

CRITICAL INTERCULTURALITY. A PATH FOR PRE-SERVICE ELT TEACHERS

INTERCULTURALIDAD CRÍTICA. UN CAMINO PARA PROFESORES DE INGLÉS EN FORMACIÓN

INTERCULTURALITÉ CRITIQUE. UNE VOIE POUR DES PROFESSEURS D'ANGLAIS EN FORMATION

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This text is a part of the theoretical and conceptual basis supporting an ongoing research study on initial language teacher development programs being carried out within the framework of the Ph.D. program in Education at Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino in Bogotá, Colombia.

ABSTRACT

This article elaborates a theoretical reflection upon critical interculturality as a tool for decolonial pedagogy, which needs to be explored in initial language teacher education programs as a means to counteract the increasing emphasis on the instrumental nature of the field caused by a limited view of the meaning of professional development. For this purpose, the text addresses, first, the theoretical developments of the decolonial turn; secondly, it discusses the notion of critical interculturality; and finally, it presents a reflection on the links between critical interculturality, decolonial pedagogy, and a vision of teacher education as a dynamics of personal development. The text concludes by explaining the potential of critical interculturality as a point of intersection for transgressive pedagogies, whose main feature is recognizing and making subjectivities visible. The article is part of an ongoing research on initial language teacher development programs currently being carried out within the framework of the Ph.D. in Education at Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino in Bogotá, Colombia.

Keywords: decolonial pedagogy, critical interculturality, initial language teacher development programs

RESUMEN

El presente artículo tiene por fin presentar una reflexión teórica acerca de la interculturalidad crítica como herramienta de la pedagogía decolonial para ser explorada en los programas de formación inicial de docentes de lenguas como una manera de contrarrestar la cada vez mayor instrumentalización del campo causada por una visión limitada de lo que constituye el desarrollo profesional. Para este propósito, el texto trata los desarrollos teóricos del giro decolonial; a continuación, discute la noción de interculturalidad crítica, y finalmente, presenta los vínculos entre la interculturalidad crítica, la pedagogía decolonial y una visión de la formación de docentes como la dinámica de un desarrollo personal. El texto concluye con una explicación del potencial de la interculturalidad crítica como una intersección de pedagogías transgresoras fundamentadas en el reconocimiento y la visibilización de subjetividades. El artículo hace parte de una investigación en curso acerca de los programas de licenciatura en lenguas modernas, que se está llevando a cabo dentro del marco del Doctorado en Educación de la Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino en Bogotá, Colombia.

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Palabras clave: pedagogía decolonial, interculturalidad crítica, programas de formación inicial de docentes de lenguas

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de ce texte est de présenter une réflexion théorique à propos de l'interculturalité critique comme un outil de la pédagogie décoloniale qui peut être explorée dans les programmes de formation initiale de professeurs de langues comme une manière de compenser l'instrumentalisation de la profession causée par la vision limitée de ce que constitue le développement de professeurs. Pour ce faire, l'article aborde les développements théoriques de l'inflexion décoloniale; puis, il présente la notion de l'interculturalité critique, pour finalement, établir les liens entre l'interculturalité critique, la pédagogie décoloniale et une vision de la formation de professeurs comme la dynamique d'un développement personnel. L'article termine avec une explication du potentiel de l'interculturalité critique comme une intersection des pédagogies contrevenantes fondées sur la reconnaissance et la visibilisation de subjectivités. Le texte fait partie d'une recherche à propos des programmes de formation initiale de professeurs de langues étrangères menées dans le cadre du Doctorat en Éducation de l'Université Santo Tomás de Aquino à Bogota, Colombie.

Mots-clés : pédagogie décoloniale, interculturalité critique, programmes de formation initiale de professeurs de langues étrangères

Introduction

In a recent article, Kumaravadivelu (2014), by means of what he calls personal vignettes, describes how his condition as a non-native English speaker has, in different ways, played against his desire to contribute to the field of ELT. He mentions, for example, his choice of ELT methods as his research interest; second, his publication endeavors; and third, his presence at international conferences held in countries where English is not an official language, or periphery countries, as named by Phillipson (1992).

He claims that despite advocacy in the field of ELT to demystify the idea of native speaker ‘infallibility’ through the recognition of non-native teachers’ knowledge production, the existence of World Englishes and the appreciation of situated pedagogical practices, there exists an orthodoxy in terms of methods (Communicative Language Teaching/Task-Based Teaching), materials (center-based produced textbooks), and a preference for native English-speaking teachers which contributes to constituting non-native English speaking teachers as subalterns (Spivak, 1988); therefore, the author proposes a decolonial option in ELT based on the theoretical constructs of Maldonado-Torres (2010) and Mignolo (2010).

