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DISRUPTING COLONIAL TENSIONS IN INITIAL LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION: CRITERIA BASED ON CRITICAL INTERCULTURALITY

DISRUPCIÓN DE TENSIONES COLONIALES EN LA EDUCACIÓN INICIAL DE PROFESORES DE LENGUAS: CRITERIOS BASADOS EN LA INTERCULTURALIDAD CRÍTICA

DISRUPÇÃO DE TENSÕES COLONIAIS NA FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DE PROFESSORES DE LÍNGUAS: CRITÉRIOS BASEADOS NA INTERCULTURALIDADE CRÍTICA

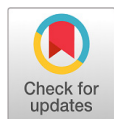
UNE DISRUPTION DES TENSIONS COLONIALES DANS LA FORMATION INITIALE DES ENSEIGNANTS DES LANGUES: DES CRITÈRES FONDÉS SUR L'INTERCULTURALITÉ CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Colombian English Language Teaching (ELT) is experiencing a paradigmatic change guided by the decolonial turn. This turn has enriched the debate about the implementation of a bilingual policy in Colombia, its impact on languages other than English, the purposes of learning English in the country, and English teacher practices and identities. This article shares the results of a critical ethnography that collected data from students and teacher educators from ELT preparation programs and institutional and legal documents. Results indicate that, in Colombian ELT, there are six discursive tensions representing coloniality. These are (a) English teachers as instructors or as educators; (b) native or non-native English speakers; (c) poor image of foreign language teachers as opposed to an idealized language teacher; (d) instrumental or cognitive and intercultural purposes for learning English; (e) emphasis on disciplinary knowledge or on interdisciplinary knowledge; and (f) division or integration between theory and practice. To counter these tensions, a set of criteria are proposed. These criteria are: (a) ELT preparation graduates are professionals in language pedagogy; (b) they are multilingual educated teachers; (c) they are well-rounded professional educators; (d) English is a means of recognizing diversity; (e) ELT preparation programs embrace interdisciplinarity as a decolonizing option; and (f) ELT preparation programs promote praxis. To conclude, the criteria proposed aim to shift initial language teacher education from an instrumental vision to a reflexive one, considering what is being learned, how, with whom, in what contexts, and the reasons that justify it.

Keywords: coloniality; decoloniality; critical interculturality; ELT; teacher education.

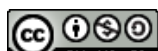


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RESUMEN

La enseñanza de inglés en Colombia vive un cambio de paradigma de la mano del giro decolonial. Dicho giro enriquece el debate sobre la implementación de una política de bilingüismo en Colombia y el impacto de la misma en idiomas diferentes al inglés, en el aprendizaje de inglés y en las prácticas e identidades de los docentes de inglés en el país. Este artículo socializa los resultados de una etnografía crítica, en el marco de la cual se recolectaron datos de los docentes en formación y los formadores de docentes de programas de licenciatura en lenguas y documentos legales e institucionales. Los resultados indican que la enseñanza de inglés en Colombia presenta seis tensiones discursivas representantes de la colonialidad. Estas son a) docentes de inglés como instructores o educadores; b) preferencia por hablantes de inglés nativos o no nativos; c) mala imagen de docentes de lengua extranjera en oposición a un docente de lenguas idealizado; d) los objetivos instrumentales o cognitivos e interculturales en el aprendizaje del inglés; e) énfasis en el dominio de la disciplina o el conocimiento integral, y f) la división o integración entre la teoría y la práctica. Para contrarrestar estas tensiones, se propone una serie de criterios, a saber, a) los licenciados en lenguas son profesionales en pedagogía de las lenguas; b) son docentes educados en un enfoque multilingüe; c) son educadores profesionales integrales; d) el inglés es una forma de reconocer la diversidad; e) los programas de licenciatura acogen la interdisciplinariedad como opción decolonizadora, y f) los programas de licenciatura promueven la práctica. Para concluir, los criterios propuestos apuntan a cambiar la formación inicial del profesor de idiomas de una visión instrumental a una reflexiva, considerando lo que se aprende, cómo, con quién, en qué contextos y las razones que lo justifican.

Palabras clave: colonialidad; decolonialidad; interculturalidad crítica; enseñanza de inglés; formación de docentes.

RESUMO

O ensino do inglês na Colômbia passa por uma mudança de paradigma, como resultado da virada decolonial. Esta mudança enriquece o debate sobre a implementação de uma política de bilingüismo na Colômbia e seu impacto sobre outras línguas além do inglês, na aprendizagem do inglês e nas práticas e identidades dos professores de inglês no país. Este artigo compartilha os resultados de uma etnografia crítica, no âmbito da qual foram coletados dados de professores em formação e professores educadores em programas de graduação em línguas de uma universidade em Bogotá e documentos legais e institucionais. Os resultados indicam que o ensino da língua inglesa na Colômbia apresenta seis tensões discursivas representativas da colonialidade. Estes são a) professores de inglês como instrutores ou educadores; b) falantes nativos ou não nativos do inglês; c) má imagem dos professores de línguas estrangeiras em oposição a um professor de línguas idealizado; d) objetivos instrumentais ou cognitivos e interculturais no aprendizado do inglês; e) ênfase no domínio da disciplina ou conhecimento abrangente; e f) divisão ou integração entre teoria e prática. Para contrariar essas tensões, são propostos vários critérios, a saber: a) os graduados em línguas são profissionais em pedagogia linguística; b) são professores educados em uma abordagem multilíngue; c) são educadores profissionais holísticos; d) o inglês é uma forma de reconhecer a diversidade; e) os programas de graduação abrangem a interdisciplinaridade como uma opção descolonizante; e f) os programas de graduação promovem a prática. Em conclusão, os critérios propostos visam mudar a formação inicial de professores de línguas de uma abordagem instrumental para

uma abordagem reflexiva, considerando o que é aprendido, como, com quem, em que contextos e as razões da aprendizagem.

