles and linguistic backgrounds, educators can create more accessible and effective pathways for deaf students to develop written English proficiency, thereby expanding their communicative and educational opportunities.

Future research should continue to explore the application of genre-based pedagogy across a wider range of genres and with larger cohorts of deaf learners to further refine and validate these initial findings.

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## 23.

# Analyzing critical literacies at UNAL: exploring the discourse of welfare on the campus walls through a critical discourse analysis lens.

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### Abstract

Critical literacies play a significant role understanding institutional discourse within academic spaces. Previous research has examined how language serves as the means to establish, reproduce, and challenge power dynamics within the circulating texts in public spaces, but little attention has been given to the way students read, analyze, and critique the underlying discourses present in their daily interactions. This presentation revolves around the analysis of campus literacies reflecting university welfare policies in the framework of a written communication class for student-teachers. The project departed from mapping through Google My Maps different literacies and texts written by students at Universidad Nacional de Colombia regarding Bienestar Universitario. The study employed Critical Discourse Analysis following Van Dijk's (2015) model to unearth the subtle and hidden messages regarding students' concerns about the discourse of welfare within the campus. The findings highlighted a disconnection between institutional narratives on student well-being and students lived experiences. This lent support to the notion that critical literacies served as an effective approach to unveil institutional limitations, in which case they should be widely considered in discussions on educational policy and student well-being.

**Keywords:** critical literacies, critical discourse analysis, welfare discourse, students' literacies

### Introduction

Currently, universities are often perceived as educational institutions that not only shape students' academic and professional futures but also play a crucial role in their general well-being. Environments in these institutions are expected to be safe and ensure students' mental health with adequate support. This perspective has shaped the notion that well-being is a crucial matter in students' education. It contributes to students' wholesome education while advocating for a safe space for learners to develop personally, academically, and professionally. The common understanding concerning Universidad Nacional de Colombia (here after UNAL) might be that it is a space in which welfare of future professionals is a matter of concern. However, literacies

present on the campus evidence the perceived misrepresentation of such ideas by the university community.

One of the missions of UNAL is to foster the holistic development of students through different strategies developed by Bienestar Universitario<sup>1</sup>. This department seeks to ensure the well-being of students by addressing aspects such as mental health, academic support, and the quality of students' lives. However, the presence of texts on UNAL's walls evidences an unconformity with this department, showcasing the dissonance between the institution and students' experiences. These texts are examples of critical literacies, which in this context can be understood as the different ways students engage in multimodal writing, drawing, and/or multiple forms of communication within the campus. Their voices shed light on their concerns regarding the policies while claiming a platform to make public their disconformities with the overall management of the discourse of welfare.

Understanding literacy from a critical perspective (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1988; Luke, 2012; Medina et al., 2015; Sharkey, 2012) allowed us to analyze the multiple texts portrayed around the campus' walls as the academic community's voices in the form of written representations. Through this lens, we sought to traverse the critical reading of the multiplicity of texts embedded within the tapestry that constitute the campus' walls. The critical analysis of these literacies allowed a deeper understanding of the university dynamics, and the way students read and write about mental health and overall the welfare discourse at the university. By analyzing the messages and uncovering power relations inside the institution, we could identify a visible contrast between students' experiences at university and its stakeholders' discourses. This project aimed for a broader discussion of how language is used to convey ideologies and thoughts, also contributing to the visualization of academic dynamics around well-being and institutional management.

For this purpose, we aimed to answer the main question for this project: What perceptions of UNAL students about the strategies offered by Bienestar Universitario are reflected in the texts within the campus? Using Google My Maps<sup>2</sup> tools we identified written texts on the campus walls that reflected perceptions concerning Bienestar Universitario and university quality. Taking into consideration the objective and the limitations of this manuscript's length, we present the analysis of three literacies, which constituted rich information and seem distinctively purposeful to apply Van Dijk's model for Critical Discourse Analysis (Here after CDA). This text unfolds in different sections, helping us to identify the classification of the literacies, followed by the analysis of these discourses, and finally our reflections and conclusions about the implications of Bienestar Universitario that are represented in the literacies at the university.

## **Theoretical and Methodological Considerations**

This section depicts the main theoretical and methodological foundations within the development of the study. The section departs by describing succinctly our understanding of the role of literacy, the model of analysis employed following principles of CDA, and the steps followed within the classroom space that led this process.

### **Critical Literacy**

For years literacy had been understood as the mere act of mastering the skills of reading and writing. This perspective posed on literacy an instrumental dimension failing in recognizing the multiple layers of reading and writing that occur in individuals' daily lives (Luke, 2012). Conversely, a critical perspective to literacy grounded on the seminal works of Freire (1970) has boosted a renewed impetus towards approaching literacy from a critical outlook. This perspective allowed us to go beyond the skill-product dimension of reading and writing towards understanding the emancipatory and empowering nature of literacy (Luke, 2012). This understanding also considers the political axis reading and writing have within learning and teaching as well as the hegemonic and dominant discourses present in the texts we read and write in everyday life.

Not only did critical literacy served as the cornerstone to recognize that learners first read their worlds and then the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987), it also contributed as an approach to content for curriculum within the written communication classroom. The development of this project involved a joint effort between students and their teacher to map, read, and critically analyze the multiple texts portrayed on the campus walls. UNAL is a space where its walls have become canvases full of literacies that shape how knowledge, authority, and identity are built. These literacies become political acts that seek to shape their readers, while advocating for specific calls for actions from the university community. As students from the different programs navigate through campus they often encounter a rich linguistic landscape (Sayer, 2010) that constitutes a significant niche for pedagogical construction. The aforementioned perspectives exhibit the social nature of literacy and the multifaceted, fluid, and dynamic character of literacy practices (Street, 2014).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis within Van Dijk's Model: Theoretical Approximations**

In order to conduct the analysis, we employed principles of CDA, as a tool for examining how power and its abuse are produced and reproduced in discourses. Literacies portrayed in campus walls constitute texts loaded with particular intentions and aimed at specific audiences, therefore, we sought to understand the underlying and hidden perspectives within the campus' literacies. The latter reflects the critical dimension of discourse analysis. As Pardo (2012) cogently expresses, CDA constitutes a form of reflection concerning the sociocultural dimensions of

discourse and the critical position that the researcher assumes to unveil the social inequalities, the hierarchical, hegemonic, and dominant relationships that are produced, reproduced, and legitimated through discourse. Thus, CDA served a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it constituted the main lens to look at the students' written texts on campus, on the other hand, it served as the perspective to critically analyze the hidden dynamics of discourse.

Furthermore, Van Dijk defines CDA as “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (2015, p 466). This definition served as the ground to understand how discourses embedded in institutional settings, such as UNAL, can reinforce or challenge existing power dynamics. The different literacies selected are examples of how students engage with discourse, while creating discourse on their own.

In analyzing discourse following Van Dijk's (2015) model, we also acknowledged cognitive factors where language embedded within discourse serves as a powerful tool to shape how people perceive reality by manipulating minds through the selection of particular speech or writing. Van Dijk (2015) explains that discourse not only transmits information but also structures the mental models of people, influencing how they interpret the world. Through informational and discursive choices such as lexical choice, topic choice, and the use of metaphors, discourses are used to convey interests, mainly of dominant groups.

### **Methodological Considerations: Mapping, Reading, and Critically Analyzing**

To analyze the literacies, first, we engaged in mapping through the campus the multiple texts present on the walls. This involved a joint effort between a group of fourth-semester students in a written communication class. By employing Google My Maps, we were able to map multiple texts serving multiple intentions and loaded with different semantic constructions. For this study, we decided to focus on those literacies concerning students' expressions regarding Bienestar Universitario. However, we considered Bienestar Universitario not solely as the institutional organization in the form of the office, but as the overarching concept of students' well-being. The three main topics we categorized after an initial stage of analysis were: A criticism of Bienestar Universitario department services, mental health and institutional response, and finally, access to educational resources.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Through Van Dijk's model of analysis we understood that language is not neutral, it carries implicit meanings, shaping how we perceive and interpret information according to our context and that ultimately it becomes a tool for subtle control and cognitive manipulation. Furthermore, in this section we present our interpretation on possible target audience, implicit intentions, power

dynamics, and resistance perspectives reflected within the literacies. The literacies found at UNAL are representations of the minds of the academic community that belong to the institution, reflecting their concerns, criticisms, and perspectives on university life. The texts serve as a medium through which students engage in discourse, and share their demands. By analyzing them from our perspective as being part of the academic community of the institution, we interpret the power dynamics, ideologies, and issues embedded in language while understanding its potential for agentic resistance within the university setting.

Universidad Nacional de Colombia is a space where the voices of a wide range of communities are heard. The institution advocates critical thinking on issues, social inequalities, and disparities within everyday life. The sense of belonging in the academic community is powerful; this leads some students to find in walls a platform to share their voices in the form of written texts through graffiti. Following their need to communicate, they share experiences, complain about institutional problems, or seek union amongst the academic community against forms of oppression. The following lines depict each one of the pictures, the analysis following Van Dijk's model and our interpretation.

#### **Picture 1: A Critique to the Welfare Department**



*Note: Picture taken at Manuel Ancizar Building - UNAL Sede Bogotá*

This picture taken at Manuel Ancizar building facade exposes a question concerning the well-being of students in relation to the welfare department. It showcases the question: “¿A eso le llaman Bienestar Universitario?” that could be translated as “Is that what is referred to by Bienestar Universitario?”. It is a black graffiti written in Spanish which appears to be elaborated by a student. The phrase challenges the effectiveness of the department, highlighting a sense of dissatisfaction with an ironic tone. In connection to Van Dijk's model, the hidden intention of the author is to make the university community to question their thoughts about Bienestar Universitario, creating a cognitive dialogue to make them feel identified without them being conscious about it. Upon a first reading, the text conveys a critique, implying that the current conditions do not satisfy the

students' needs. The text emphasizes two power relations. On the one hand, there is a hidden dynamic where the author is the underdog because the department fails in providing adequate caring services to him/her. On the other hand, we can find the author as a topdog in relation to other university students as he/she promotes a message that influences students, making them think about their own experiences with Bienestar. Through irony and strategic wording, the graffiti critiques Bienestar Universitario system and shows the author's resistance to the institutional narrative.

### Picture 2: Modifications to the Welfare Information Text



*Note: Picture taken at Orlando Fals Borda building - UNAL Sede Bogotá*

The second picture for analysis taken at the building of the Sociology department, also known as Orlando Fals Borda building, is a modified text that serves as a critique to the department, making first a question and then a change of meaning that displays dissatisfaction. The picture exhibits the phrase “Información Bienestar”<sup>3</sup> written on a wall by the area where students can find information about the department. The word “Bienestar” is in blue, and it is visually split into two parts: “Bien” at the top and “Estar” at the bottom. Two modifications were made to this text: first, the addition of a question mark and the word “Estás” in black for creating the phrase “¿Estás bien” (which means “Are you well?”). The second modification was the insertion of the word “Mal” before “Estar” transforming it into “Malestar” (which translates as discomfort or distress). The changes adjust the intended meaning of the original text, shifting it from an informational sign to a sign of concern and also a criticism. From Van Dijk’s perspective, the literacy illustrates how linguistic changes and choices carry semantic weight. The author understands that language is not merely descriptive, but it actively constructs meaning, expresses attitudes, ideologies, and perspectives, and also shapes the audience’s mental structures.

Upon a first reading of this text, the message seemed confusing, as it was difficult to determine whether there was a single modification or two. However, after analyzing it, we concluded that there are two distinct messages from different authors, each allowing a different interpretation. The first modification introduces doubt and invites reflection, directly engaging

with the audience, which appears to be university students. It shows a concern regarding the wellness and probably the mental health of students, making a direct question for readers' introspection and also for them to consider their own state. The second modification changes completely the original text meaning, suggesting that rather than providing well-being, the institution may actually contribute to students' distress. By shifting one syllable, it takes a different connotation, turning the information message to a criticism and a challenge for the department because through the author's discourse Bienestar is not conveying its role for the community. Moreover, textual interventions are capable of influencing perceptions, appealing to different types of discourses and different interpretations.

The third photo taken also at the Manuel Ancizar building, illustrates one graffiti in black paint that reads “¿Bienestar?... No tenemos ni Agua.” Which translates as “Well-being?... We don't even have water.” The text is written informally, and it emphasizes urgency and frustration by employing irony. The graffiti does not use structured typography, instead, it looks spontaneous and aligns with protest discourse. The message critiques the university's failure to provide basic resources such as water, questioning the institution's claims of ensuring student well-being. By placing a rhetorical question at the beginning (¿Bienestar?), this graffiti creates a contrast between institutional discourse and lived student experiences. The direct nature of the text suggests it was written by a student or an individual directly affected by the issue. Van Dijk's CDA model (2015) helps us understand that the graffiti primarily benefits university students, including the author, as the message is giving visibility to his/her concerns. Regarding the implicit biases, the use of “we” (implied in “We don't even have water”) proposes a collective identity among students, reinforcing solidarity.

The graffiti does not offer a solution, but instead demands recognition of the problem to the institution and the welfare department.

### Picture 3: A Claiming for Water



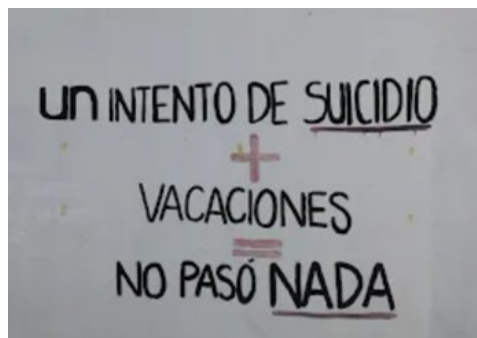
*Note: Picture taken at Manuel Ancizar Building - UNAL Sede Bogotá*

By reading the text, we understood an act of resistance and challenge to the narrative of

well-being that UNAL presents. It shows a critique and also a salient relation of power between the author, the students, and the institution. The author transmits emotion and a sense of proximity to students by choosing a specific language, making the message reliable for the audience.