This decolonial option implies several actions. For instance, in terms of research, studies whose goals include demonstrating that members of subaltern communities can teach well, or comparing who can better teach any aspect of language, whether native or non-native teachers, should be suspended; also, research whose objectives are to prove center-developed theories ignoring local demands ought to be reconsidered. A second suggestion has to do with designing situated pedagogical practices which take into consideration the local historical, social, political, and educational conditions. In the same line of thought, other actions include creating textbooks and materials that respond to the pedagogical practices developed by local professionals and, finally,

reconsidering teacher education programs in such a way that future and current teachers become producers rather than consumers of knowledge.

The aim of this article is to present a theoretical reflection on this restructuring of teacher education programs based on the notion of critical interculturality proposed by Catherine Walsh (2010) as linked to the decolonial option suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2014). The text will first address the theoretical developments of the decolonial turn; secondly, it will discuss the notion of critical interculturality. Finally, a reflection on the links between critical interculturality, decolonial pedagogy, and a vision of teacher education as “a dynamics of a personal development” (Ferry, 1991, p. 54) will be presented.

The Decolonial Turn: Acknowledging the Subaltern

The decolonial turn refers to a line of thought developed by a group of Latin American and Caribbean intellectuals who are interested in critiquing the idea of modernity based on the peoples who lived it under a subaltern condition, that is to say, former colonies. Restrepo and Rojas (2010) describe a set of features that shape decolonial argumentation. First, they establish a difference between colonialism and coloniality: colonialism is understood as the exercise of political and military power for the exploitation of wealth in the colonies. Thus, colonialism is connected to the processes of colonization made by European empires in the 16th and 17th centuries. Coloniality, on the other hand, is a phenomenon extending its influence to the present, bringing about different kinds of hierarchies. Restrepo and Rojas (2010, p. 15) explain that coloniality:

refers to a pattern of power operating through the naturalization of territorial, racial, cultural, and epistemic hierarchies which make the reproduction of domination relationships possible; this pattern of power not only guarantees the exploitation of some human beings’ capital by others on a global scale, but also the subalternization and obliteration of

knowledge, experience, and life forms of those human beings who are dominated and exploited in this way (Restrepo & Rojas, 2010, p. 15).¹

A second characteristic of the decolonial turn is the relationship between modernity and coloniality, where coloniality is described as the dark side of modernity which constituted, and still influences, regions that were former colonies. The conceptualization of modernity/coloniality for recent times also involves geopolitics, since it can no longer be conceived of as only pertaining to nations, states, or countries, but is bound to a world power system.

Mignolo (2005) explains that even though this construction of Latin American otherness, since the period of European and American colonialism, is a feature of modernity; in contemporary times, due to the historical process of both Europe and the United States, post-modernity continues to hide coloniality. Today, the dynamics of power and domination are diffuse, as a precise agent of power (country or region) cannot be identified given that they are hidden in organizations. Therefore, globalization as a feature of coloniality cannot be attached to any particular country; however, it does maintain a universal logic from the North Atlantic (i.e. Northern Europe and North America) outwards, usually represented in the incidence of multilateral organizations in the so-called 'third-world' countries, for example, the OCDE (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and its influence on educational policies in Latin America).

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1 Author's translation. The original reads: *"se refiere a un patrón de poder que opera a través de la naturalización de jerarquías territoriales, raciales, culturales y epistémicas, posibilitando la reproducción de relaciones de dominación; este patrón de poder no sólo garantiza la explotación del capital de unos seres humanos por otros a escala mundial, sino también la subalternización y obliteración de los conocimientos, experiencias y formas de vida de quienes son así dominados y explotados."*

This means that

the modern world system is produced during the European colonial expansion which for the first time connects the different regions in the planet, conferring to it a new scale (global). Since then, local experiences in any region in the planet become unthinkable outside of their interconnectedness within the framework of this world system (Restrepo & Rojas, 2010, p. 20).²

Faced with this panorama, the authors cited argue that "the decolonial turn aspires to consolidate a decolonial project" (Restrepo & Rojas, 2010, p. 20). The decolonial argumentation is interested not only in analyzing the ways in which modernity has spread economic and political forms originating from Europe, and currently from the USA, to other regions in the world, but also in formulating a decolonizing ethical and political project whose single aim is to recognize and disseminate the manifold forms of knowledge, ways of life, and hopes for the world emerging from subaltern communities. This entails the construction of an equality-in-difference so that these subalternized forms of knowledge are granted the same validity as those that come from the European and North American experience.