Palavras chave: colonialidade; decolonialidade; interculturalidade crítica; ensino do inglês; formação de professores.

RÉSUMÉ

L'enseignement de l'anglais en Colombie a subi un changement de paradigme en raison du tournant décolonial. Ce tournant enrichit le débat sur la mise en œuvre d'une politique de bilinguisme en Colombie et son impact sur les langues autres que l'anglais, l'apprentissage de l'anglais et les pratiques et identités des enseignants d'anglais dans le pays. Cet article partage les résultats d'une ethnographie critique, dans le cadre de laquelle des données ont été collectées auprès d'étudiants et de formateurs d'enseignants dans des programmes de licence en langues à une université de Bogotá, ainsi que des documents juridiques et institutionnels. Les résultats indiquent que l'enseignement de l'anglais en Colombie présente six tensions discursives représentatives de la colonialité. Il s'agit : a) des enseignants d'anglais en tant qu'instructeurs ou éducateurs ; b) des locuteurs natifs ou non natifs de l'anglais ; c) de la mauvaise image des enseignants de langues étrangères par rapport à un enseignant de langues idéalisé ; d) des objectifs instrumentaux ou cognitifs et interculturels dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais ; e) de l'accent mis sur la maîtrise de la discipline ou sur la connaissance globale ; et f) de la division ou de l'intégration entre théorie et pratique. Pour contrer ces tensions, un certain nombre de critères sont proposés, à savoir : a) les diplômés en langues sont des professionnels de la pédagogie des langues ; b) ce sont des enseignants formés selon une approche multilingue ; c) ce sont des éducateurs professionnels holistiques ; d) l'anglais est une façon de reconnaître la diversité ; e) les programmes diplômants embrassent l'interdisciplinarité comme une option décolonisatrice ; et f) les programmes diplômants encouragent la pratique. En conclusion, les critères proposés visent à faire évoluer la formation initiale des enseignants de langues d'une approche instrumentale vers une approche réflexive, en considérant ce qui est appris, comment, avec qui, dans quels contextes et les raisons de l'apprentissage.

Mots-clefs : colonialité ; decolonialité ; interculturalité critique ; enseignement d'anglais ; formation des enseignants.

Introduction

The Colombian National Bilingual Plan is a language policy launched by the Ministry of Education in 2004 to educate bilingual citizens, in English and Spanish, so that they were in better position to insert the country into the global economy (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2006). Also, this policy has promoted the development of research about the teaching and learning of English in Colombia, which nonetheless keeps anchored to a colonial tradition, as local scholars have highlighted (González, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2015; Usma, 2009).

First, the language policy has been critiqued for the excessive incidence of transnational entities, such as the British Council, in comparison to that of local academics. This cooperation entity has played a major role as an ally of the Colombian Ministry of Education both in the formulation and implementation of language policy through teacher training programs, among other activities. In this vein, González (2007) affirms that “the imposed leading role of the British Council [...] holds back the development of a local community with enough validity to construct a language policy” (p. 313).

Second, such policy has been questioned because of considering bilingualism only in Spanish and English, neglecting the linguistic diversity of a country where approximately 65 indigenous languages, two creole languages, and a variety of the Rom language are spoken. In this regard, De Mejía (2006) concludes that “restricting the notion of bilingualism to Spanish/English bilingualism leads to a distorted view of the complex interrelationships between languages, cultures, and identities in the Colombian context” (p. 165).

Third, the Colombian National Bilingual Plan is related to the implementation of teacher training strategies based on a cascade model focused mostly on language development. This model promotes uniform teaching methodologies designed in Britain

or the United States, again ignoring the particularities of contexts. In this sense, Le Gal (2018) states, “from its beginnings, ELT in Colombia [...] has relied on foreign methodologies: Grammar-Translation Approach, Audiolingual Approach, Direct Method, Communicative Approach, Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching have all been successively adopted without any real contextualization” (p. 6).

Fourth, the policy in question has been a subject of criticism for the implementation of a foreign assessment model created for a European context—Common European Framework of Reference for Languages—which does not respond to the needs of a context where Spanish is the pervasive language. This is critiqued by Ayala and Álvarez (2005) when asserting that “European countries need to communicate on their borders with the other cultures that sometimes speak different languages. On the other hand, the countries that surround Colombia do not speak different languages” (p. 16).

And fifth, this language policy has faced criticism for the preference of a specific kind of native speakers (i.e., inhabitants from the countries that have English as their first language). This is an important issue in the Colombian context because

in the Colombian context—and policies—this label [native speaker] is used to describe any foreigner who performs as an English teacher and who does not need to be certified as such. Colombians, on the other hand, who want to become English teachers, need to obtain a professional degree after studying at a university for five years. (Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero-Nieto, 2018, p. 61).

In this train of thought, Kubota and Lin (2006) explain in detail the implications of race in English language teaching. They argue that the discussions about native and non-native speakers have focused mostly on linguistic aspects, disregarding the racialized aspect of the issue. They state,

The problem lies in the tendency to equate the native speaker with White and the nonnative speaker with non-White. These equations certainly explain discrimination against nonnative professionals, many

of whom are people of color. Unfortunately, this essentialized dichotomy (i.e., native speaker = standard English speaker = White versus nonnative speaker = nonstandard English speaker = non-White) has tended to blind us to the discrimination experienced by teachers who do not fit this formula (p. 481).

Kubota and Lin (2006) exemplify these non-native speakers as Asian or Black native speakers of English, White native speakers with a southern U.S. accent, and I would add Latino non-native English teachers. The previously discussed aspects are the ones that shape the colonialities of being, knowledge, and power to which Colombian English teachers are exposed even at the start of their career in the initial teacher education programs.

Professors and researchers at institutions in charge of preparing both pre-service and in-service English teachers have begun promoting a shift in the field of English language teaching (ELT) by questioning these prevailing conceptions in the field, for example, language teachers as instructors instead of well-rounded educators, English as an end in itself instead of a means, and the oblivion of context when attempting to optimize the processes of teaching and learning foreign languages. This article reports on six criteria resulting from a study aiming to disrupt the dimensions of coloniality in Colombian initial teacher education programs, based on the concept of critical interculturality.