As it creates a collective identity, we witness the power relation between the institution's directors, who are the dominant group, and the students, who are directly affected by the lack of water and the apparent bad resource management inside the university. The graffiti exposes the reality within the campus, where students do not feel connected with the idea of wellness, and they ask for their conformity by using UNAL walls.

#### Picture 4: A Reference to Suicide



*Note: Picture taken at Faculty of Veterinary medicine and Zootechnics & Logo UNAL*

The fourth picture was taken in the Veterinary and Zootechnics Faculty. The text, painted on a white wall, stands out because of the use of colors and dynamism. Black is the predominant color, but red is strategically used to highlight the most relevant information, making the text more dynamic and impactful by using red symbols. It shows a mathematical operation but uses the words: “UN INTENTO DE SUICIDIO + VACACIONES = NO PASÓ NADA.”<sup>4</sup> The whole text is written in capital letters to emphasize the significance of the problem. It should be noted that the difference in typography in the first word: “UN” was intended to refer to the public logo of UNAL (see figure 1). Also, the words “SUICIDIO” and “NADA” are underlined with a red line, a feature that accentuates the issue that the author addresses. The combination of the text format and the contrasts in colors make the message visually striking and also gives it an emotional

charge, drawing attention to mental health concerns inside the institution.

Van Dijk's model serves as a tool for examining the addressed topic and the biases of the author. The message critiques the lack of attention to mental health issues, particularly the students' attempts of suicide, which the author addresses as being ignored by the university authorities. From the author's perspective, suicide is equal to nothing for the institution, because him/her perceives a lack of institutional support and care for students facing psychological afflictions. The use of capital letters conveys clear frustration, and the author does not specify who attempted suicide, leaving it open to interpretation as either a personal experience or a tragic situation involving a student close to him/her. The literacy calls for recognition of mental health struggles within the student community and demands greater awareness from the administration. The mathematic operation suggests a systemic issue: the normalization of suicide attempts as isolated incidents that are quickly forgotten once academic breaks occur. By incorporating the UNAL logo through typography, the author directly implicates the university, implying that the institution fails to address the seriousness of the situation. The message is also engaging with students, making them reflect as they could feel unseen in their struggles. In general, the graffiti reflects a social issue that is treated as secondary in academic performance. Mental health is a serious topic to treat and talk about, but the student who elaborated the text broke the silence around this matter to give recognition and demand accountability from the university.

By analyzing these literacies, the discourses that are present at UNAL are clearer to our understanding. Throughout this process, we uncover messages students want to communicate by understanding the use of language and its hidden purposes. The intentional mention of Bienestar Universitario and the use of irony in most of the texts reflects students' frustration and their effort to expose structural deficiencies within the institution. In the following lines, we further explore the key findings of our analysis, discussing how discursive acts illustrate power imbalances and serve as a tool for resistance, making visible students' struggles.

## **Conclusions**

The analysis revealed how UNAL is a space where students share thoughts and messages through literacies in the walls, reflecting institutional discourses in contrast with students' lived experiences. By examining the texts through Van Dijk's model of CDA, we identify how students use capitalization, irony, and emotions to show dissatisfaction with Bienestar Universitario and the UNAL setting. The literacies go beyond academic writing, using walls as spaces of resistance where students challenge dominant narratives. Additionally, the presence of those messages demonstrates that students care about mental health and academic resources, but they feel the institution is not giving enough importance to these elements. The four critical literacies presented expose the

tension between the institutional authority and students, considering that university directors are perceived as the more powerful in relation to other academic members.

This project serves as a platform to make visible students' narratives, which address overlooked issues such as mental health and institutional negligence. The presence of texts related to suicide, frustration with inaccessible resources, and dissatisfaction with Bienestar Universitario services, suggest a disconnection in the university community, understanding it as the whole group of individuals within the institution (students, professors, administrators, etc.). Furthermore, while the welfare department is officially responsible for student well-being, the analyzed texts imply that its efforts are perceived as insufficient for students' actual needs. Beyond individual acts, our analysis revealed broader implications about literacies. Institutional communications have a standard language tied to formal discourse, while students usually use informal discourse in order to connect with the audience and challenge the settings. The fact that messages about mental health and academic support appear in unofficial discourses illustrates a failure to integrate student concerns into formal university policies. Recognizing these literacies, specifically, pushes the general community to rethink how mental health is being addressed at our university and why students keep doubting the management of the institution.

While our study provides an insight into critical literacies within the UNAL campus as forms of resistance and critique, it also revealed some gaps that future researchers could explore. On the one hand, many of the analyzed texts show frustration with systemic issues but do not specify particular topics beyond the general dissatisfaction. Although there are elements that can be inferred or interpreted, the lack of clarity in some literacies suggests that while students recognize the structural problem, they do not communicate the nature of the issues, making them remain covered or ambiguous. Future studies could focus on identifying recurrent themes and understanding the lack of language specifications in some literacies for bringing to light implicit students' concerns. On the other hand, we consider that the policies directly implicated with the department should be deeply analyzed. This project serves as a foundation for critical discourse analysis of the welfare department policies and communications, as we consider it necessary to understand what the formal literacies reproduced by Bienestar Universitario want to address, and what the hidden discourses that may be affecting students' perceptions about the department and the development of its commitments are. By extending this research, future studies could contribute to more inclusive policies that reflect students' actual needs rather than just administrative narratives.

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## 24.

# Narrative analysis of language and content-driven teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the implementation of CLIL in primary school

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### Abstract

To respond effectively to today's educational demands, it is essential to adopt emerging teaching methodologies that allow language learners to enhance language awareness but also built upon integrated learning that includes global citizenship competences such as cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Stakeholders in Colombia are embracing some of these emerging methodologies as they allow students to address critically current problematics while learning a foreign language. Thus, some private schools within the Colombian context, demonstrate a growing interest in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology in the last decade. CLIL is recognized as a dual-focused approach that uses an additional language to instruct content subjects, simultaneously promoting the mastering of content and Language. The current research aimed to identify the beliefs and attitudes of five primary school teachers about the implementation of CLIL. A Narrative inquiry was used to understand relevant information and capture individual experiences. The findings of this research, displays challenges in effective communication and uncovers a need for a better understanding and practice of translanguaging strategies. Besides challenges addressing contextual difficulties, cultural factors in textbooks and differences in mathematical knowledge between countries were revealed.

**Keywords:** *CLIL, bilingualism, translanguaging.*

### Introduction

In the evolving landscape of English as a Foreign Language, the imperative for a multicultural society and globalized competency has boosted language policies to adopt innovative language teaching methods and approaches. English, as a critical component of school curricula, fosters intercultural competence and equips students to engage in real-world interactions. Within this context, the emergence of CLIL as a 21st-Century innovation, intertwining content and language teaching. This dual-focused method not only enhances language proficiency but also facilitates content learning, helps students to gain confidence and raises motivation to learn a foreign language (Hidalgo and Ortega-Sánchez, 2023).

Integrating Content and language is an approach that has been adopted by different schools in the private sector in Colombia over the last decade, offering an opportunity to enhance bilingual education; in this matter, most of the bilingual private schools hire teachers with a strong proficiency in English and teachers with specialized knowledge in specific content areas that are also proficient in English (Truscott de Mejía et al, 2012). According to McDougald, J. and Pissarello, D. (2020), teachers encounter several challenges when they are immersed in teaching situations in which they are required to instruct their specific content subject in English or teach an English lesson using specific content subject. Therefore, the concern among different studies (Perez-Cañado, 2018; Villabona and Cenoz, 2022; McDougald 2019; Banegas et al, 2020) indicate how the implementation of CLIL is still a challenge since CLIL educators are unaware of the variety of its features and they are unsure of how to address the approach that is context-oriented.

As there seems to be little evidence of research during the last five years that illustrates an accurate portrayal of teacher's beliefs and attitudes towards CLIL, specifically in primary schools where the student's linguistic and scientific awareness is at its best, it is necessary to analyze the factual background of teachers who are currently instructing CLIL, what their perceptions are, and how they depict their experience of teaching using this approach. Therefore, the following study aimed to answer the following questions: *What are the beliefs found in primary school language-driven and content-driven teachers about the implementation of CLIL in their educational context? What implications for CLIL principles can be derived from these teachers' beliefs?*

### **Theoretical Framework**

Due to the need to adjust language education to the new requirements in the 21st century that prepare citizens for mobility and global competence, CLIL has been understood as a suitable practice that enhances these demands. Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010) define CLIL as a dual-focused educational approach that integrates an additional language in instructing content to master both language and content equally. Even though the initial idea of integrating content and knowledge is not newly discovered, some authors highlight its importance in Europe (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010; Perez-Cañado, 2016; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter, 2014), and some others show growing interest in South America (Banegas, 2021; McDougald, 2018; Curtis, 2012).

According to Coyle (2002), when discussing CLIL foundations, four principles must be considered. The initial principle emphasizes the importance of successful content or subject learning and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding specific to that discipline at the core of the learning process. The focus here is on teaching subjects while using and incorporating another language rather than teaching in a different language. The second principle

explores the role of language as a means for both communication and learning. Coyle (2002) suggests that language is acquired more effectively through authentic and unexpected experiences rather than formal language instruction. The third principle indicates how CLIL should cognitively challenge learners without discriminating against their abilities. In this sense, CLIL is relevant to the language learning objectives of the European Commission as it offers an environment that fosters the development of critical thinking skills, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), and cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP). Finally, the last principle refers to pluriculturality, which recognizes the interrelation of language, thinking, and culture. CLIL allows students to engage with alternative cultures by studying subjects in a different language, allowing a deeper understanding of different perspectives.

According to Coyle et al. (2010), there are four specific components of CLIL that are interrelated to understand CLIL: Content (subject matter), Communication (language learning and using), Cognition (learning and thinking processes), Culture (developing intercultural understanding and global citizenship). In this sense, there is a symbiosis that allows a relationship that exists to have a balance between content learning and language learning. Thus, Massler, Stotz, and Queisser (2014) distinguish between two types of CLIL: type A CLIL, which is used in subject lessons, and type B CLIL, which is integrated into language lessons. These categories closely correspond to Met's (1999) differentiation of the "content-driven" and "language-driven" extremes on the continuum. As CLIL programs can be categorized into two types: content-driven and language-driven, it is not a matter of determining which type is superior but rather ensuring that there is clarity regarding the program's objectives and expected outcomes, based on their contexts as they can significantly impact the overall effectiveness of the program (Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

When implementing CLIL, some research has suggested that the appropriate use of L1 (mother tongue) in CLIL classes offers a myriad of benefits, and the inclusion of translanguaging practices allows multilingual learners to have a better output in the target language (Karabassova and San Isidro, 2023; Isidro, X. and Lasagabaster, D., 2019). The concept of translanguaging involves an understanding of how diverse modes including gestures, bodies, and lives contribute to the meaning-making process during communication (García and Otheguy, 2019). Some of the benefits expressed by Creese and Blackledge (2010) about translanguaging in bilingual environments refer to the advantages of using codeswitching in education. Their findings indicated that codeswitching could promote inclusivity, encourage active participation, and enhance comprehension among students.

## Methodology

A narrative inquiry was used to understand relevant information and capture individual experiences provided by in-service CLIL teachers in primary school. As indicated by Spector-Mersel (2011), narratives are characterized by being expressed in various forms such as spoken or written texts, told sequentially by a narrator (rather than as question-and-answer exchanges). Czarniawska (2004) also defines it as a particular form of qualitative research where the narrative is seen as a verbal or written account of an event/action or series of events/actions connected in chronological order. Consequently, Riessman (2008) defines the narrative as a description of events connected in a sequence and includes spoken, written, or visual components. For the purposes of the study, the data gathered was taken into a process of triangulation and categorization in order to ensure the reliability of the information collected and analyzed.

Five in-service teachers from different private bilingual schools were chosen based on the following criteria: English Language teachers instructing non-English subjects and content-area teachers delivering core subjects in English. The five in-service teachers hold different types of education. Three English Language teachers hold bachelor's degree in modern languages and two content-area teachers hold a bachelor's degree in Math Education who claimed to have a level of English Language ranging from B2 to C1 according to their statements. To enhance and support the issues presented in the research project, there were various instruments to collect information from the participants, given the qualitative nature of the study: questionnaire, interview, and a class diary.

At the initial stage of data gathering, the five participants received a questionnaire with the specification of three sections: the first one had the finality of gathering general information from the participants such as gender, age, and professional degree since it was important to classify and categorize the information subsequently. The second part of the questionnaire was aimed at collecting information about participants' specific information about CLIL: Years of experience and content subjects taught along with their experience. A structured interview was applied to all participants, it afforded participants the opportunity to contemplate deeply and offer accurate responses to the questions, encouraging a profound reflection on their practices and contextual gaps considering the inquiry's focus. A class diary template was given to all participants aiming to provide information regarding the strategies used for three content lessons that they planned and delivered focused on the same topic. Following, participants narrated a written reflection about the development of the class focusing on the strategies that were successful and the ones that did not turn out as expected when planning the classes.

## Findings

The results are discussed by categories drawn on by what was found on the different sections of the data collection tools.