At first glance, it seems that the decolonial turn is based on the same premises as the postcolonial studies emerging from Southeast Asia and Africa; however, there are three main differences between them, as explained by Restrepo and Rojas (2010). First, there is a difference in terms of historical experience: the decolonial turn describes the origin of the colonial difference beginning with the arrival of the Spanish and the Portuguese to the Caribbean and Latin American territories from the 16th to the 19th centuries, or what Dussel (2000) dubs "first

2 Author's translation. The original reads: *"El sistema mundo moderno es producido en el proceso de expansión colonial europea que conecta por primera vez las diferentes regiones del planeta, dándole así una nueva escala (global). Desde entonces, las experiencias locales de cualquier región del planeta se hacen impensables por fuera de su interconexión en el marco de este sistema mundial."*

modernity”. Post-colonial studies, on the other hand, locate the source of the colonial difference in “second modernity”, that is, during the colonization of Asia and Africa by England, France, and Germany from the 18th to 20th centuries.

Another difference lies in the aspects the movements emphasize when exercising their critique. Thus, decolonial theorists ascribe greater importance to the results of colonialism in current configurations of Latin American and Caribbean societies, or what was previously described as coloniality, while postcolonial studies place emphasis on how historical past events have led to present conditions in Asia and Africa, that is to say, on colonialism. In other words, the decolonial turn focuses on the consequences of the colonial past, while postcolonialism focuses on that colonial past as a root of present problems.

The final difference has to do with the genealogy of the communities of argumentation. Postcolonial studies have a strong influence from French post-structuralism (Foucault, Lacan, Derrida), while decolonial theorists also involve in their argumentation elements of Caribbean and indigenous thinkers, Freire’s pedagogy, and feminist theory, among many other aspects; that is why Mignolo (2007, p. 27) states that “decolonial thought is differentiated from postcolonial theory or postcolonial studies in the genealogy of the latter is located in French post-structuralism instead of the dense history of decolonial planetary thought.”³ Nonetheless, despite these differences, both lines of argumentation are concerned with how power relations established during historical experiences of colonial submission have implications for the current lives of peoples who were colonized, as well as for the lives of those who played the role of colonizers.

3 Author’s translation. The original reads: “*el pensamiento decolonial se diferencia de la teoría poscolonial o de los estudios poscoloniales en que la genealogía de estos se localiza en el post-estructuralismo francés más que en la densa historia del pensamiento planetario decolonial.*”

Critical Interculturality: The Path to Overcoming Coloniality

Walsh (2010) ponders on the concept of interculturality informed by the political changes in Latin America during the 1990s. She argues that interculturality is conceived in three ways: relational, functional, and critical. Relational interculturality refers to the contact and exchange among cultures. This kind of interculturality is considered natural to Latin America since in this territory there has always been contact among groups of *mestizos*, as well as groups of African and indigenous descent. However, this view of interculturality remains oblivious to societal structures that maintain inequality within these relations.

Functional interculturality is focused on recognizing cultural difference and diversity ultimately striving for the inclusion of different groups through tolerance and dialogue. According to the author, functional interculturality reached a new height represented in the educational and constitutional reforms of 1990s in which the recognition of diversity became a main goal; however, this recognition followed a top-down approach and ignored the structures of inequality. Additionally, functional interculturality served to neoliberal policies by hiding the interest of using terms such as inclusion and multiculturalism with the purpose of controlling diverse groups to prevent and keep order in the emergence of conflicts caused by exploitation of resources in their territories.

The third view of interculturality is a critical one, focused not only on difference and diversity as such, but, by recognizing how that difference has been constructed within a colonial framework, also serving as a “tool, process and project which is constructed by people as a demand of subalternity” (Walsh, 2010, p. 78). Critical interculturality works as a decolonial, ethical, and political project aiming to challenge and transform existing

structures, institutions, and social relations that maintain inequality in such a way that other ways of being, thinking, living, learning, and knowing are acknowledged. This means that, as the author warns, although the notion of interculturality in her work stems from an indigenous locus of enunciation, it does not imply that other subalternized sectors cannot make part of this decolonizing project.