Coloniality in Colombian English Language Teaching

The problem of coloniality in Colombian ELT was underscored by the implementation of the National Bilingual Plan, whereby the quality of teachers becomes a key success factor in the implementation of the linguistic policy. The problem involves academic colonialism, native-speakerism, and an instrumentalization of both English as a language and the methodologies for teaching English as outlined in the introduction. While this article describes the Colombian situation, it is important to recognize that bilingual linguistic policies in Latin America and the Caribbean

are imbued with a geopolitical dynamic that is part of the globalized system of power (Quijano, 2014). Therefore, neither the region nor the nation-state exist on their own, but they are part of a colonial world system (Grosfoguel, 2006). Nonetheless, it is necessary to bear in mind that bilingualism involves different challenges in different countries, such as such as Jamaica, Barbados, or Aruba, in the Caribbean, while in Latin America; for example, in Bolivia, Paraguay, or Mexico there are some instances of resistance to coloniality further developed.

González (2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015) has discussed extensively the colonial approach in the professional development of bilingual teachers in the Colombian context. She states that academic colonialism is seen in the adoption and universalization of a foreign model of linguistic proficiency. It is also embodied in the association with international cooperation entities that have a greater influence than local scholars in the implementation of linguistic policies. Likewise, for her, academic colonialism is evident in the preference for materials and methodologies originated in the countries of the North Atlantic and the entronement of a specific native speaker. Lastly, such colonialism is reified in the requirement of additional certifications based on training models focused on the use of materials and the application of methodological recipes.

These characteristics of bilingual professional development, framed within the context of the linguistic policy in Colombia, denote different dimensions of coloniality. First, they encompass coloniality of being, where non-native speaking teachers are deemed inferior because of their way of speaking English. This also articulates processes of racialization that associate the native speaker with white and the non-native speaker with non-white (Kubota & Lin, 2006; Tarazona, 2021). Second, they boost coloniality of knowledge that has historically favored foreign teaching methodologies that are seldom fully suitable to the Colombian context. Similarly, these disqualify

the adaptations teachers make of these methodologies to fit their contexts, and as a result, these teachers are labeled as *bad teachers* (Gómez, 1971; Amador-Watson, 2011; Lizarazo, 2015). Lastly, Colombian bilingual professional development entails coloniality of power. It subsumes the two above through the educational policies of transnational entities, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, which determine the reasons why learning English in Colombia is important. In this vein, these entities use economic competitiveness and development as reasons for learning English and conceal an international division of labor (Escobar, 1999; Mignolo, 1995). Thus, countries enter the global market on inequitable terms because those that have the machinery and financial support become exploiters, and those that have natural resources and cheap labor are exploited (Restrepo & Rojas, 2010; De Sousa, 2010).

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Incorporating a critical intercultural perspective into the initial education of English teachers will contribute to making these different dimensions of coloniality present in both the ELT preparation programs and in the teaching and learning of English in the country visible. It will also problematize and exert possible resistance against them. Language teachers, both pre-service and in-service, are unaware of how colonial features in the policies define what they can or cannot do in their contexts in methodological terms. They also experience conflict when students question them about the reasons why English should be learned in Colombia; and in some cases, they still perceive themselves as inferior in comparison to an idealized native speaker (Viáfara, 2016). In short, the problem deals with the situation of bilingualism in Spanish and English in Colombia, the colonial view of professional development in the Colombian context, and the preference for native speakers and foreign methodologies. Finally, it proposes to use the theoretical developments of the decolonial turn, and particularly, critical interculturality as a basis

to build guiding criteria for the initial education of English teachers.

Decolonial Turn and Critical Interculturality

The lens employed in this study to approach initial education of English-as-a-foreign-language teachers is the decolonial turn with an emphasis on the notion of critical interculturality proposed by Walsh (2007). The decolonial turn is characterized by a critique of modernity from the vision of those who lived it under a sub-alternate condition, that is, as colonies. Restrepo and Rojas (2010) explain a set of characteristics that shape decolonial argumentation. First, they claim it is relevant to differentiate colonialism from coloniality.

Colonialism refers to the exercise of political and military power for the exploitation of wealth in the colonies. Therefore, colonialism is related to the processes of colonization by European empires during the 16th and 17th centuries. Instead, coloniality is a phenomenon that extends to the present and results in different sorts of hierarchies. Restrepo and Rojas (2010) explain that

coloniality refers to a pattern of power that operates through the naturalization of territorial, racial, cultural, and epistemic hierarchies that enable the reproduction of relations of domination. This pattern not only guarantees the exploitation of the capital of some human beings by others on a global scale, but also the subalternation and obliteration of knowledges, experiences, and ways of life of those who are so dominated and exploited (p. 15, own translation).

Second, the decolonial inflection establishes a relationship between modernity and coloniality, where the latter is defined as the dark side of modernity that constitutes —and still influences— the countries that were once colonies. Another characteristic of the decolonial shift is to think of modernity/coloniality beyond states, countries, or nations by incorporating geopolitics into the analysis and thinking of a globalized system of power. Concerning this system, Mignolo (2005) explains

that, while this construction of Latin American otherness based on European and American colonialism is a feature of modernity due to the historical processes of both Europe and the United States, in the contemporary era, postmodernity continues to hide coloniality and maintains a universal logic from the North Atlantic (the United States and Western Europe) outwards. In the words of Restrepo and Rojas (2010),

the modern world-system is produced in the process of European colonial expansion that connects for the first time the different regions of the planet, thus, giving it a new (global) scale. Since then, the local experiences of any region of the planet become unthinkable outside of their interconnection within the framework of this global system (p. 20, own translation).