### CLIL teacher's background (training and experience)

All teachers in the study received some training in CLIL previously by attending conferences, taking academic courses, or self-directed learning, which means that they looked out information on websites or academic papers in an independent way to enhance their understanding of CLIL. This reveals the intention of teachers to expand their knowledge and professional development in this area. Interestingly, while language teachers' experts were eager to participate, content teachers' experts were unsure about participating in the study expressing a lack of confidence on the topic. Besides, even teachers did not have wide experience in the field, they showed great motivation to learn about CLIL. It was found that math is the most common subject to be taught among the interviewed teachers.

### Teachers' beliefs on CLIL in its implementation

The decision to instruct using the CLIL approach responds to different reasons. First, there were some training opportunities provided by the private institution that teachers were currently working at or where they had worked in the past (bilingual private schools or IB schools with international curriculum) reported as the first contact with the approach. It was noted that math teachers in this study, who hold a bachelor's degree in math, also studied English language in addition to their regular curriculum. This shows that teachers have consciously tried to advance in their professional development, expecting better job prospects in the future. It also indicates that CLIL is gaining popularity among both content-focused and language-focused teachers, and there is an understanding of the significance of this methodology in promoting bilingualism. This depicts an invitation to university programs for initial teacher training in specific content areas in Colombia need to give significance to the use of English for instructing the content covered in the professional program.

According to the teachers' statements, they face several challenges when implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), particularly in effective communication and conveying meaning on specific topics. It is crucial for them that students have a clear understanding of the concepts, so they employ various strategies depending on the context. Additionally, the teachers mentioned that certain cultural factors in the Colombian context need to be adequately addressed in the textbooks used for their specific content areas. For instance, mathematical knowledge from countries like the USA differs from that taught in Spanish-speaking countries, including the metric system, units of measurement, and procedures. These statements

align with the *second and fourth principles of CLIL* suggested by Coyle (2002), which emphasize the role of language in communication, which is acquired more effectively through authentic and unexpected experiences rather than formal language instruction. Also, it refers to effective communication, which is crucial for the interplay between language, thinking, and culture, enabling a deeper understanding of diverse cultural perspectives (Coyle, 2002).

One of the challenges also mentioned pertains to the contextual difficulties in Colombian classrooms, such as large class sizes and varying levels of English proficiency among students. Here, it is an issue affecting not only public schools but also private bilingual contexts. This reflects on the current state of bilingualism in Colombia and highlights the challenges identified by research in teaching not only English but also core subjects in English. This information is vital for determining the most effective bilingual approach to adopt in Colombian classrooms and their benefits depending on each situation. Another significant challenge in implementing CLIL is related to the additional time required for class preparation. Understanding how teachers integrate content and language during this preparation process is essential. This statement reflects that although there may be sufficient professional development opportunities available for CLIL teachers, either through bilingual school training or by personal choice, teachers still need help trespassing CLIL theory into practical application in their teaching contexts.

Regarding balancing content and language, teachers emphasized the significance of language tools in teaching various subject areas. They highlighted the importance of acknowledging that students are simultaneously learning the content and the language at the same time. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to motivate students and provide them with sufficient input to ensure their comprehension of the concepts. Teacher 3 also emphasized the necessity of learning new words and expressions in the target language to effectively convey meaning when teaching content and use previous knowledge and experiences from the world. The statements mentioned are consistent with the connection between the Language Triptych, as depicted by Coyle et al. (2010), which emphasizes the role of communication in facilitating effective learning in L2 environments. Based on teachers' narratives, communication is crucial for the implementation of successful CLIL practices, as outlined in the theory of CLIL referred to as the language of learning, which is the language used during the learning process and is vital for comprehending and expressing subject matter, including key phrases, expressions, vocabulary, and subject-specific language.

In line with scaffolding principles, Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 emphasized the importance of building upon prior knowledge and experiences to enhance language proficiency and support students' strengths. These ideas are aligned with the concept of scaffolding to gradually reduce

teacher support as students become more independent and skilled, ultimately withdrawing scaffolding completely. Teacher 4 and Teacher 5, who are content-driven teachers, described specific strategies to balance integrating both concepts. Accordingly, they used a Pictionary, word banks, and real-life examples, using English to present ideas and results to clarify math methods.

The strategies reported to enhance knowledge comprehension include visual aids or technology, gestures, embodiment, thinking routines, workshops, and concrete material, which were mentioned to support the learning process highly. It is essential to note the flexibility of CLIL, which enables teachers to use various strategies to promote critical thinking and apply the knowledge being taught.

Regarding the use of L1, four out of five teachers stated that they have used L1 at different levels; some have used it to enhance critical thinking and content understanding, while others used it to catch students' attention and clarify important information. These strategies are associated with the use of *translanguaging* strategies as they allow multilingual learners to have better output in the target language (Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023) since codeswitching in specific and structured moments can promote inclusivity, encourage active participation, and enhance comprehension among students (Arthur & Martin, 2006). It is important to mention that content-driven teachers expressed that switching to L1 was the last strategy they used when balancing content and language. This exhibits that there needs to be more understanding regarding the benefits of using translanguaging strategies appropriately in the classroom, especially by content-driven teachers.

### **CLIL practices in light of its principles**

The class diary presented information on the practices of teachers based on their personal experiences. It is evident that the teachers chose a range of subjects, such as Science, Social Studies, and Maths, to reflect on their experiences with CLIL. The activities varied in terms of resources, materials, and strategies, depending on the level and subject content. According to the teachers' narratives, some activities were successful in achieving the lesson's objectives, and students enjoyed participating in group activities and those that required concrete materials. However, teachers mentioned facing challenges, like excessive use of L1 by students during socialization, the need to reinforce subject-specific vocabulary, and the requirement for more practice on certain topics. One participant also highlighted that transitioning from a concrete context to the writing process can be complex and requires more practice. According to the teachers, while using concrete materials is enjoyable for students, mastering mathematical concepts, theories, and methods takes more time and practice.

According to the narratives displayed on the class diary it was also found that CLIL offers teachers and students the possibility to practice and implement knowledge that is used in their daily life within their communities, this allows students to keep motivated with the content they were learning while acquiring the language as well. The teachers' comments align with Coyle's (2015) 4C's Framework, which emphasizes the integration of content that encompasses important societal aspects such as global citizenship, sustainability, and community development. It is important to recognize that content cannot be isolated but rather should be seen as an essential component of cognitive development and the promotion of intercultural understanding.

It was also noticed how teachers had used different strategies in their classes to promote critical thinking and data analysis by using thinking routines, surveys, charts, and concrete material to understand topics in context. According to their statements, students have excellent ideas when they face challenges and try to solve them; however, they take longer to express their ideas in the target language, so sometimes they leave students to express those interesting ideas in L1 and continue with the class in English. As mentioned previously, using L1 is not restricted to CLIL settings. Teachers, especially language-driven teachers, knew how to properly use translanguaging strategies in their classroom to make students understand the topics and to use and enhance critical knowledge. However, they also mentioned that sometimes it is hard to balance the L1 usage especially when they have to socialize and ask questions in collaborative group activities.

The practices' narratives also allowed us to notice a slight difference in how content and language-driven teachers instruct their classes and use CLIL components. In this sense, the narratives of the content-driven teachers were more structured in terms of explaining the mathematical concepts and integrating the language isolated by practicing writing sentences with the vocabulary they have practiced in L2. In turn, content-driven teachers arranged specific language learning strategies in their classes, such as word banks and pictionaries. Though these strategies are helpful, they need to integrate the language and content since they isolate the linguistic component to one part of the class. Subsequently, content-driven teachers agreed that writing skills need to be improved when describing the processes that they have made with concrete material and that it is still hard to follow step-by-step instructions to construct mathematical knowledge in L2. In fact, it is important to mention Villabona and Cenoz (2022) who highlighted a clear distinction between content-driven and language-driven teachers, attributing this division to the prioritization of either language or content in most teacher education programs. They argue that content teachers often prioritize content over language integration, leading to a lack of adequate integration as expected.

## Conclusions

This study aimed to find out the beliefs and attitudes of Primary school second language-driven and content-driven teachers about the implementation of CLIL in their educational context. The results emphasize the need for a better understanding of the benefits of translanguaging strategies, effective communication strategies, and the well-balanced integration of content and language components in CLIL practices. In regard to the beliefs found in the narrative inquiry, for the participants, the motivation to adopt CLIL relies on opportunities provided by private institutions, especially bilingual and IB schools; furthermore, content teachers consciously studied the English language to enhance professional development. Regarding the challenges reported by the participants, the information shows that teachers face challenges in effective communication when conveying meaning on specific content topics, and they also address contextual difficulties such as different levels of proficiency and number of students per classroom. Likewise, cultural factors in textbooks and differences in mathematical knowledge between countries were revealed.

As to the balance between language and content, teachers believe that language tools and motivating students to enhance comprehension are extremely important in CLIL settings. Moreover, it is relevant for teachers to identify and use appropriate strategies including building upon prior knowledge, using real-life examples, and employing various teaching visual and technology aids. The use of L1 was found to be a useful tool if used in a structured way, where teachers used L1 not just as a code-switching tool in the class to enhance comprehension, but it was used to enhance critical thinking by letting students express thoughtful ideas when language was a limit. In this sense, most teachers used L1 at different levels to enhance critical thinking and content understanding. It was also revealed that Content-driven teachers tended to employ switching to L1 as the last resource to be used when balancing content and language, while Language-driven teachers manage appropriately translanguaging strategies to support learning and critical thinking.

Now, regarding the implications for CLIL principles, it was found that content-driven teachers are required to improve the integration of language and content to achieve a balance between these two components. This indicates a need for expanded opportunities to implement Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) practices, based on the theoretical underpinnings provided during their professional development. Essentially, it has been noticed that even content-driven teachers have reported to have CLIL training expressed in short courses, conferences or master classes provided by either the school they have worked for or taken autonomously, still there is a need to improve the practical components the training they have received, guided by CLIL experts, in order to enhance the practical aspects of CLIL methodology.

Likewise, it is also important to foster collaboration between content-driven and language-driven teachers, to be able to integrate a holistic view of the methodology that incorporates both linguistic and conceptual aspects.

As for implications regarding the implementation of CLIL based on what was found in the teachers' narratives, it highlighted the importance of supporting content-driven teachers as they are still missing practical solid components of the principles in their practices, which raises questions about what educational institutions can do to tackle this situation and support the collaboration between content-driven and language-driven and what actions can be made to fill in the gap to be either content or language teacher and balance its components.

Some directions for further research implicate the understanding of contextual factors that influence the preference of language-driven teachers to participate in CLIL programs in bilingual schools in Colombia, despite the literature suggesting that the most common type of CLIL teachers are content-experts. In the same vein, it seems crucial to dive into the long-term impact of CLIL on Bilingualism in Colombia since it is a quite new approach being implemented, especially in private bilingual schools; it could be relevant to conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of CLIL on student's bilingual proficiency and academic achievements. Additionally, it seems necessary to conduct studies that compare the outcomes of various CLIL practices to identify the best practices for diverse subject areas.

Identifying the pedagogical implications and suggesting research directions can improve the understanding and implementation of CLIL in educational settings in Colombia. Educators and researchers can contribute to the continuous improvement of bilingual education in Colombia and improve the development of effective teaching methodologies by addressing the challenges, promoting collaboration, and investigating the nuances of CLIL or other bilingual practices.

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## 25.

# Bilingual education and critical pedagogies relatedness to latin american local realities

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### Abstract

This research suggests working together (mutually) with eight English language teachers in four Latin American countries. It is also necessary to mention that research highlights identifying the suitable/contextual practices in language teaching and learning. The process of carrying on this study is based on Language Teacher Education and is focused on a Dialogue between (shared) ELT (English Language Teaching) practices in Latin America.

This paper handles constructs about Critical Pedagogies (Freire, 1987; Giroux, 2020; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 2016; Kincheloe, 2005; Pennycook, 1990) as brings together issues of cultural language in education, cultural emancipation aspects, social liberation in the academic community, among other ones.

Critical Pedagogy in bilingualism landscapes constitutes a distinct imagination of society, allowing us to think and create the conditions for a different social power, as well as a diverse condition, both of knowledge and existence (Walsh, 2009. p.31). Then, this text emphasizes the "other practices" of Latin American English Language teachers, as well as evidence of social transformations in/outside their classes and puts on the table the countering oppressive discourses that emerge in EFL-Bilingual teaching/learning environments.

**Key Words:** *Bilingual Education, Critical Pedagogies, Latin América, Language Education, ELT Educators.*

### Introduction

This research goes into depth about a topic that has not been explored as heavily before; it deals with the mix of diverse topics in which the researcher works/lives as an English Language teacher, researcher, and person at the same time. The purpose of this research is to contribute to successful and relevant on the Latin American community.

This on-going research states an idea about working together (mutually) with six English language teachers in three Latin-American countries. It is also necessary to mention that research on language acquisition and learning was traditionally conducted (sometimes in collaboration with language teachers) and reflected their research traditions, using experimental, ethnographic, discourse, or interactional analysis (Chaudron 1988), often to identify “*the suitable/contextual*

*practices* in language teaching or learning. The process of executing this is based on Language Teacher Education and is focused on a Dialogue between (shared) ELT practices in Latin América.

The focus will be Critical Pedagogies as it brings together issues of teaching practices in the ELT field. Critical Pedagogy (C.P) is a concept and reality that worries us and emphasizes the importance of exchanges and mutual learning between cultures/teaching practices; it implies that they are not static but change over time based on interactions with other practices. According to Giroux (2003), it provides the theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy, a teaching approach with a strong agenda for change grounded in the idea that society and education are inextricably linked.