Another important contribution in terms of critical interculturality has to do with its conception as an epistemic turn. For Walsh (2010), epistemic interculturality represents *an-other thinking* or *border thinking* common concepts in the decolonial turn and similar to proposals made by Anzaldúa (1987), Gutiérrez (2008), and Kramersch (1993), which refer to an

oppositional thinking, not based solely on recognition or inclusion, but rather directed toward a socio-historic structural transformation. A politics and a thought that approach the construction of an alternative proposal of civilization and society; a politics departing from and in the confrontation of power, but which also proposes other logic of incorporation (Walsh, 2007: 52).⁴

However, such epistemic interculturality is not isolated from the dominant paradigms or structures; rather, it uses them to generate an-other thinking in such a way that those hegemonic paradigms are affected and decolonized in order to break with the “cultural standardization that constructs Western universal knowledge”⁵ (Walsh, 2007, p. 51).

4 Author’s translation. The original reads: “*pensamiento oposicional, no basado simplemente en el reconocimiento o la inclusión, sino más dirigido a la transformación estructural socio-histórica. Una política y un pensamiento tendidos a la construcción de una propuesta alternativa de civilización y sociedad; una política que parta de y en la confrontación del poder, pero que también proponga otra lógica de incorporación.*”

5 Author’s translation. The original reads: “*estandarización cultural que construye el conocimiento “universal” de Occidente.*”

A Call for an Epistemic Break in English Language Teaching

Following postmodern, postcolonial and decolonial theoretical developments, Kumaravadivelu urges an epistemic break in the field of teaching English. This implies questioning the “West-oriented, center-based knowledge systems that EIL (English as an International Language) practitioners in periphery countries almost totally depend on” (2012, p. 15). Actions to attain this turn imply breaking with different dependencies: on ineffectual and vacuous terminologies, on Western knowledge production, on center-based methods, on center-based cultural competence, and on center-based textbook industries.

In Colombia, there have been echoes to this call. For example, González (2010, 2012) denounces the existence of academic colonialism in the Colombian ELT field as practitioners’ and teacher educators’ local knowledge is increasingly displaced by foreign agencies and center-based textbook industries. These industries become certifying entities and undertake professional development programs —with the acquiescence of some local professionals— since their members are perceived as better teachers since they allegedly use better methods and strategies than those developed locally.

Therefore, Colombian critical local experts are urging the construction, support, and dissemination of local knowledge especially considering its absence in the formulation of language policies such as the National Bilingual Plan mainly because of the critique local academics made of it. González (2010), for example, states that contributions of local academics “represent one of the main assets of the epistemological debate around English in Colombia” (p. 245). Additionally, Clavijo claims that “becoming more independent intellectually as a nation from the imposed dominant ideologies and being able to value and

support local knowledge and production is a priority in our country” (2009, p. 9).

Coloniality in Colombian Teacher Development Programs

The hegemonic ideology of *native-speakerism* undoubtedly had an impact on teacher development programs, as well. In the Colombian context, for example, in-service teacher training has been commonly assumed by center-based textbook industries by means of one-off workshops for using their publicized material. Also, due to a perceived lack of proficiency of both pre-service and in-service teachers, they are asked to have additional certifications such as TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) and ICELT (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching), which in the long run undermine the work developed by local university teacher education programs and creates hierarchies among certified and uncertified teachers (González, 2009). This means that despite the effort made by universities in designing, offering, and strengthening professional development programs which respond to local conditions and needs by educating teachers as producers of knowledge, people interested in pursuing a career in teaching can do so by obtaining an alternative certification which is based upon a homogeneous idea of both English teachers and ELT contexts, and limits teachers to acting as consumers of knowledge. The use of standardized certifications will also divide teachers into certified and uncertified, leading to unequal access to work and professional development, as well as salaries. As explained by González (2009), this division among teachers is also linked to the location and nature of institutions, that is to say, teachers working in rural areas or in public schools have fewer chances of obtaining these additional certifications.

Finally, when center-based international agencies offer teacher development workshops, they implicitly follow an instrumental approach in

which the teacher becomes a technician who applies *best practices* created by foreign experts, which are supposed to yield results when following a determined sequence of steps in a defined period; this instrumentality contributes to a de-professionalization of ELT practitioners since they become consumers rather than producers of knowledge (Cárdenas, González & Álvarez, 2010).

Initial teacher training programs have also felt the impact of coloniality. In Colombia, there is a widespread belief in the lack of quality of teacher education programs (*licenciaturas*) disseminated by studies based on state tests results (Barón & Bonilla, 2011; Barrera-Osorio, Maldonado & Rodríguez, 2012; García, Maldonado, Perry, Rodríguez & Saavedra, 2014) as well as those describing the poor level of bilingualism in the country (OECD & World Bank, 2012; Sánchez, 2013). Therefore, the Ministry of Education has developed a support strategy for BA programs in language teaching (*Programa de Fortalecimiento a Licenciaturas*) whose actions were, first of all, applying the Online Oxford Placement Test (OOPT) to both teachers and learners to determine their proficiency and, second, utilizing the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) to describe pedagogical knowledge. Additionally, a number of observations and focus groups were carried out.