In view of this scenario, Restrepo and Rojas (2010) state that “the decolonial inflection aims to consolidate a decolonial project” (p. 20, own translation). The decolonial shift is interested in analyzing how modernity has expanded political and economic forms from Europe —and now the US— to other regions of the world. It also seeks to formulate a decolonizing ethical and political project whose aim is the visibility of the multiplicities of knowledges, ways of being, and aspirations about the world that emerge from subaltern spaces, i.e., the construction of an equality-in-difference. Hence, these subaltern knowledges could have the same validity as those originating from European and American experiences.

This decolonizing project seeks to exert resistance against coloniality in three dimensions: being, knowledge, and power. The coloniality of being is the inferior condition attributed to the subjects of the former colonies, intertwined with processes of racialization, which eventually lead these populations to be considered inferior compared with the ideal of the European white man (Mignolo, 2005). The coloniality of knowledge is related to the suppression and marginalization of knowledges different from White European scientific forms, including African and Indigenous ways of knowing (Castro-Gómez, 2005). Finally, the

coloniality of power describes the social, economic, political, and cultural mechanisms by which subalternation is maintained (Quijano, 2014). This dimension of coloniality establishes hierarchies between territories and populations within a global pattern of power in which some peoples are exploiters and others are exploited. In this regard, Quijano (2000) states that

social classes in Latin America are marked by color, any color that can be found in any country at any time. This means that the classification of people is realized not only in one sphere of power—the economy, for example—but in each and every sphere. Domination is the requisite for exploitation, and race is the most effective instrument for domination that, associated with exploitation, serves as the universal classifier in the current global model of power. (p. 572)

Regarding the decolonial shift as a decolonizing ethical and political project, Walsh (2007) proposes an *epistemic interculturality* (p. 48). She explains that, in Latin America, the notion of interculturality is frequently associated with the resistance of indigenous and Afro-descendant movements and their corresponding “construction of a social, cultural, political, ethical and epistemic project aimed at decolonization and transformation” (p. 47, own translation). However, she warns that the construction of interculturality in her work is part of an indigenous locus of enunciation, which does not prevent other sectors from addressing explorations in this direction of critical interculturality. Epistemic interculturality represents *other thought* (*un pensamiento otro*) or a *border thought* (*pensamiento fronterizo*), a common concept in the decolonial inflection, which is an

oppositional thought, not simply based on recognition or inclusion, but rather focused on a socio-historical structural transformation. A policy and a thought aimed at building an alternative proposal for civilization and society; a policy that is based on the confrontation of power, but it also proposes another logic of incorporation. (Walsh, 2007, p. 52, own translation)

Epistemic interculturality is not unrelated to dominant paradigms or structures. Yet, it uses

them to generate that other thought so that those paradigms are affected and decolonized to break with “the cultural standardization that builds universal knowledge of the west” (Walsh, 2007, p. 51, own translation). Regarding the topic of interest of this article, the initial education of EFL teachers, it would be inconvenient to ignore the origin of the phenomenon from a European — and now transnational — colonial and expansionist tradition. It could also be unfavorable to overlook the contributions that have been made to the discipline from the centers of power. This is because doing so would be a partial vision that biases negatively the approach to the teaching of English in the Colombian context. Therefore, one of the expected contributions of implementing a critical intercultural perspective is to establish a mediation between the developments made by the community of argumentation of the modernity/coloniality research group and the initial education of EFL teachers.

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Method

The methodology employed in the study was a critical ethnography. According to Thomas (1993), critical ethnography differs from traditional ethnography because it has a political purpose. Critical ethnography offers a more direct style of thinking about the relationship between knowledge, society, and political action. Anderson (1989) states the goal of this methodology is to free individuals from the sources of domination and repression. Carspecken (1996) equates critical ethnography with critical qualitative research with an interest in social inequalities and positive social change. The steps he proposed were the ones followed for the development of the study.

Data collection and analysis

In his book *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, Carspecken (1996) describes five moments that integrate both data collection and data analysis. These are (a) monological data collection, (b) reconstructive preliminary analysis, (c) dialogic data

generation, (d) describing relationships between systems, and (e) the explanation of such relations. Different data collection instruments were used at each moment. Steps A and C are related to data collection, while steps B, D, and E are associated with data analysis. The stages are explained below.

Carspecken (1996) describes monological data collection as a primary objective record of data, which seeks to account for information using the senses to determine *what is* or *what happened*. He mentions that, at this stage, interviews of demographic information or reports from participants about their life routines can be used. Following this first collection, he suggests a second stage related to a preliminary analysis of this data. The third stage aims at the generation of dialogic data, in which the researcher obtains new data from the participants through one-to-one or group discussions. Carspecken and Apple (1992) state that, at this moment, researchers want participants to reflect on their lives in ways that may be new to them, and this leads them to produce a theory that is relevant to their lives. The fourth stage is about unveiling relationships between systems by comparing routines and cultural forms displayed by a group and those shown by other groups to see how they can influence each other. A fifth moment is focused on explaining relationships and consists in connecting the findings with macro social theories. These connections allow for analyzing the role educational institutions play in the maintenance of inequitable societies.

For the generation of dialogic data, both the transcription from the discussion groups and the interviews with experts were analyzed using the thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes the following steps: (a) familiarizing yourself with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for topics, (d) reviewing topics, (e) defining and naming topics, and (f) producing the report. At the stage of describing relationships between systems, a documentary analysis was implemented by using elements of critical discourse analysis. Regarding the procedure

for documentary analysis within ethnography, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest asking the following questions: How are the documents written? How are they read? Who writes them and who reads them? For what purposes and on what occasions? With what results? What is registered and what is omitted? What does the writer assume about his/her readers? What do readers need to know to make sense of the documents?

Finally, at the moment of explaining relationships between systems, data were reorganized and reclassified into different or new categories (Saldaña, 2009). In the categories obtained from this second coding cycle, the six criteria for the initial training of foreign language teachers in Colombia were formulated based on critical interculturality as a decolonial alternative that will be explained in the results section. Before this, it is important to describe the context and participants of the study.