Also, C.P from the ELT perspective has given an option to think “different” or “out of the frame”; it means that the English as a Foreign Language (EFL), classes are teaching from a local and challenging way, in which the teacher not just offer a class as a traditional way, nevertheless, they prepare their student for confronting socio-political conditions in daily life. Additionally, ELT critical pedagogy has been criticized for propagating students by encouraging a specific political narrative (Burbules and Berk 1999; Mejía 2004).

Even though certain EFL teachers may try to maintain objectivity, interactions both within and outside of the classroom may discreetly express to student particular social views, personal preferences, and understandings of power dynamics. Since the ELT field is socially produced and represents the interests of specific individuals or groups that are frequently in positions of power, this viewpoint argues that it is ideological, political, and "interested," much like all knowledge (Canagarajah 2008; Pennycook 1989).

I have been able to identify from my professional experience that education in Latin American countries has been permeated by American/British hegemony. In fact, in the EFL classes a standardized paradigm could be evident which is unique, monolithic, and universal. I could analyze that Latin-American EFL teachers give lessons and are adapting teaching perspectives from the North or West. It has been a rewarded process, where EFL teachers handle or practice in their daily practices with students.

A relevant core will be focused during the implementation of this study, which is socio-cultural oriented. The idea is to find options for and from the communities. Related to this, Menezes and Duboc (2021) did a critical analysis about the *The falling Sky: words of a Yanomami shaman*, co-authored by Kopenawa and Albert (2013) where they mentioned that a performative decolonial praxis attempts to help language teacher educators and researchers become attentive to socially-just-oriented educational agendas that claim to be culturally sensitive, whereas, in fact, they

may be serving the purposes of a still prevailing colonial project. P.876.

This research stands within a critical/reflexive paradigm where a representative role is played in questioning the linearity of historical views on the ELT field. In turn, this study proposes inquiry in three countries (Chile, Brazil, and Colombia) where six EFL teachers will share their life experiences, realities, uncertainties/options (In relation of their pedagogical practices of EFL); thus, the process establishes a commitment to conflictive dialogue between cultures, contexts, and mutual understanding of the subjects.

The following are the given research question/objectives that have been implemented during the path of reflection.

### **Research question**

What are the Critical Pedagogy issues that make difficult or facilitate the teaching practices of Latin America ELT Educators

### **Research Objectives**

- To promote mutual understanding among ELT Latin-American Educators about local pedagogical practices.
- To question the universality of ELT traditional methods through dialogues, conversations, and contextual realities.
- To reflect upon the methods of ELT Educators' local strategies through self-awareness, respect, and honesty.

### **Background and Concepts**

This part of the paper focuses on previous research/studies and concepts closely related to the C.P within relational views on pedagogical practices in Latin American ELT contexts. The following titles are defined as important elements during the implementation of this research.

### **Teacher Education (EFL perspective)**

Drawing on language teacher education, Pennycook (2004) persuaded teachers to: “take into account our students' embodied stories of learning and teaching, the memories, pains, and desires that have been written on their educated bodies.” (p. 333). This is not only an epistemological question, but also an ontological and political one: if life stories are not brought to the foreground within language teacher education, the “local” perspective, that is, own/grounded knowledge, cannot be cultivated.

Teacher education in languages moves through memory and life stories that are linked to the generation of knowledge (Wang, et al., 2011; Motha, 2012). The teachers' own experience within their knowledge, the generation within language teaching; and thinking consciously and deliberately about how identities are constructed through discourses and interactions inside and

outside the classroom.

In this study, it is relevant to talk about this concept since the dynamics of language teacher education imply an incomparable space to support the understanding of how teaching-learning processes are intertwined, as well as how identities are read, located, and understood.

Another aspect highlighting this concept is the community participation in language teacher education that challenges notions of teachers' prior beliefs and identities that go beyond the classroom (Varghese et al., 2005) and experiences as students (Johnson, 2009). One way, then, to improve good practices in language teacher education in this research is to reduce the distance between the content of teacher training and their personal lives, integrating their daily practices, their desires, and their life stories which relate the particularities offered locally and internationally.

Teacher Education in the EFL environment represents a way to reflect upon pedagogical practices, critical overviews inside and outside the classroom, and the traditional/normalized strategies teachers have used for a long time.

### **Bilingual Education and Critical Pedagogy in the ELT field**

ELT and bilingual education have become more and more integrated into critical pedagogy. English's socio-historical reality, that is, its colonial past (Pennycook 1998, 2004) and neo-colonial present, which takes shape in comparatively complex forms of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 2009)—is acknowledged in a reflective turn. The content and use of published teaching materials (Gray 2013), the development of post-method pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu 2006), teacher identity in official educational discourse (Guerrero 2010), inclusivity (e.g. McClure 2010), ELT and neoliberalism (Block, et.al 2012), and critical teacher education (ibid.) are some of the topics that different authors have addressed with critical views of ELT/Bilingualism.

At the same time, there is no secret about the neoliberalist overview in the C.P perspectives. A "neoliberal concern of [teaching and] learning English" (Kubota, 2014, p. 13) for economic reasons and as a language of "university corporations" (Piller & Cho, 2013) has still entangled itself with the practices of CP in ELT in the current neoliberal culture. Regarding the previous, it is worthy to mention that Bilingualism and the ELT field have held up a structure over competition and market productions; then, this research explores the dynamics under these constructs and highlighting options about Bilingual Education and Critical Pedagogies relatedness to Latin American local realities.

### **Methodology**

This research is conceived as a narrative/biographical inquiry. In education, narrative inquiry can explore the experiences of teachers and students in the classroom, reflecting on teaching practices, learning processes, and educational outcomes. The study focuses on the events

of the educators who transit through the critical views on pedagogical practices in Latin American ELT contexts and how the EFL Educators influence them positively or negatively by identifying life stories, mutual reflections, and uncertainties when interacting between the communities and with the social dynamics that come into play in these relationships.

According to Clandinin & Caine (2008), narrative research is based on Dewey's (1997) theory of experience, which emphasizes interaction and continuity of situations. In this way, the proposed study addresses not only the participants' experiences with the research but also how their interactions with other individuals and the critical moments in which they face the influence of their pedagogical practices.

The goal of narrative research is the interpretation and understanding of the meaning of a phenomenon through the narration of lived experiences, trying to account for the complexities and gaps of their stories according to context and times. Narrative research is also characterized by the search for horizontality between the participant and the researcher since the quality and quantity of the data lie in a good relationship with and between them. The researcher seeks to have an ethical view of the phenomenon by immersing themselves in the lives of the participants, listening to their stories, and reliving them with them as they navigate their experiences.

Likewise, the narrative component requires that researchers remain attentive to ethical tensions, obligations, and responsibilities in their relationships with participants. For this, informed consent, and the guarantee of voluntariness in participation, confidentiality, and anonymity are established, as in all research.

## **Participants**

In this study, it is intended to have these participants within some relevant information:

- Six ELT Educators in Latin American countries. Countries: Brazil, Chile and Colombia
- Characteristics of the ELT Educators: In-service teachers with at least 5 years of pedagogical experience
- ELT Educators can teach their classes in diverse contexts such as rural settings, public/private schools, universities and/or giving EFL classes in different institutions.
- Two ELT Educators from private schools in Santiago (Chile), two ELT Educators from a public university in Paraná (Brazil), and two ELT educators who work in rural schools (Colombia).

In the same way, I strive for a just and equitable selection of participants, ensuring that no individual is unfairly excluded, in line with the principles of justice and no harm. To maintain the integrity and ethics of the research, the members of it were committed to transparent and responsible management of the information collected in different moments and processes

(gathering, systematization, analysis, and processing of data).

### **Ways of reflecting and discussing**

From a positivistic standpoint, I thought of some instruments to implement in this research. However, as a researcher and educator, my main concern was about a human and authentic way to reflect and discuss among the ELT Educators. The following were considered as possibilities to promote mutual understanding about real/usual pedagogical practices as well as understanding the methods and several ELT Educators' local strategies:

### **Relatos/Life Stories**

There are informal conversations between ELT Educators; in fact, we used to propose different talks when working in schools, universities, and others. This way of reflection deals with the stories of ELT Educators who need to be heard and analyzed.

The life stories of the ELT Educators in Latin America defined and differentiated us from others, so we played a role in identity construction. Within these stories, there were contradictions, tensions, and ambivalence.

By using life stories in this research, I decided to analytically explore on account of the pedagogical practices of the ELT Educators or an aspect of their lives. The ELT Educators' life stories corresponded to the enunciation -written or oral - by a narrator of one's own life or part of it. It was necessary to include important facts in their life stories.

In these life stories I learned to see the ELT educators' realities in their pedagogical practices, feelings when giving a lesson (English Language), achievements, and disappointments during implementation curriculum/lesson plans, others, and more which was recognized for the analysis of this study.

### **Conflictual Dialogues and Mutual perspectives**

Another way of reflecting and discussing at the time of carrying on this study deals with dialogues and mutual interactions among ELT Educators in Latin-América. I proposed an environment of reflection, respect, honesty, and curiosity. To get a mutual learning was something challenging in this research; however, the idea related to emerging cultural interactions between the countries, three contexts and three ways of perceiving the EFL pedagogical strategies. I tend to say that these dialogues cause conflicts.

For many authors, conflict is one of the most important aspects of collective learning (Gadotti,et.al 1995). For example, "education presupposes a transformation, and there is no kind of peaceful transformation" (Gadotti, 1995:29). "Pedagogy of conflict" does not seek to hide the conflict, but rather to face it, to uncover and use it as a source of learning, because it is through conflict that the dialectic aspects of reality, the contradictions and the spaces of resistance become

evident.

Moreover, Boaventura de Souza (1996) pointed out that the emancipatory educational project holds much more responsibility. We must, on the one hand, correctly define the naturalness of cultural conflict and, on the other, invent devices that facilitate communication (p.558). In this order, this research investigated a more equal, more just relationship between ELT educators that allowed us to learn about the world in an edifying, emancipatory and critical way. p. 562

In general, this study found out a possibility of having conversations among the participants involved. It was expected to dig into conflicts, dialogues, opposite / commonalities, and mutual perspectives at the time of reflecting upon teaching English language practices.

Also, to have a visual picture of this research; here is the outline of the research (Image 1), including general overviews about what the research would like to do:

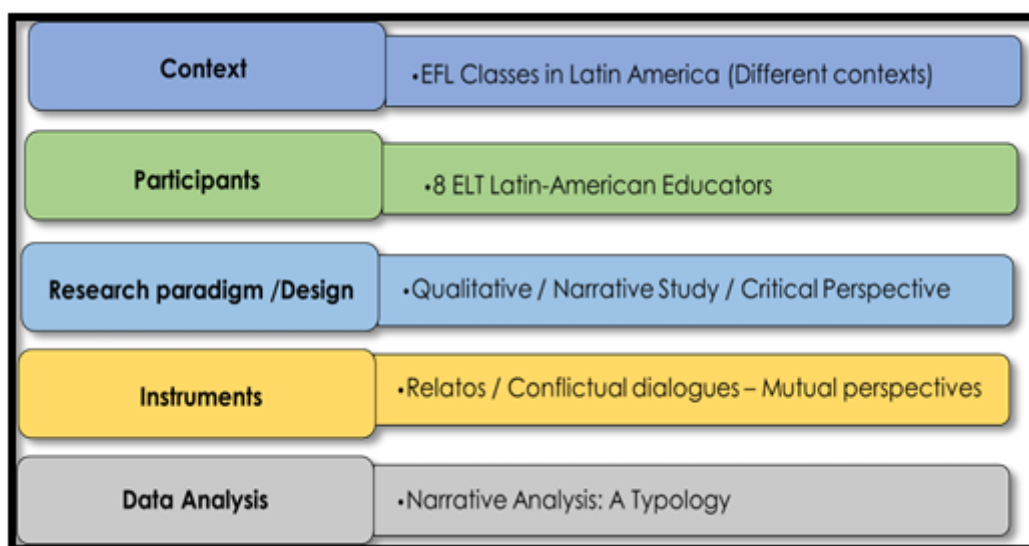


Image 1. Research Proposal outline. (Own elaboration)

## Findings / Results

The analysis focuses on the narrative thematization of EFL teachers' life stories. Based on these reflections, some emerging categories pop up from the analysis presented. Each section handles narratives excerpts from EFL teachers in Latin America.

### The Legacy and the Perception of "Good English"

From a critical perspective, the idea of "Good English" has been problematized; Davies (2008); however, it is a common dynamic in the field, as teachers find themselves pointed out regarding our language proficiency, in addition to other collocations such as fluency, pronunciation, and even the "way" of speaking English.

As a result, this first category challenges us to reexamine how we use language and what it

means in society. Exploring in-depth the reality that EFL instructors find in their day-to-day work with relation to the legacy and perception of "Good English" therefore becomes necessary from a critical stance.

The following passage illustrates how the need of using "Good English" is permeated in an EFL class/teaching practice.

"...So, the students tested my English to see if I was actually 'good at it'; it's not ok, since I realized my English sounds basic, but in fact I only learned English at the university when I was studying. However, in my actual practice I currently exchange students, and they speak about their likes/cultures...I try to speak well, and it gives me confidence on what I am doing whether I am a good teacher and a 'good English speaker...I knew I was being tested and that they were trying to test my English knowledge..." Mari' life story, Private school, Brazil. September 2024.

This situation has led the teacher to reflect on the preconceived ideas of her students about what it means to know English and the figure of a native speaker.

The teacher is taking advantage of the presence of exchange students to generate a class discussion about the notion of "native English speaker" and the idea of "good English", while also exploring new cultures. The conversation with students reveals notions, often influenced by the ideal of native speaking, that students have about mastering English. The previous offers an opportunity to reflect and deconstruct these ideas in class, for this, the narrative underlies the continuing nature of learning and adaptation into the teaching profession. Mari's experience offers a valuable perspective on the challenges and strategies of an English language teacher, as well as on the dynamics of perception and confidence in the language classroom.

### **Countering oppressive discourses and fostering hope in/outside classroom**

A significant consideration is the impact that "all the narratives that are meant to keep us depressed" have on students. The educator is inspired to educate "so that people have hope" because she recognizes in his students the same difficulties that he went through in public school. The next excerpt evidences a situation where Jane argues about the notion of hearing students to be "fine" in an English language class.

"This situation happened a while ago, when I was still an undergraduate student, learning how to become a teacher. Back then, I was working in the program of initiation to teaching at my university, so I would plan and develop classes in a public school nearby, under the supervision of the teacher responsible for the group of students. Because I had been a public-school student, I saw myself a lot in them and thought of all discourses that are meant to keep us down and to keep the world going: we're not good enough, the university is not for people like us, there is no future for us etc"

Jane' life story, public university, Brazil. November 2024.

The teacher is inspired to educate "so that people have hope" because she perceives in her students the same circumstances that she went through in public school. To help a student overcome the idea that "I'm not good enough" or "I can't do it," an important narrated event is employed to demonstrate that despite internal or external doubts, the task can be performed.

EFL lessons tend to include inappropriate language that is aimed at a group or person based on natural characteristics (including gender, ethnicity, or religion) and may harm the stability of society. Consequently, this category highlights how crucial it is to adopt a positive and empathic discourse that fits with the important dynamics that are studied in the classroom.

### **Empowering students to question “normalization”**

The main goal of teaching, according to the participant, is for people to "use language to question what is considered normal." This is typical of classrooms where people are trying to problematize a rigid structure with conventional aspects indicating a colonial system and where critical consciousness is emphasized.

It may be addressed by looking at the following part of Ariel's teaching experience. In one of my experiences, one of students, probably moved by such discourses, didn't want to complete the assignments, not even to try them, because she said she didn't know English and would not be able to do it. I started to help her out, show possible ways to do it, and eventually she tried. A few minutes later, she called me to say, very proudly, that she had completed the entire activity.

I don't know if this experience marked me so much because I was beginning as a teacher or because I saw myself in those students, but I was remembering that to remind myself of why I teach: so people hope and use language to question what is considered normal.

Ariel' life story, public-rural school, Colombia. August 2024.

It is acknowledged that the role of the teacher goes beyond mere information transfer; it aims to foster in students the critical ability to examine and question practices or assumptions.

The development of students' critical thinking, creativity, flexibility, and adaptation is therefore prioritized by critical pedagogies in bilingual education scenarios. Students' ability to learn about other viewpoints, challenge facts, and come up with creative solutions to issues may be limited by a rigid structure. Thus, this reflection relates to the role of the teacher in class, seeing the need to "try to exist differently" and address this influence in his/her teaching practice.

### **Discussion / Conclusion**

Critical pedagogies provide a transformational stance in English classrooms that transcends beyond the teaching of language. It highlights social equality, critical reflection on how knowledge is constructed, and fostering student autonomy. Using English as a vehicle for world

inquiry, students discuss issues such as social justice, power, and inequality.

Thus, this reflection (essay) allows us to examine the possibilities in which Critical Pedagogies and Bilingual Education may be used to address realities of Latin America. It analyses the different perspectives of EFL teachers in their methods of teaching, but it also underlines the importance of relevant aspects such as, The Legacy and the Perception of "Good English"; Countering oppressive discourses and fostering hope in/outside classroom; and Empowering students to question the "normalization". All of this is supported through conflictual dialogues with and from the participants.

Finally, the objective in this text is to talk about how EFL teaching initiatives help students develop critical thinking skills by persuading them to challenge current standards and principles; promote an emphasis on student autonomy: In bilingualism situations, students are empowered to make choices for their own education and growth. Also, a priority on social justice is discussed, addressing prejudice and social inequity both within and outside of the classroom. Although the relationship between Critical Pedagogies and English language teaching/bilingualism is close, it has not yet been thoroughly investigated; this includes, of course, the experiences of teachers, the everyday events that students encounter, and the dedication of the entire educational community to take diversity, positionality, and unique/contextual approaches into consideration.

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## 26.

# Chatgpt as a peer correction tool for language learners

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### Introduction

Having the chance to observe a coworker is such an enriching experience because not only does it provide the opportunity to see how other teachers work, but it also makes you reflect on your teaching practices. Observing a colleague is always a good source of new ideas for your own lessons. As teachers, we get to a point in which the classes and activities become repetitive and less original. Nevertheless, observing other teachers refreshes our creativity. That way, we can either take the observed teacher's activities as examples to our lesson's needs. On the other hand, it is interesting to see how different teachers like to emphasize different skills of the class based on their personalities.

Another important point is that observing how another person works gets you to reflect on how you are managing your classes. According to Ahmed, et al. (2018), "several studies suggest that the Peer Observation (PO) may be used as a developmental tool rather than an evaluative activity. The observer can decide the goals of the PO in order to receive meaningful feedback" (p. 74). Although it is common to judge other teachers when observing their classes, it is also a good way to analyze the way you are handling your own lessons. In fact, some questions may emerge: Do we have the same challenges? What are we doing to overcome them? What is the teacher doing right that we are not? Additionally, being observed cannot be out of the picture since it provides another person's perspective on how your classes are being managed.

Overall, it can be said that doing peer-observation is a good practice that we as teachers should do more often. First, it makes us have a different perspective of teaching and it is a good way to reflect on our own teaching practices and look for ways to improve them.

### Why is it Important to Carry out a Systematization?

There is no question that it is relevant to carry out a systematization because it is necessary to organize and structure the findings of the observed challenges in a clear and logical way so that other people who are interested in the same issue can understand, retain, and even duplicate the information more easily. Thus, future additions to the research can be included without necessarily going through the same processes mentioned in this paper.

### Phase 1 – Identification of the teaching practice

This phase will present relevant information about where the systematization took place,

the observed lessons, the identified challenge and the teaching practice that will be used to overcome the challenge. Additionally, this phase will show in a very detailed manner what happened in the observed classes and how a tech-tool was implemented.

This systematization was carried out at the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano in Cali (CCCA). The CCCA is a non-profit foundation and a Binational Center officially recognized by the Embassy of the United States in Bogota. It has provided English language education and promoted culture since 1954.

The original observation was specifically done in the north branch on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. A Pre-Independent 2 class was observed in order to identify some possible teaching challenges that teacher Nicole Andrea Reyes was facing in her lessons. It was noticed that her lesson lacked the use of technological resources; the only one used was the television. On the other hand, Teacher Talking Time (TTT) was present more than it should be due to the lack of some students' participation and contribution to the lesson.

### **Identification of the Teaching Practice**

Based on the observations mentioned above, it was important to identify which teaching practice would be used to overcome the challenges that teacher Nicole was facing. So, it was concluded that the most suitable teaching practice for these issues was peer correction. Peer correction was chosen because it provides students with the opportunity to analyze their peers' mistakes and correct them. As a result, students will be given more chances to participate and have speaking time in the lesson. It is important to point out that the teacher's help is still relevant when it comes to providing corrections to the students. The objective of this teaching strategy is to increase Student Speaking Time in class by fostering peer correction with the help of ChatGPT.

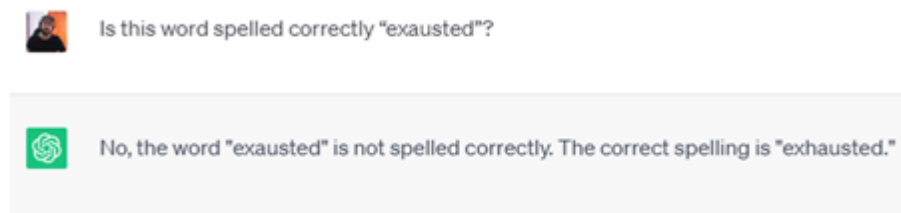
ChatGPT is a language model AI that uses complex learning algorithms to understand and generate human-like language. It can answer questions, generate text, and carry out different language tasks. One way ChatGPT could be used for peer-correction in an English class is by having students enter their written work into the AI, which would then generate feedback on grammar, punctuation, syntax, and vocabulary usage. This feedback could be used by students to help each other identify and correct errors they aren't sure about in their speaking, spelling or writing, so that they can improve their English usage. Additionally, ChatGPT could be used to provide suggestions for sentence structures or word choices, helping students to expand their vocabulary and improve their level overall.

### **Class 1 - Vocabulary:**

Peer correction would be implemented when brainstorming. The teacher would

brainstorm vocabulary regarding the class topic and have students write it down on the board. If there were spelling mistakes, students would have to correct them by their understanding and in case they did not know what the corrections were, ChatGPT could be used to double-check on misspelled words. Students should type the following questions or similar ones in order to get the best results possible: *What's wrong with this word's spelling "word"? Is this word spelled correctly "word"? What's the correct spelling for this word "word"? See image 1. ChatGPT sample.*

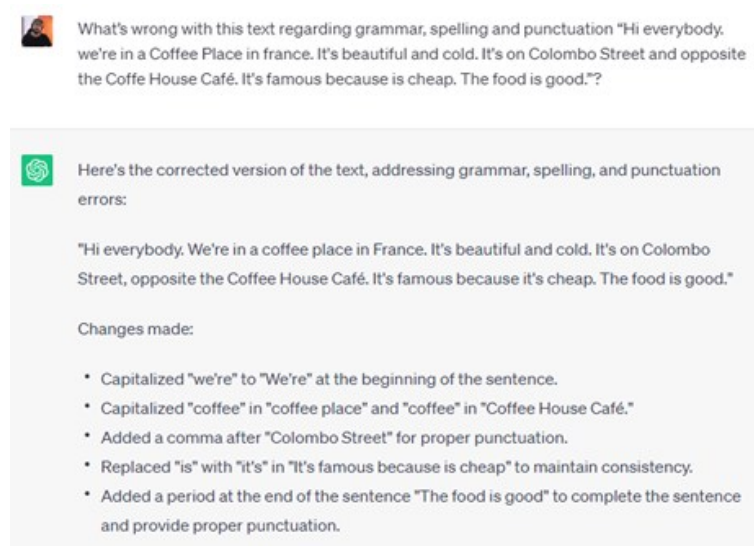
Image 1. ChatGPT sample.



### Class 2 - Writing:

Peer correction would be used for checking written texts. The teacher would have students write a short paragraph related to the main topic of the class in Google Docs. Once they were done, students would have to check their peers' work, as much as they could. The feedback was to be provided orally. ChatGPT could be used to check grammar, cohesion, and spelling that students are not certain about. Students should type the following questions or similar ones in order to get the best results possible: *Can you check this text in terms of grammar, spelling, and punctuation "text"? What's wrong with this text regarding grammar, spelling and punctuation "text"? Image 2. ChatGPT sample.*

Image 2. ChatGPT sample.

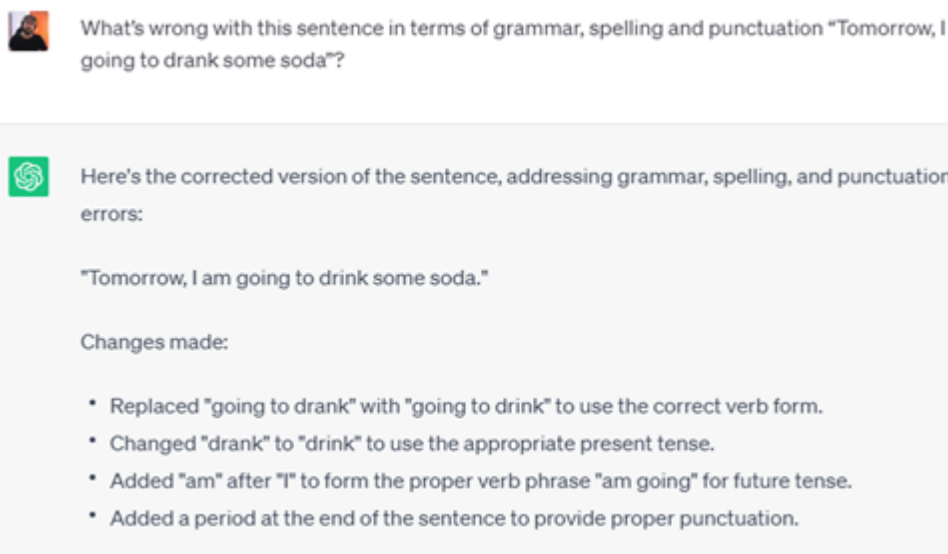


### Class 3 - Speaking

Peer correction would be applied for correcting oral production in roleplays. The teacher

would have students roleplay a conversation about the topic addressed in the lesson. Students should take notes of mistakes they caught and then make corrections orally. The teacher could also write some mistakes on the board. ChatGPT could be used to correct sentences that students were not sure about. Students should input the following questions or similar ones in order to get the best results possible: *What's wrong with this sentence in terms of grammar, spelling and punctuation "sentence"?* Image 3. ChatGPT sample.

### Image 3. ChatGPT sample.



The systematization of teaching challenges and the identification of suitable teaching practices, such as peer correction, can help overcome these challenges. In this particular case, ChatGPT can be a helpful tool to foster peer correction and increase Student Speaking Time. By implementing peer correction in different class activities, students can boost their confidence, have more opportunities to participate, and improve their English usage.