Context and Participants

As mentioned previously, this study had different participants and moments of data collection. First, there was a pedagogical intervention aiming to implement critical interculturality done with three classes from the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Bilingual Education at Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, ÚNICA, in Bogotá, Colombia. After that, discussion groups were held with the participants to obtain information about their perceptions.

ÚNICA is a relatively new university —aged 18— that functions as an American teacher college and has two academic programs. The first one is a BA in Bilingual Education, which is now BA in Bilingualism with Emphasis on Spanish and English. The second program is the Specialization in Bilingual Education, which seeks to provide further education to in-service teachers. The Specialization is offered in partnership with Colegio Nueva Granada in Bogotá; and in Medellín,

through an agreement with the Sura Foundation and the Centro Colombo Americano in that city.

Another data collection moment was implemented by means of interviews with experts. The choice of experts was guided by texts on critical interculturality and those on teaching English as a foreign language in relation to the recovery of local knowledge (González, 2009, 2010, 2012; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Walsh, 2007; among others). Experts from Universidad del Valle, Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad Surcolombiana, and Universidad de la Amazonía were interviewed. Considering that, based on critical interculturality, subaltern discourse formations can be brought into dialogue with hegemonic and official discourses, the teacher education officer of the Bilingual Colombia Program in the Ministry of National Education was included in this group of experts.

A final moment of data collection was carried out using the technique of discourse analysis or *trace analysis* (*análisis de huellas*) (Giroux & Tremblay, 2004) to trace the discourse formations about teacher education. Such analysis also helped compare these discourse formations with what expert teachers expressed about this topic. Likewise, it led to understanding how the formations influence BA students, which was expressed during the discussion groups. For this moment, four documents related to EFL teacher education were chosen: (1) Resolution 02041/2016 on the reform of degree programs and its corresponding amendment in Resolution 18583/2017; (2) the socialization document of Colombia Very Well, National English Program, 2015-2025 (Campo, 2014); (3) the proposal for initial language teacher education resulting from the work of local scholars together with international cooperation organizations under the Colombian Framework for English project (COFE) (Cardona et al., 1992); and (4) the PEI of the BA program in Bilingual Education at ÚNICA, the institution where the interventions were carried out (Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana —ÚNICA, 2013).

Results

This section contains a brief description of the discursive tensions that were found during the data comparison and contrast process carried out at the fifth moment of critical ethnography. Then it explains the criteria emerging from the vision of critical interculturality as a way to approach the resolution of these tensions. The discursive tensions in the ontological dimension found were: (1) English teachers as instructors vs. English teachers as professional language pedagogues; (2) the preference for native speaking teachers vs. the preference for the non-native speaking teachers; (3) the ideal English teacher vs. a local *bad* English teacher. The discursive tensions found in the epistemological dimension were: (4) emphasis on the instrumental functions of English vs. cognitive and intercultural functions of English; (5) emphasis on disciplinary competencies vs. integrative competencies; and (6) focus on practical knowledge vs. integration between theory and practice.

At the ontological level, one of the recurring tensions is that between the notion of the English teacher as a language instructor or technician in foreign languages with one of the English teacher as a professional language educator. The former is who executes predetermined recipes and who is perceived as alien to reflection. In contrast, the latter's education must go beyond the development of language skills and methodology. By analyzing discourse formations, this tension was found to come from the historical origins of the teaching of English in Europe and its corresponding arrival in Colombia in the 19th century; however, this dichotomy also appeared when participants compared the English-related teacher education policies proposed by the National Ministry of Education with the ideas regarding teacher education in BA programs.

Due to the time the research was conducted, when many foreign English speakers were brought to the country to support the National Bilingual Plan, the second tension in the ontological dimension has to do with the preference for native speaker tea-

chers in comparison to the non-native speaker teachers. This is based on the belief that non-native teachers are not good English speakers, and as a result, they are at a disadvantage compared to native speakers. The linguistic policy favors hiring native speakers as English teachers, which is a historically built preference.

The third discursive ontological tension is between an ideal English teacher and the conception of a local non-native deficit teacher. The media cause this poor representation of both in-service and pre-service English teachers, as they label their methodologies as obsolete and their language level as insufficient. In relation to this aspect of native-speakerism, one participant stated,

The problem, for me, is that many of them do speak English and do have good English, and yes, super interesting, but they lack pedagogy. So how does a person who has not gone through college and has not seen pedagogy intend to teach children who belong to a completely different culture? (Student 2, Discussion Group 1, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation)

Regarding the epistemological dimension, two tensions are evident. The first one regards the need to learn English for competitiveness, globalization, and economic development and, on the other hand, the need to learn English for science and culture. The first discourse formation has been questioned because it assumes that all Colombians are able to benefit from learning English, regardless of the conditions in their context; and the second advocates for a humanist tradition that justifies learning foreign languages beyond language skills as a way to expand the world by gaining access to other cultures and science.

Finally, the other discursive tension is related to the competencies that a teacher of foreign languages should have. While most language policy documents emphasize disciplinary competencies (i.e., methodology and language), institutional documents coincide with those of teacher educators

regarding the need to develop a comprehensive teacher education, which also involves research and humanistic competencies.

Disrupting the Colonial Tensions in Colombian Language Teachers' Education

To disrupt these dichotomies deriving from a colonial view in the education of pre-service English language teachers, six criteria based on critical interculturality, as a development of the decolonial turn, are proposed.