### Phase 2 – Establishing the objective and axes of the systematization project.

In this section, we will explore three key perspectives: the teacher's viewpoint on Teacher Talking Time (TTT) during correction sessions, the amount of Student Talking Time (STT) during peer correction activities, and the efficacy of using ChatGPT as a technological tool to mitigate TTT. Additionally, research into each axis helps us gain a comprehensive understanding of how these factors cross and influence language learning outcomes.

#### Systematization objective

The objective of this systematization is to evaluate the findings of lowering Teacher Talking Time and increasing Student Talking Time using student peer-correction with the help of ChatGPT in Nicole's Pre-Independent class.

## Axes

Axis 1 - Teacher's perspective: The amount of TTT when making corrections:

Axis 2 - Student's perspective: The amount of STT when making peer corrections.

Axis 3 - Tech Tool's perspective: Effectiveness of ChatGPT to reduce TTT.

## Phase 3 – Reconstruction of the teaching practice

The role of a teacher in the language learning process is varied, with one relevant aspect being the correction of students' language mistakes. Effective correction strategies applied by students can greatly impact their language learning. In this section, we dive into the dynamics of TTT during peer correction within the context of utilizing ChatGPT as a tool for language improvement. Thus, a narrative description of what happened, focusing on each axis, in each session is shown below.

### Axis 1 - Teacher: The amount of TTT when making corrections.

#### Session 1 - Vocabulary

In this session, the teacher took an important amount of time during the first part of the class to explain how ChatGPT was going to be used as a peer-correction tool. As this went along, students took a while signing up and asking the teacher questions on how to do it. Once everything was set up, she had students brainstorm vocabulary about recycling. She paired students up and they were provided with a marker to write the vocabulary on the board. They were expected to make spelling mistakes, nevertheless, when the activity was taking place, it was noticed that there were no mistakes from the students. Therefore, the teacher misspelled two words on the board on purpose in such a way that students could use the technological tool to make the necessary spelling corrections. At the end, one word was not corrected properly by ChatGPT due to the lack of context, so the teacher had to intervene and correct it.

#### Session 2 - Writing

Session 2 took place in the Multimedia Room. Students were assigned a writing activity based on the same topic, which was recycling, seen in the prior session. In addition, the teacher explained to the students in a very detailed manner the assignment which involved writing an email requesting a product they had purchased. For this activity, they used a shared Google Doc. Once they were done writing their emails, they had to check a classmate's work by using ChatGPT. To sum up, they had to copy the text and paste it in ChatGPT using the following questions in ChatGPT: *Can you check this text in terms of grammar, spelling, and punctuation "text"? What's wrong with this text regarding grammar, spelling and punctuation "text"?* After the explanation of the activity was given, the teacher did not have to make any interventions or corrections whatsoever.

### Session 3 - Speaking

To begin with, the teacher took some time going over the instructions on how to create a roleplay conversation in their notebooks, following the vocabulary and topic seen in class. After that, the teacher went over the activity again and gave them time to memorize the script. Finally, she had students role-play the dialogues in front of the class. The other students had to take notes of the mistakes they noticed during the role-play. Also, the teacher could take part in this activity by taking her own notes. Once the role-plays were done, the students listed the mistakes they caught on the board. Later, they used ChatGPT to correct them. However, since no context was given to ChatGPT, it corrected some sentences in the wrong way. Once again, the teacher had to intervene and make corrections.

### Axis 2 - Student: The amount of STT when making peer corrections.

#### Session 1

During this session students were given the instructions to write a few words regarding recycling, when implementing this activity they shared ideas with each other for some time. As the observation started, students brainstormed vocabulary about recycling. Students were provided with a marker to write the vocabulary on the board. They were expected to make spelling mistakes; nevertheless, there were none. So, the teacher misspelled two words on the board on purpose so that students could use the technological tool. The two words were “foum” as in “foam” and “aluminum” as in “aluminium.” Once students were done, they used ChatGPT to correct the spelling of the words. They asked the following questions: *What’s wrong with this word’s spelling “word”? Is this word spelled correctly “word”? What’s the correct spelling for this word “word”?* However, they came across one limitation. Since no context was provided before the questions, ChatGPT was not as accurate as expected. Although it corrected “aluminum” properly, it did not correct “foum” right, and instead it showed it as “forum.” That was when the teacher’s help was necessary, and she had to make the correction.

#### Session 2

During this session, students had to write an essay about recycling; the topic addressed in the prior session. Additionally, students were able to check each other's work and notice the mistakes they had and how the tool provided a different path to their writing skills. And finally, when the assignment was done, the teacher was able to receive feedback from them and let them share what they had written as a wrap up activity. This feedback could include insights into the students' understanding of the topic, their writing abilities, and any areas where they may need additional support or instruction.

### Session 3

During this session students were able to use ChatGPT as a way to provide assessment to their classmates in a role play activity to enhance their speaking skills using the vocabulary seen in class. First, they had to prepare their conversation in pairs and later be ready to present as a role play in front of the class. As each student came up to the class and presented, the teacher only had to call them to stand, and the student had to do most of the work by taking notes and listening. Soon after, the students were given the opportunity to write down on the board the list of words and phrases that needed fixing, and later they had to look them up in ChatGPT and provide the assessment to their classmates. At the end, they were provided with some suggestions on the way they did assessments and finally finished the activity.

### Axis 3 - Tech Tool: Effectiveness of ChatGPT to reduce TTT.

#### Session 1

In this session, ChatGPT was used to correct words related to recycling that students had brainstormed on the board. Although the tech tool was able to correct a word properly, it did not succeed in correcting other words due to the lack of context that it was given. It turns out, context is king, and without the full picture of our classroom discussion, ChatGPT stumbled on a few occasions. It left us with a small issue, needing more teacher intervention than initially anticipated. This unexpected situation in our experiment served as an eye-opener, revealing the balance between the aid provided by AI and the essential guidance offered by our teacher.

#### Session 2

Session 2 took place in the Multimedia Room so that the use of the tech tool was more convenient. In this case, ChatGPT was used as a means of correcting a text. Students were to copy their assigned classmate's work and paste in ChatGPT to correct it. The most remarkable aspect was that there was no need to call upon the teacher for assistance; ChatGPT autonomously handled the entire correction process.

#### Session 3

As a final session, ChatGPT was used by students to correct wrong sentences they caught from their classmates' roleplays. Once again, the tech tool did manage to make some corrections well, showcasing its potential as an educational aid. It adeptly pinpointed and rectified a multitude of sentence structure issues, delighting both students and the teacher alike with its capabilities. However, because of the lack of context, ChatGPT could not correct some sentences properly. In one specific case, the correction it made was right, but it did not suit the context of what students meant. This incident was like a wake-up call, showing us that even though ChatGPT can be super helpful, it showed the need to be careful on how we use it. It's kind of like having a really

handy tool in your toolbox, but you've got to use it wisely, especially when you want everything to flow smoothly and make sense in your conversation or writing.

#### **Phase 4- Interpretation of the teaching practices**

In this phase, the dynamics of TTT and STT during peer correction activities using ChatGPT were explored. Across three sessions, the role of the teacher, the engagement of students, and the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a tool for reducing TTT were addressed. Each session offered valuable insights into how ChatGPT influenced the balance of interaction in the classroom, shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Here is what could be interpreted from the findings.

#### **Axis 1 - Teacher: The amount of TTT when making corrections:**

##### **Session 1 - Vocabulary**

When students used ChatGPT to brainstorm recycling-related vocabulary, it helped keep TTT in check. Instead of the teacher doing all the talking, ChatGPT stepped in to provide quick corrections and suggestions, allowing students to actively engage in the vocabulary brainstorming process. According to elearningindustry<sup>1</sup>, “whether you're struggling with a particular subject, or just need some advice on how to manage your time more effectively, ChatGPT can help” (2023, para. 2).

This dynamic shifted the focus from the teacher to the students, creating a more student-centered learning environment. It's a great way to ensure that the teacher did not unintentionally dominate the discussion when the goal is for students to express themselves and collaborate while building their recycling-related vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that it is extremely necessary that the teacher guides students to provide enough context to ChatGPT before the questions are asked so that the tech tool can process the information more efficiently and thus, provide a better correction.

##### **Session 2 - Writing**

During a writing activity in which students were assigned a task, the role of ChatGPT became crucial in managing TTT. By providing instant corrections and guidance, ChatGPT enabled students to independently refine their writing skills. “Rather than weaken student effort, artificial intelligence can help prepare students for the real world by encouraging critical thinking—with a few caveats” (Abramson, 2023, p.1).

The goal was to let students take the lead, express their creativity, and learn through their own efforts. Therefore, ChatGPT acted as a valuable tool for keeping TTT in check and ensuring that the focus remained on students actively engaging with the writing task. In this case, ChaGPT showed good effectiveness and corrected everything exceeding the expectations. In

fact, some students acknowledged its importance and pointed out that sometimes they left out some small details that they would not have noticed if it had not been for ChatGPT. The application of the tech tool was beyond successful as mentioned before, since there was no need for the teacher to intervene.

### **Session 3 - Speaking**

When employing ChatGPT to facilitate a role-play conversation among students, the objective was to empower learners to actively engage and drive the discussion. In this context, it was essential for the teacher to limit TTT and encourage students to take the lead in crafting the conversation. ChatGPT served as a valuable resource for providing guidance and corrections without overshadowing the students' participation. Striking the right balance ensured that students had the opportunity to develop their communication skills and utilize ChatGPT as a helpful tool rather than relying solely on the teacher's input, thus promoting a more student-centered and interactive learning experience. However, once again it was crucial to provide context to ChatGPT before inputting the question so that it could provide more accurate answers that suited the conversation's intentions. Integrating any new tool into the classroom should be done judiciously, and ChatGPT is no exception (Abramson, 2023).

## **Axis 2 - Student: The amount of STT when making peer corrections**

### **Session 1**

When students utilized ChatGPT for peer corrections while brainstorming vocabulary about recycling, it amplified STT substantially. With ChatGPT's assistance in providing real-time feedback and language support, students could engage in meaningful discussions, shared ideas, and collaboratively explored recycling-related terms. This approach did not only foster active participation, but it also encouraged students to express themselves confidently in English. By minimizing the need for teacher intervention and allowing students to guide the conversation, ChatGPT enhanced STT, creating a more student-driven and interactive learning environment, which was particularly beneficial for vocabulary development in a topic like recycling. Additionally, as noted by Kasneci, et al. (2023), language models like ChatGPT can also provide teachers with adaptive and personalized means to assist students in their language learning journey, which can make language learning more engaging and effective for students. Nevertheless, it is relevant to mention that since the tech tool did not function as expected, the teacher's help was needed. Overall, it was observed that STT increased.

### **Session 2**

When students were assigned do a writing activity and utilized ChatGPT for peer corrections, there was a notable increase in (STT). This approach encouraged students to actively

engage with their peers' writing, providing comprehensive and high-quality feedback and suggestions, as emphasized in the statement, “students can learn from each other by peer-reviewing and assessing each other’s solutions. This, of course, has the best effect when the given feedback is comprehensive and of high quality” (Kasneci, et al. 2023, p. 5). By relying on ChatGPT as a helpful tool for language support, students could independently discuss and improve their written work. This dynamic shift toward peer interaction not only enhanced STT but also promoted collaborative learning, as students learned from one another's perspectives and writing styles. It created a more student-centered and communicative classroom environment, allowing students to take ownership of their writing and language development

### **Session 3**

Integrating ChatGPT into role-play activities in an English class significantly amplified STT during peer corrections. By utilizing ChatGPT as a language support tool, students could engage in extended dialogues, receive real-time feedback, and collaboratively refine their language skills. This innovative tool empowered students to actively participate in the learning process, fostering a dynamic and interactive classroom environment. As they corrected each other's language errors with ChatGPT's assistance, they not only gained valuable speaking practice but also deepened their understanding of English grammar and vocabulary. But finding ways to incorporate AI tools in your course could actually help prepare students for the real world, where they'll need to apply concepts rather than simply recall facts (Abramson, 2023). Enhancing student talk time through ChatGPT integration in English role-play activities .

In essence, ChatGPT enhances STT, making role-play activities in English class both engaging and instructive. However, the teacher’s intervention was crucial to clarify the context of the phrases and vocabulary corrected by the tech tool.

### **Axis 3 - Tech Tool: Effectiveness of ChatGPT to reduce TTT.**

#### **Session 1**

The use of ChatGPT in the context of students brainstorming vocabulary about recycling has proven effective in reducing TTT. Although ChatGPT's ability to provide instant language support and corrections empowered students to take charge of their learning process and instead of relying heavily on the teacher for guidance, students could independently explore recycling-related vocabulary, share ideas, and engage in discussions. There was still the need to rely on the teacher’s assistance at some point since the tech tool could not pick the context that the brainstorming vocabulary was taking place in. Nonetheless, this shift minimized the need for the teacher to dominate the conversation, thereby creating a more student-centered and interactive learning environment. However, be clear about your expectations for the class and motivate

students to be engaged with the material (Abramson, 2023).

ChatGPT acted as a valuable tool that encouraged students to actively participate and collaborate, ultimately enhancing their language skills while efficiently reducing TTT.

## **Session 2**

The effectiveness of ChatGPT in reducing TTT became highly evident when students were assigned to do a writing activity. ChatGPT's real-time language support and feedback capabilities empowered students to work independently on their writing tasks, as highlighted by the statement, "There is vast potential for AI language models to facilitate the editing process, and act as a vehicle to disseminate information from the non-English speaking world" (Tai et al. 2023, p. 19) Instead of prolonged teacher explanations, students could use ChatGPT as a helpful resource to enhance their writing skills. As ChatGPT and other AI technologies advance, universities will develop official conduct codes about their use. Until then, it's up to you to implement and communicate expectations about how students can and can't use these tools in your class (Abramson, 2023).

This dynamic minimizes TTT and encourages self-directed learning. Students were not only engaged in the writing process but also gained valuable insights into their language development. ChatGPT's role in reducing TTT allowed the teacher to facilitate the learning process more efficiently, fostering a more student-centered and productive writing environment.

## **Session 3**

The effectiveness of ChatGPT in reducing TTT was present when students were tasked with creating a roleplay conversation. ChatGPT served as a valuable tool that empowered students to take the lead in constructing and guiding their conversations. ChatGPT offers fast and easy access to information, (Abramson, 2023) with its real-time language support and suggestions, students could independently correct roleplay scenarios and engage in dynamic interactions with their peers. This reduction in TTT allowed the teacher to step back a bit from the conversation and adopt a more facilitative role, letting students actively participate and learn from one another. ChatGPT's contribution in this context fostered a student-centered and interactive learning environment, where TTT was minimized, and students were encouraged to harness their creativity and communication skills effectively.

## **Phase 5 - Learnings and experiences**

The objective of this systematization was to meticulously assess the outcomes achieved by reducing TTT while concurrently increasing STT through the strategic implementation of student peer-correction, created by ChatGPT, within the context of a CCCA teacher's A2 level class. In this innovative approach, we explored the practical application of technology and pedagogy to

explore how ChatGPT could facilitate peer correction, thereby empowering students to actively engage in the learning process and refine their English language skills. This endeavor seeks to shed light on the transformative potential of such a tech-oriented strategy in promoting language proficiency and fostering a dynamic and participatory classroom environment.

In conclusion, the systematic assessment aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of reducing TTT while simultaneously increasing STT through the strategic integration of student peer-correction with ChatGPT. Through this innovative approach to technology and pedagogy, our goal was to explore ChatGPT's capacity to enable peer correction, empowering students to actively participate in their learning journey and improve their English language skills.

From the teacher's perspective, the systematization of teaching challenges and the incorporation of effective teaching practices like peer correction are invaluable tools in enhancing the learning experience. The usage of ChatGPT as a facilitative tool can significantly contribute to fostering peer correction and increasing Student Speaking Time.

On the other hand, ChatGPT was found to be better suited for writing activities in a classroom setting. One advantage lies in its ability to provide students with a controlled and structured environment for honing their writing skills. With the written format, students could compose and foster a deeper understanding of grammar, syntax, and organization. Moreover, ChatGPT can assist in generating constructive feedback, identifying areas for improvement and offering suggestions for enhancing written work. This process encourages students to develop critical thinking and self-editing skills, which are essential for effective communication. Additionally, the text-based interaction minimizes distractions that may appear in spoken conversations, allowing students to focus more on the task at hand. Overall, ChatGPT's proficiency in supporting writing activities makes it a valuable tool for language educators looking to enhance their students' literacy and composition skills in a classroom setting.

This educational strategy not only fosters active student engagement but also allows for the development of critical language skills through peer interaction and correction. Research on this shows that when students correct each other, it benefits both agents. They get more practice and learn from their peers. So, they would learn more about this topic to find interesting ways to create engaging and interactive classrooms that put students at the center of the action. It is all about learning from one another, and that is enriching!

As for the researcher's perspective, the use of AI in a classroom as a tool to engage English as a second language was interesting. Therefore, the matter of having to use it was the same as knowing how it could be used effectively. AI-powered language learning platforms can provide instant feedback on grammar, vocabulary usage, and writing skills. This immediate feedback helps

students correct mistakes in real-time, leading to more efficient learning and improvement. This knowledge immediately gave the opportunity to research deeper into AI. The whole process of learning how to incorporate this new tool (ChatGPT) was appealing in terms of peer correction and focused on the one skill it was known to be more effective on, which was writing.

Finally, having AI in the classroom can enhance the efficiency, and accessibility of English language learning, ultimately helping students achieve their language proficiency goals more effectively.

### **Phase 6 - Communication**

As a lot of learnings were acquired from this systematization, there is no question that it is crucial to share its findings with others. That is why in this section it will be described how the learnings will be communicated to others.

It is planned to create a video tutorial that not only summarizes this systematization, but it also shows educators how it can be applied in their classes. This video can then be shared on the Teacher's Lounge Google Classroom, In-Services, and even social media.

The link of our video is: \_\_\_\_\_

On the other hand, this systematization also led to some questions yet to be solved and they are:

1. How can teachers make sure that students do not use ChatGPT for all their writing assignments?
2. Can ChatGPT also be used by teachers in order to make corrections?  
How can peer-correct become an everyday task among students?

Addressing these questions will be essential in navigating the evolving tool of AI integration in education while ensuring that the educational experience remains enriching and beneficial for all students involved.

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**Note:** The publication *Research Impacts: Expanding Perspectives* must be referenced in the publication you create based on my project. Here is the link to the PDF: <https://www.colomboamericano.edu.co/research-impacts-el-libro-academico-desarrollado-por-el-colombo-americano-cali/>

## Strengthening lexical competence in EFL through in-class flip in preschool and first grade: an interest center approach

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### Abstract

This pedagogical experience presents a bilingual initiative implemented in preschool and first grade at Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima de Cúcuta, Colombia. The project combines *Centros de Interés* (Interest Centers) with Flipped Learning and In-Class Flip strategies to strengthen lexical competence in English as a foreign language through active learning. Within this model, students interact with content in dynamic classroom stations that promote autonomy, collaboration, and engagement while developing listening comprehension and pronunciation skills. Rooted in Colombia's *Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje* (DBA), the experience emphasizes cross-curricular integration, fostering cognitive and communicative development in alignment with pedagogical translanguaging principles. This model showcases how early exposure to English in a natural, student-centered, and culturally responsive environment can strengthen bilingual foundations and generate high engagement in language learning.

**Keywords:** *Lexical competence, In-Class Flip, early childhood bilingualism, Interest Centers, active learning.*

### Introduction

In the Colombian context, fostering bilingual education at the preschool and primary levels remains a significant challenge and opportunity. Children at this developmental stage are highly receptive to new languages, yet traditional teaching methods often fall short in engaging them effectively. This paper presents a pedagogical experience that seeks to enhance lexical competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) among preschool and first-grade students through a bilingual Interest Center. The initiative combines the student-centered methodology of *Centros de Interés* with innovative teaching approaches such as Flipped Learning and its classroom-based adaptation, In-Class Flip.

The experience has taken place at Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima in Cúcuta, Colombia, within the framework of the subject *Comunicadores en Otra Lengua*. In this setting, language acquisition is approached from a developmental and communicative perspective, integrating the DBA (*Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje*) and a cross-curricular focus to promote 21st-century

skills. The primary aim of this pedagogical experience is to provide meaningful exposure to English vocabulary in contexts that children find familiar, engaging, and developmentally appropriate.

Grounded in the belief that young learners can thrive in bilingual environments when given proper support, this proposal recognizes the importance of cultural responsiveness, learner autonomy, and interlinguistic scaffolding. Through In-Class Flip and Interest Centers, students actively construct knowledge and gain confidence using English in authentic classroom interactions. The experience has already demonstrated progress in students' vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation and motivation for learning English. This paper documents the theoretical foundation, methodological design, results, and implications of the experience for early childhood bilingual education.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Flipped Learning**

Flipped Learning (FL) is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction is moved outside of the group learning space, allowing classroom time to be used for interactive, student-centered activities. Bergmann and Sams (2012) define FL as a method that allows students to first explore new content on their own and later use class time to practice and apply that knowledge collaboratively. Talbert (2017) further highlights that FL promotes autonomy, engagement, and active learning.

The Flipped Learning Network (FLN, 2014) describes four pillars of effective FL, known as F-L-I-P:

**Flexible Environment.** Students access content at their own pace, and the classroom adapts to varying learning needs.

**Learning Culture.** Students take ownership of their learning process, supported by collaboration and engagement.

**Intentional Content.** Teachers design purposeful materials that maximize active learning opportunities.

**Professional Educator.** Teachers act as facilitators, providing guidance, feedback, and assessment.

### **In-Class Flip**

In-Class Flip, as defined by Ramírez and R. Buitrago (2022), is a variation of FL designed for settings where students may lack access to technology at home. It maintains the FL philosophy but adapts the model by implementing learning stations within the classroom. These stations include content delivery, practice, peer support, and teacher interaction.

This configuration provides students with autonomy and promotes a supportive learning

culture, encouraging collaboration and allowing learners to internalize language through repeated exposure and practice. The flexibility of In-Class Flip makes it particularly suitable for young learners, offering structure while enabling play and exploration.

### **Interest Centers (Centros de Interés)**

Inspired by the Decroly method, Interest Centers are thematic, student-centered learning environments where curiosity and active participation guide the acquisition of knowledge (Decroly, 1965). In the bilingual project, themes are selected based on children's interests, and language content is integrated into meaningful contexts, aligning with their cognitive and emotional development.

### **Lexical Competence and Translanguaging**

Lexical competence refers to the learner's ability to recognize, understand, and use words appropriately in context (Nation, 2001). For early learners, vocabulary acquisition is the foundation for further language skills. This project privileges oral and auditory modes of learning vocabulary, supported by songs, storytelling, and interactive tasks.

Pedagogical translanguaging, as discussed by García and Wei (2014), allows learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire—Spanish and English—to support meaning-making and communication. This scaffolding encourages metalinguistic awareness and deepens engagement, as children make connections between familiar and new language structures.

### **Methodology**

#### **Context and Participants**

The experience was implemented with preschool and first-grade students at Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima in Cúcuta, Colombia. The children participated in one-hour weekly sessions in the school library as part of the Centro de Interés de Bilingüismo.

#### **Instructional Design**

The sessions were structured using the In-Class Flip model, consisting of four rotating stations:

**Flip Station.** Children viewed short instructional videos introducing vocabulary.

**Practice Station.** Students completed guided tasks related to the topic and specific subjects that were integrated (e.g., matching, sorting, drawing).

**Peer Support Station.** Children explained vocabulary or practiced with classmates.

**Teacher Support Station.** The teacher provided pronunciation support and checked understanding.

All sessions were aligned with 20 essential topics in English (colors, animals, family, greetings, etc.) and designed to address competencies such as being communicative, creative, and

collaborative.

## **Materials**

Materials included teacher-made videos, flashcards, puppets, songs, printed worksheets, and craft supplies. The learning space was adapted to encourage movement, interaction, and student autonomy.

## **Evaluation**

Formative evaluation was conducted through observation, anecdotal records, student performance in tasks, and informal feedback from parents and classroom teachers.

## **Findings**

As this pedagogical experience continues to unfold, preliminary observations have already revealed notable impacts on students' language learning and classroom dynamics. In terms of lexical competence, children have demonstrated significant growth in vocabulary acquisition. Words introduced through videos and practiced in various interactive stations have been consistently used by students not only during structured activities but also in spontaneous classroom interactions. This suggests that the combination of repetition, contextualization, and multisensory engagement inherent in the In-Class Flip model is effectively supporting memory retention and language transfer. Children begin to associate new English terms with actions, images, and routines, which strengthens long-term understanding and use.

Moreover, pronunciation has improved across sessions, with children increasingly articulating words clearly and confidently. This progress is especially noteworthy given the oral emphasis of the model, which privileges speaking and listening over reading and writing. Through guidance at the teacher station and modeling by peers in the support station, learners become aware of phonetic patterns and practice the target vocabulary in a safe, low-anxiety environment. This aligns with the principles of pedagogical translanguaging, as children draw upon their Spanish-language knowledge to compare, connect, and solidify their understanding of English sounds and meanings.

Another critical finding is the high level of motivation and engagement reported by both teachers and parents. Students show excitement when attending the bilingual Interest Center and often express eagerness to participate in its activities. This motivation seems rooted in the child-centered nature of the sessions and the active learning strategies employed. By incorporating songs, storytelling, games, and crafts, the sessions honor students' developmental needs and preferences, fostering a culturally responsive learning environment where their identities and prior knowledge are valued.

An especially impactful result has been the emergence of peer learning as a byproduct of

the flipped approach. Students who are more confident in using English have taken on supportive roles, helping classmates in both the Interest Center and the regular classroom. This mirrors the “Peer Support Station” model and exemplifies the Learning Culture pillar of Flipped Learning. According to Ramírez (2019), such dynamics not only deepen understanding for those providing assistance but also build a collaborative and inclusive classroom atmosphere where learners view each other as valuable resources.

While these findings are promising, it is important to note that they reflect an ongoing process. The full implementation of the 20 thematic units and the long-term retention of vocabulary are yet to be fully assessed. Further data collection, including more structured evaluation tools and longitudinal tracking, will strengthen the analysis. However, these initial results suggest that integrating In-Class Flip with Interest Centers in early childhood education can meaningfully support the development of lexical competence, motivation, and communicative confidence among EFL learners.

## Conclusions

This pedagogical experience demonstrates that integrating In-Class Flip with Interest Centers fosters meaningful and engaging EFL learning in preschool and primary students. The methodology respects young learners' developmental stages, privileges oral language skills, and promotes autonomy and collaboration.

The results suggest that such a model can serve as a replicable and scalable strategy in similar educational contexts. It contributes to the growing body of work supporting the role of active, inclusive, and student-centered methodologies in early bilingual education.

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## 28.