Criterion 1: Graduates of ELT Programs are Professionals in Foreign Language Pedagogy

Within the argument presented in the study, I advocate for a vision of the teacher as a professional and as an intellectual not as an instructor. A decolonial option for teaching foreign languages (Kumaravadivelu, 2014) implies that in-service teachers develop skills that enable them to become producers and not just consumers of knowledge. Critical interculturality in the field of ELT does not mean rejecting the tradition of professional knowledge or *received knowledge* (Wallace, 1991). Rather, it implies engaging it in a dialogue with local knowledge to respond to the diverse Colombian teaching contexts. Likewise, professional teachers are able to understand language teaching in a wider context in which they question themselves about what is taught, when, and to whom (Train, 2012). In this sense, the expert from Universidad de la Amazonía stated,

[...] the caqueteños [...] have had a rather tragic history due to so many problems that they have had here in matters of public order [...] they are more aware of the needs and weaknesses that there are here in the region. Then we have "taken advantage of that a little bit" and have made them, well, those exercises of consciousness of, well, what are we going to do? How should we contribute as English teachers for the region to move forward? (Expert interview 2, Universidad de la Amazonía, own translation)

Also, BA students in the different discussion groups state that, as language pedagogues, they must think

first about the diversity of students in the classrooms to decide on the most appropriate methodologies. One of the participants describes the competencies that an English teacher should have to work in the Colombian context in this way:

First, lots of knowledge about the context where they are going to move because I mean, [...] not only will there be people from the same region but also many regions and you must take into account the, the [...] like the variables that they are going to face, which you must consider when teaching. [...] There are students who are used to other things compared to other students and everything depends on, on [...] yes, on the type of student. Also, in terms of the context in which you are going to be, for example, whether it is rural or whether it is public or private. Then you should know that in a private one, it is going to be a little easier than in a public one, that you need more patience in a public context, where you need to explain more in-depth and you won't have so much time to teach English because actually at a public school you are not given the time you should for teaching a foreign language, in this case, English. (Student 2, Discussion group 5, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation)

Critical interculturality makes it possible to question the simplicity with which the teacher of foreign languages has been described, since, first, it seeks pluriversality, that is, a hegemony of the diverse and not the attainment of a universal abstract project; and second, as explained by Mignolo, in an interview with Walsh (2003), the acceptance of "the diversity of the 'being' in its needs, opinions, desires, knowledge, perspective, etc." (p. 8). This means that there are multiple ways of being a foreign language teacher and that, depending on the contexts and experiences of the teachers, they lead to the construction of a teacher (*teacher persona*) (Kincheloe, 2004).

Criterion 2: Graduates of ELT Programs are Multilingual Educated Teachers

It is important to remember that critical interculturality is a decolonizing project that seeks to subvert the three dimensions of coloniality: being, knowledge, and power. The coloniality of being, that is, the ontological dimension of the coloniality

of power, is linked to the inferiorization of subjects belonging to the former colonies for not fulfilling the ideal of the European White man; consequently, the coloniality of being is intertwined with processes of racialization.

Kumaravadivelu (2014) proposes getting rid of empty words that create divisions between groups, such as native and non-native. For this specific case, Motha (2006) indicates that social practices are shaped by discourses and therefore, suggests talking about *multi-competence* or *multilingualism* instead of non-native English speakers so that linguistic identity is changed. She adds that the use of terms such as native, non-native, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) reproduces false dichotomies or polarizations. These can be changed by using an alternative vocabulary and exploring the notions of *interstices* (Anzaldúa, 1987) or *third space* (Gutiérrez, 2008), which places bilingual speakers in a space between two languages and two cultures.

Initial language teacher education based upon critical interculturality should promote the recognition that professionally educated teachers are competent to teach all aspects of language, regardless of whether they are considered native speakers or not. Particularly, in a profession that celebrates the World Englishes that focus on intelligibility rather than accent (Kumaravadivelu, 2014). In this sense, one of the participants in the discussion groups highlights that, even though native speakers have linguistic proficiency, they may lack the pedagogical knowledge to teach in the Colombian context:

[...] But they are people who come to teach English in Colombia. The problem for me is that many of them, they do speak English and they do have good English and, right, super interesting, but they lack pedagogy. So how does a person who has not been to university and has not seen pedagogy intend to teach children who belong to a completely different culture? (Student 2, Discussion group 1, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation)

Equally, in Phillipson's work (1992) on linguistic imperialism, one fallacy is that English is better learned in a monolingual manner, that is why translation as a pedagogical strategy and the use of the mother tongue in English classes are frowned upon. The author indicates that these actions replicate colonial practices that prohibited the use of indigenous languages and forced subjects to speak the language of the colonizer.

By the same token, the theory of *translingualism* argues that the ideologies of coloniality and modernity have maintained linguistic, cultural, and racial hierarchies in society. Thus, translingualism interpellates dominant theories about bilingualism and multilingualism to subvert these hierarchies and recognize language practices that have been subalternized and classified as *non-standard* (Vogel & Garcia, 2017).

In response to the colonial view of language use, translingualism assumes the position that students' different language practices are resources that can contribute to their education. In the pedagogical aspect, the integration of school and after-school practices is promoted for the design of units, class plans, and assessment types because, in this way, the student is recognized as a knowledgeable subject who is in continuous contact with multiple languages. Translingualism advocates for flexibility to adapt teaching to changes that may emerge and to the suggestions of learners.

The objectives of a translinguistic practice are four. The first one is to support students in understanding complex texts and content. Moreover, it aims to provide opportunities to consolidate language practices that are typical of academic contexts. Besides, it seeks to create the space to assess their multilingualism and their ways of knowing. Furthermore, and primarily, it endeavors to support their bilingual identities and their socio-emotional development (Vogel & Garcia, 2017).

Criterion 3: Graduates of ELT Programs are Concerned with Maintaining their Quality as Well-rounded Educators

Kumashiro (2014) describes three elements of the influence of neoliberalism on education. First, the formulation of policies based on the prejudice that teachers are to blame for everything that is wrong with education; second, the notion that teachers are not working enough, which means extending the school day; and third, the idea that embarrassing teachers by making poor test scores public and ranking institutions will encourage teachers to work harder.

In formulating this criterion, it is important to refer to the intention of critical interculturality to subvert the coloniality of power. This coloniality manifests itself when the former colonies — peripheral countries — must comply with quality standards imposed by transnational entities and oriented by a neoliberal ideal of development (Mignolo, 2005). Argüello (2016) indicates that:

some forms of this monotopic narrative can be seen in the main administrative colonialisms in education, where the absolutism of quality, the entrepreneurship of education systems, the factual standardization of comparative results, the proletarianization of teaching, the sectorization of benefactors and the neglect of non-conventional forms of so-called other pedagogies. (pp. 108-109, own translation).

This author explains that these discourses mimic ethical and humanist ideals such as *well-rounded education*, *citizen commitment*, and *social development* and hinder critical thinking, hiding the flaws in the dominant models that maintain the status quo. In contrast to the deficit perception, undergraduate students participating in this study position themselves in the future as teachers with a calling, as well as creative and eclectic. They also see themselves as examples of motivation for their students and are interested in continuing educating themselves to be better teachers. This aspiration can be observed in the following passages taken from the discussion groups:

I think foreign language teachers apart from studying their contexts, or studying the context where they live, should also have a certain level of creativity in terms of the fact that [...] you know, not all students are equal and you must implement new teaching strategies so that all students learn how to grasp the idea of the class, right? (Student 2, Discussion group 2, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation).

[...] teachers have to prepare themselves every day, and not rely only on what they have seen in college, but every day, aspire for more, right? Because we're not going to remain with one knowledge, but what always we think, the same as with English, you do not [...] What, because you graduated from the BA, did you fully learn English? No. (Student 5, Discussion group 1, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation).

Teachers build their knowledge because they are embedded in a community of practice in which teaching activities are carried out and in which trainers are part (Wenger, 2001). However, teaching is not just about content and methods, but this community of practice is linked to pre-service teachers' identity, their stories, the communities they wish to belong to and the students they will teach. The community of practice is part of a broad socio-cultural context in which access to power and possibility is often inequitable. As a result, language teacher educators need to help pre-service teachers relate to their practice from a position of strength rather than a position of weakness and to use diverse resources to effect social and educational changes (Norton, 2005).

Criterion 4: English is a Means of Recognizing Diversity

Based on critical interculturality, it becomes necessary to recognize that the reasons for teaching and learning a foreign language go beyond the instrumental ones, i.e., *let's teach people English so that they can work in call centers*. In order to achieve this, it is essential to address the *deep ethical basis* of language pedagogy (Phipps & Levine, 2012), where questions are raised, conflicts are triggered, and a paradigm shift is made —in this case, changing the economic paradigm focused on learning

English for economic competitiveness. In this direction, one of the participants in the discussion groups stated,

I would see learning English, or I see it, as a way to open up new opportunities, open up to new cultures because it is not only the economic benefit you are going to receive, but also the cultural benefit. That is, meeting new people, relating to new people, people different from you, I think is even more fulfilling than the economic part, I would think that makes us richer than we think. (Student 2, Discussion Group 1, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation).

Within the pedagogy of languages, it is crucial to understand that language can serve as an instrument to maintain the status quo or to transform the injustices that lead to conflict. It is, therefore, important that future teachers recognize that conflict can happen in any instance where language plays a key role, for example, in intergenerational dialogue and in diverse language communities, which, in turn, are also politically and economically different.

Phipps and Levine (2012) indicate that compassion in language pedagogy is contextual, and therefore, it may be explained as empathy, affect, and support, but that language learning may be also “explicated in contexts of pain and as a compassionate activity: for those suffering the pain of inequality and for those experiencing legacies of colonialisms” (p. 11). In line with the factor of compassion in the pedagogy of foreign languages, Urbina (2016) indicates that the contributions of the combination of an intercultural philosophy, intercultural dialogue, mutual recognition, and education for peace include:

An intercultural dialogue where diversity is respected and all languages and all different ways of thinking are appreciated, which enables dialogue between cultures and solidarity between the peoples of the world. This intercultural dialogue is assumed to be a practice of peace.

The task of an Intercultural Philosophy is therefore peace, since it is a permanent action that is built every day to “learn to live together” (p. 152).

Critical interculturality as a decolonial option conceives pedagogy beyond the utilitarian purposes of language and initial teacher education, therefore, a criterion for the BA programs is set out based on the understanding of the foreign language as a mediation to know the diverse other and to recognize oneself as a diverse individual. In relation to this, the participants stated,

Obviously, this program [Language, Culture, and Identity] helps you understand that, as a teacher, millions of people of different ethnicities, different perspectives, different beliefs are going to come into your life. So yes, what a teacher has to do before having his vocation up is learn how to respect and tolerate (Student 1, Discussion Group 2, Language, Culture, and Identity, own translation).

I think that one as a teacher is going to have students of all kinds of backgrounds and one has to know how to get to them [...] And you have to know, you have to accept them and treat everyone the same because, in the end, the role of a teacher is to help a student move forward and be that example to the other students to accept [...] to teach how to accept everyone’s thoughts (Student 2, Discussion Group 3, Language, Culture, and Identity, own translation).

The tension in these language functions as well as the approach to who the language teacher is, whether an educator or instructor, also leads to an emphasis on the skills that language teachers should develop, whether disciplinary competencies or more integrative competencies.

Criterion 5: ELT Preparation Programs are Based on Interdisciplinarity as a Decolonizing Option

A teacher education program for foreign language teachers sees them as well-rounded professional educators, and for this same reason, the knowledge and skills they should develop come from different disciplines and contexts. Castro-Gómez (2007) believes that the university reproduces a dominant model of science based on disciplinary boundaries and that to begin decolonizing the university, it becomes necessary to resort to trans-disciplinarity. This questions disciplinary divisions since their interventions are limited and try to

simplify the understanding of the world. Besides, Castro-Gómez (2007) suggests appealing to transculturalism to establish a dialogue of knowledges, in which different ways of producing and communicating knowledge can be linked and subjects who know can relate with one another.