# Raising EFL pre-service teachers' intercultural awareness through peace-building pedagogy and pedagogical materials from comisión de la Verdad

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### Abstract

This participatory action research aims to report the effect of the pedagogical materials implemented in an EFL course to foster a group of thirteen pre-service teachers' intercultural awareness at a public university located in Boyacá. While widening their intercultural skills, attitudes, or beliefs, this study incorporated four Peace-building Pedagogy principles established by the Comisión de la Verdad: Truth clarification, Truth recognition, coexistence and no repetition. Also, pedagogical materials from the Commission were used such as testimonios, songs, poems, graphic novels, documentaries, restorative and healing practices. Data collection through six workshops was grounded on the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) that included six stages: culture denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Artifacts, semi-structured interviews, audio/video-recordings and field notes were also collected. Hence, results showed that the materials promoted a culture of empathy and inclusivity, paving the way for a more understanding teacher education; revealed a sense of belonging vital for their academic and personal growth; and encouraged values such as empathy, understanding, and forgiveness because we as researcher-teachers are positioned as advocates of social justice in education, aiming to bridge the gap between language learning and intercultural sensitivity.

**Key words:** *Content and Language Integrated Learning, Comisión de la Verdad, Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Awareness, Peace Building Pedagogy.*

### Introduction

In today's interconnected world, raising intercultural awareness has paramount importance in preparing learners for civic engagement through inclusive and peaceful educational practices. Hence, pre-service teachers are summoned to widen their inventory of intercultural skills, attitudes, and beliefs for bridging the social gaps rooted in prevailing imbalances and forms of violence that are necessary to be addressed in teacher education programs. Thereunder, this research study

sought the implementation of Peace-building Pedagogy principles and pedagogical materials from Comisión de la Verdad (Truth Commission) to reveal the effect both have on developing intercultural awareness among a group of EFL pre-service teachers enrolled in a culture-based course at a public university in Boyacá.

Considering the previous premises, through a focus on participatory-action research we developed a pedagogical intervention of six workshops designed on the basis of the six stages of the DMIS Model: Culture denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration, as established by Bennett (2004) and further explained in the corresponding section of this document. Overall, these stages represented the transfer from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism as a symbol of the transformative and decolonial positioning that we as pre-service teacher researchers have at a public university. Furthermore, the six workshops were also designed to make the research participants aware of the four C's of the CLIL teaching approach: culture, cognition, communication, and content, as well as to teach them based on the four peace-building pedagogy principles established by the Truth Commission: *Esclarecimiento de la verdad* (Truth clarification), *Reconocimiento de la Verdad* (Truth recognition), *Convivencia* (coexistence) and *no repetición* (no repetition) in light of the participants' course content.

This project aligns with global efforts to integrate intercultural competence in education. This is essential for preparing students to thrive in increasingly multicultural societies. Millican et al (2021) affirm that in today's higher education curricula, subject matters such as inequality, difference, conflict, and cohesion are often explored in courses on civic education, citizenship, ethics, democracy, and peacebuilding. Thus, educational systems are integrating peace-building and intercultural awareness strategies into their curricula. Particularly, this research contributes to the expanding body of literature on education while fostering empathy, understanding, and conflict resolution.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research project aims to explore the effect of the application of Truth Commission Materials on Intercultural Sensitivity Awareness in pre-service teachers. To understand the theoretical foundations of this study, several concepts and perspectives must be examined, which include communicative competence, intercultural competence, peace-building pedagogy, and the integration of Truth Commission materials into English language teaching (ELT).

According to Hymes (1972) communicative competence refers to a person's ability to communicate successfully by achieving intended goals and ensuring that their communication is contextually appropriate and acceptable. Language within the EFL context is conceived as a means for communication and sharing information according to Larsari (2011). Nevertheless, language

serves not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of social and cultural backgrounds as mentioned by Hymes (1972). This explains why communicative competence is crucial for students to engage in meaningful communication in real-world contexts. In regard to our study, we aim at generating spaces for the participants to strengthen their communicative competence through sharing their prior knowledge, experiences from their cultural backgrounds and perspectives to reflect on social affairs from different contexts. While attempting to do so, the participants gain more opportunities to communicate through a reflective and experiential process.

Due to this idea of how language is not only a means of communication but a social reflection and cultural process, the concept of Intercultural Competence arises. Leung et al. (2014) defined intercultural competence as a person's ability to connect and work efficiently with people from various cultural backgrounds, both at home and abroad, by drawing on their knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. It entails the need to address learners' cultural backgrounds in harmony with their teacher education in order to maximize their understanding of their needs and positioning and the one from their peers and local or global communities.

Intercultural awareness (ICA) has long been a critical component of the second language (L2) teaching and learning field, initially through the study of literature in the target language or an interest in the country, people, and traditions associated with that language according to Baker (2015). Nevertheless, in the last decades, the socio-cultural turn in applied linguistics has led to an increasing focus on the cultural dimension of language education. This approach extends traditional communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) to explicitly recognize the intercultural contexts in which languages are used and the range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes required. Within this framework, Byram's concept of critical cultural awareness (1997) as cited in Baker (2015) becomes central, providing a foundation for evaluating one's own and others' perspectives, practices, and cultural products, which is essential for developing intercultural awareness in language learners.

Regarding the aforementioned statement, intercultural competence refers to the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, which requires a set of cognitive, behavioral, and affective skills. One of the most notorious models that outlines how individuals develop this competence through different skills is Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) Bennett (1986). In this study, DMIS is used as a frame to understand how EFL pre-service teachers advance through different stages of intercultural sensitivity moving from the ethnocentrism phase to the ethnorelativism phase achieving intercultural awareness according to Bennett and Hammer (2017). In the ethnocentrism phase, the person usually views their own culture as central and may struggle to acknowledge

cultural differences, in this phase we can evidence the following stages: Denial, Defense, and Minimization. However, as individuals become more culturally aware, they move into the Ethnorelative phase, where they recognize and value cultural differences, in this phase we can evidence the following stages: Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. In this sense, these six stages stand out as a crucial path for understanding how pre-service teachers evolve their thinking on their cultural perceptions, intercultural responses, and their adaptability level to cultural differences

Lastly, the Truth Commission, formally known as the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición*, was established as part of the 2016 Final Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). This temporary, non-judicial mechanism is part of the *Sistema Integral de Verdad, Justicia, Reparación y No Repetición*, a broader system aimed at addressing the long-standing armed conflict in Colombia, *Comisión de la verdad* (n.d). Incorporating materials from Colombia's Truth Commission adds another important foundation to this framework structure. These materials provide the bedrock for understanding how the historical and social contexts shape Colombian cultural identities and for identifying the possible scars that conflict may have caused, as well as serving for promoting critical peace-building reflection on cultural diversity.

## Methodology

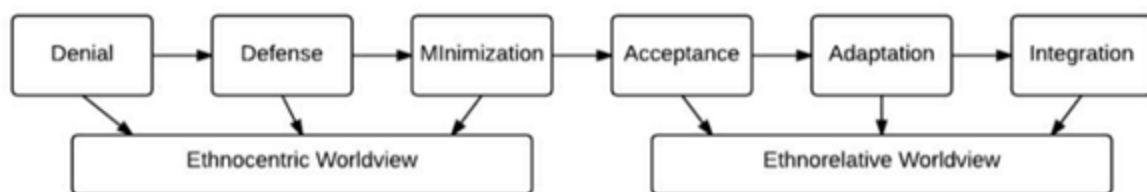
The research project follows a qualitative research design, focusing on seeking to understand the impact of implementing Peace-building Pedagogical tools on the development of intercultural awareness among pre-service teachers through workshops focused on culture-based themes. This project is outlined on the grounds of constructivism as the main paradigm to understand how people learn and transform information through observation and interaction. This paradigm embodies the relevance of knowledge construction in the light of confronting new information and providing new meaning to it.

This research is grounded in Participatory Action Research (PAR) aiming to address tangible challenges within English language teacher education. According to Cornish et al. (2023) “participatory action research prioritizes the value of experiential knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems, and for envisioning and implementing alternatives” (p.1). It is important to highlight that (PAR) aims to empower participants through active involvement in processes of reflection and collaboration. Thus, collaboration is key to the development of our study by exploring how the integration of Truth Commission materials and intercultural awareness impacts prospective EFL teachers while the application of six workshops at a public university from Boyacá, particularly a bachelor program in Modern Languages with

emphasis on English. The participants of this project are twelve pre-service teachers (nine women and three men) and one English teacher assistant who partook as a facilitator.

During the workshop's implementation, we collected data using direct observation gathered through field notes, participants' artifacts by compiling posters, graphic organizers and narratives that were recorded in oral and written forms. Furthermore, through elicitation we conducted a semi-structured interview with all study participants. Regarding the instructional design, we selected one methodology and one Developmental Framework for planning each workshop. On the one hand, Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was used to address the culture-based teaching approach due to its structured and systematic approach to reflection, which is crucial for the development and refinement of the intercultural topics for each session. On the other hand, the Intercultural Sensitivity Model by Bennett (1986) provides a scaffolded progression to develop students' intercultural awareness moving from an ethnocentric towards an ethnorelative understanding of their intercultural competence. These stages are illustrated next.

Figure 1



Note. Image retrieved from Bennett (2004).

Considering the previous two methodologies, the six workshops of this project were also planned based on the Peace building Pedagogy principles that align to restorative practices from the Truth Commission pedagogical materials. These selected principles established by the Truth Commission were *esclarecimiento y reconocimiento de la Verdad, convivencia y no repetición*. Likewise, different thematics were covered in each workshop to diversify the use of different pedagogical materials. The thematics of the six workshops were environmental violence, gender violence, political violence, enforced disappearance, child abuse and tortures. It is important to mention that the thematics were selected based on some Truth Commission pedagogical materials as well as the relevance these had within the syllabus of the course “Elective V Taller de Lengua, Contenido y Cultura” that was followed by the participants in the specific research context of this project. The thematics were also matched progressively with the six stages of Bennett’s (2004) model.

## Findings

The findings answer the main research question: What does an implementation under the tenets of Peace-building Pedagogy and the use of some Truth Commission materials reveal about

raising EFL pre-service teachers' intercultural awareness? We established three categories supported by the 4Rs framework that combine the dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation, and reconciliation for positive peacebuilding as stated by Galtung (1976).

The first category relates to recognition and redistribution. It aims at recognizing the struggle and hopeful voices of victims minimized by the mechanisms of war, forced displacement and gender inequality that perpetuate suffering and the oblivion of a past that continues leaving an indelible mark. In this first category, pre-service teachers highlighted the relevance of recognizing and redistributing victims into their healing process. According to Galtung (1976) when referring to redistribution, it involves addressing victims from the social and economic inequalities that can fuel conflict, ensuring that all members of society have equitable access to resources and opportunities. In this section, there are findings on how participants recognize mechanisms of war, forced displacement and gender inequality and how the system has perpetuated a harmful cycle re-victimizing victims by different violent practices.

The second category entails representation because it has to be claimed the importance of representing the roots and beliefs of our cultural capital in the recognition of our identities and the revitalization of foreign and indigenous languages. The recognition and representation of one's cultural capital thrives interest as a pedagogical endeavor of paramount relevance in today's cultural studies. When referring to cultural capital, we reflect on the cultural assets that embody cultural values to us such as "aesthetic, spiritual, symbolic or other elements that may transcend or lie outside of the economic calculus" as mentioned by Throsby (2005) (p.3). That is to say, the cultural capital entails the values and beliefs one has as part of one's identity construction and to which we consider one's cultural heritage.

The third category encompasses reconciliation by contextualized pedagogical and didactic practices in peacebuilding through truth, focusing on emotional management, reflection, forgiveness, reparation, remembrance, and resilience to foster empathy and reconciliation. pre-service teachers highlighted the relevance of reconstructing our teaching practices with pillars grounded in the principles of peace-building pedagogies. These ideas stem from the intention to implement and transform current practices that need the contextualization of materials based on students' diverse needs. This category is relevant for teachers' intercultural awareness due to the fact that the pedagogical materials' selection and implementation of participants in their teaching practices could reflect culturally responsive norms, values and ideologies. By encouraging the participants to use pedagogical materials contextualized on the grounds of peacebuilding, their future students could navigate across cultural boundaries, diversity and other complex themes such as violence or conflict. Teachers gain a deeper understanding of educational contexts, allowing

them to tailor content and meet the specific needs of their students from diverse settings, especially in those severely impacted by the armed conflict.

## Conclusions

Understanding and appreciating different cultures is one important insight in this research process. Teaching methods that make diversity visible are essential. Recognizing students' unique identities creates inclusive classrooms because when teachers value their students' cultural backgrounds, they build a foundation for teaching practices that include everyone. This strong appreciation for diversity improves the learning environment and helps students feel proud of themselves by creating a sense of belonging vital for their academic and personal growth. The focus on peacebuilding and resilience in education highlights the important role educators play in society. When teachers engage with different stories and perspectives, the conversation not only stays in the classroom but also spreads to the community. This encourages everyone to work together to heal relationships harmed by violence. By discussing history in a meaningful way, educators can challenge the acceptance of violence and inspire students to be advocates for peace. By promoting hope and healing, they help break the cycles of conflict that have lasted for generations.

Additionally, the incorporation of peace-building pedagogies further underscores the necessity for educators to adapt their practices, especially in regions marked by conflict. Using contextualized materials that reflect students' real experiences is essential for future practices in education. Besides, by prioritizing critical thinking about social issues, teachers must cultivate a supportive classroom atmosphere. This strategy not only fosters engagement but also empowers students to think deeply and collaboratively about the world around them.

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