In the field of educating foreign language teachers, Train (2012) states that transcultural humanism recognizes that the components of foreign language education are part of *larger ecological networks*. That is, they are immersed in more complex systems consisting of institutional, pedagogical, and academic institutions, so they cannot be reduced to a separate set of courses and programs. This decentralization of disciplines and cultures allows educating teachers to have the resources to begin understanding the complexity of their work, first, as educators and, second, as foreign language teachers. In this sense, Mignolo (in an interview with Argüello, 2013) tells us that

the question is not to give [students] knowledge but to give them the tools for them to understand how it is, how the [colonial matrix of power is managed] [...]. Our task is to give them the tools, not what they have to think, but the tools for them to think [...] so that they articulate what they already know; they know it by intuition, but they don't have the discourse [...] you have to give them the instruments so that they can face the society that oppresses them: the tools of knowledge they can argue with (p. 131).

For her part, Walsh (2007) asserts that in order to decolonize knowledge, it is vital to recognize that knowledge production can happen in spaces other than academia and to question the concepts of rationality that regulate what is considered *expert knowledge*. However, to achieve this, Phipps and Levine (2012) consider it necessary to overcome conflicts, employ critical thinking, reflect on the context and its particular conditions, and assume that learning is not finite and can take a lifetime.

A ELT preparation program based on critical interculturality seeks to develop in its students the skills that allow for analyzing the contexts to understand the teaching of foreign languages in

their complexity and formulate good practices. The implementation of a critical approach to initial language teacher education aims to overcome the instrumentalization of knowledge. Thus, teachers are no longer acritical consumers of the *latest pedagogical trends* originated in the countries of the center (Kachru, 1990) but become producers of knowledge. By understanding that social and educational reality is complex, it is crucial to admit that pedagogical knowledge is interdisciplinary and that its different theoretical bases help solve educational problems. This is because these are analyzed from different angles and their integration leads to a more complete view of phenomena.

Criterion 6: ELT Preparation Programs Promote Praxis

One of the purposes of the study reported here was to explore ways in which critical interculturality could be implemented in an initial language teacher education program. This intention was underpinned by the concept of praxis which, according to Monchinski (2008), involves the theorizing of the practice and the practicing of the theory. Praxis also involves thinking over the actions that will be taken before they are implemented and why, and then reflecting on what was done, how it was done, and its results.

For this work, critical pedagogy served as a means for putting the theoretical position of critical interculturality into practice since it allows changing the dynamics of power between pre-service teachers and teacher educators, using pre-service teachers' experiences and emotions as mediation for learning. This incorporation of pre-service teachers' experiences in pedagogy echoes what Walsh (2005) states about *critically interculturalizing*, which means placing into dialogue different ways of thinking and knowing not just at the theoretical level, but within the contexts lived by the subjects.

Although this research committed to a practical application of critical interculturality, it became clear that there is still work to be done in this area. As Arroyo (2016) mentions, "the task of

decolonization is still pending in our research, educational, political and vital practices” (p. 50). The strategies implemented in this research were intended to think of other ways of relating oneself to the educational field, different from the authoritarianism and verticality, to which most students had been exposed in their previous educational spaces as well as from the decontextualized learning of the foreign language. The participants of this research seem to have appreciated the praxis present in the incorporated activities, according to what they expressed in the discussion groups:

I thought it was very important because everything we saw about the theory was applied when the microteaching was performed: how to control a group or, for example, how large each group could be, why, well, yes, all that, interaction between students (Student 2, Discussion group 2, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation).

So, I found the fact that we lived it as a real class very interesting. That is, some things are never going to miss in the classroom, and we must keep them very well in mind, the student who wants to do nothing, the one who distracts the partner by talking, the rude one. I mean, these things convey to us or lead us to real life, to face the problems of real life (Student 1, Discussion group 1, Pedagogy and Second Language, own translation).

Within the framework of this research, the development of empirical knowledge in future teachers is considered important, but this cannot be overestimated in comparison with the other knowledges that make up the meta-epistemology of teacher education. This meta-epistemology, which I intended to promote through critical interculturality, brings together a set of knowledges that, in addition to the empirical one, includes the normative, the critical, the ontological, and the reflexive-synthetic (Kincheloe, 2004). Initial teacher education guided by this critical epistemology leads to overcoming instrumental rationality focused only on techniques and the notion of practice from a utilitarian perspective. In contrast, the goal is to develop well-rounded professionals with skills that address the complexity of education as a whole and not just instruction in English or any other foreign language.

Conclusion

The criteria proposed above intend to shift initial language teacher education from an instrumental vision to a reflexive one, pondering what is being learned, how, with whom, in what contexts, and the reasons that justify it. In the context of Colombian language policy, teachers ought to become aware of how their identities and ideologies affect the classroom.

Pre-service and in-service teachers should be required to reckon how political and economic aspects influence English teaching in a transnational globalized context. Understanding this sociopolitical context in BA programs does not result in a complete break with the teaching and learning of English as the *language of empire* since critical interculturality does not seek provincialism or autochthonism. On the contrary, the development of this literacy of power allows future teachers to identify the crevices to which they can direct their struggles (Mejía, 2011).

When trying to implement language policies in their teaching practice, English teachers develop new ways of knowing in need of recovery to build local knowledge in the discipline. It is paramount that pre-service teachers become familiar with local educational models and knowledge and practices of rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendant environments, among others, for teaching and learning both foreign and mother tongues. In this vein, they could begin to question the supposed *universality* of teaching languages and to build the *diversality* or *pluriversality* proposed within critical interculturality. In doing so, they do not impose a new paradigm based upon the subaltern but recognize the possibility of coexistence of several paradigms. It is pertinent to remember that critical interculturality and the decolonial inflection are located at the intersection of traditional and modern, so they seek an articulation of knowledges and practices in which they are granted the same value regardless of their origin.

Each one of the proposed criteria for initial language teacher education can be developed in future research in greater detail in terms of their decolonial potential. The concepts of trans- and interdisciplinarity and translanguaging in particular present a wealth that needs to be explored empirically.

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