Coloniality may also influence student-teachers' beliefs, their everyday behaviors, and their expectations in relation to the course of study. For example, despite being proficient in the language, some students with regional accents may be criticized or become self-conscious about not sounding like native speakers. A few students, due to a partial understanding of the nature of language teaching, may neglect grammar or language analysis classes as they are perceived to be less important than communicative or task-based ones. Some other students may see teaching English as learning a set of formulas that may be applicable to any context and then become frustrated when those ready-to-use routines do not

seem to work in the context in which they apply them; finally, a few students may see the learning of educational research in the course of study as unnecessary since these ready-made routines have already been tested before by center specialists and, therefore, they are assumed to be effective in local contexts.

Moreover, an excessive focus on proficiency and instructional best practices may mislead students into believing issues of wider educational scope, such as the notion that addressing inequalities of gender, class, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation in the classroom are out of their area of expertise and action. The risk could be that since students pay attention only to English and the best ways to teach it, they neglect other more pressing issues which may affect learning in general, such as bullying; or they may become so 'enamored' of English that they ignore the political and economic inequalities speaking English creates at both local and global levels. It is important to recognize that many people who enter an initial teacher education program do so to learn the language without always wanting to become teachers; therefore, they focus only on linguistic aspects and language teaching, but not on what surrounds that teaching. Therefore, one of the aims of initial teacher education programs is to make them aware of their responsibilities as public intellectuals and citizens in a global world.

Agray (2008) reflects on what Colombian society asks of language teachers and is very critical, first of all, of the rampant instrumentality fostered by both the social sectors and the Colombian Ministry of Education, and, secondly, of the lack of coherence between what these sectors demand and what the Colombian National Accreditation Council (*Consejo Nacional de Acreditación*), an entity responsible for supervising teacher development programs, requires from *licenciaturas*. She claims that there is a need for language teachers to go beyond these dichotomies and to question, based on their subjectivities, what they demand

from themselves. The author suggests critical consciousness as a possible response to enact this subjectivity. Critical consciousness is one of the elements composing interculturality —as proposed by Freire (1970, 1973, and 1998) and interpreted by Fantini (2000)—, which involves an awareness of self, a consciousness of self in a social situation, a transformation of self in relation to others, and a critical and creative approach to both reality and fantasy.

Decolonial Pedagogy and Language Teacher Development

It is in this vindication of critical consciousness and subjectivity that decolonial pedagogy and critical interculturality come into play. Walsh (2013), the author making the broadest contributions in this area in the Latin American context, presents a detailed discussion of the theories underpinning decolonial pedagogies and how they emphasize the political dimension in education. The author affirms that

Pedagogy and all that is pedagogical go beyond the instrumental sense of teaching and transmitting knowledge; nor are they limited to the field of education or scholastic spaces (...) Pedagogy is understood as an essential methodology within and for social, political, ontological, and epistemic struggles for liberation (Walsh, 2013, p. 29).⁶

This means that within the framework of decolonial theory, pedagog(ies) are considered strategies of resistance to face subordination and marginalization brought about by the colonialities of power, being, and knowing in such a way that “possibilities of being, feeling, existing, doing, thinking, seeing, listening, and knowing in an-other way

6 Author's translation. The original reads: “*la pedagogía y lo pedagógico va[n] más allá del sentido instrumentalista de la enseñanza y transmisión del saber, tampoco están limitados al campo de la educación o los espacios escolarizados (...) La pedagogía se entiende como metodología imprescindible dentro de y para las luchas sociales, políticas, ontológicas y epistémicas de liberación.*”

[are incited] (Walsh, 2013, p. 28).⁷ This emerging pedagogy is theoretically supported by the ideas of humanization, emancipatory praxis, and horizon of hope, which are common elements to the proposals made by Paulo Freire in the pedagogy of the oppressed, the sociogeny developed by Frantz Fanon (1973, 1983), and the proposal of *intellectual maroonism* and the use of writing as a liberating practice as suggested by Manuel Zapata Olivella (1997).

Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist from Martinique in the West Indies concerned about issues of racism and racialization and how both black people and French colonizers contributed to its construction and perpetuation. He used a method called *sociogeny* whose goal was to analyze how white people dehumanize black people, and also how black people incorporate ideas of inferiority based on their experiences under colonial power. In a way, this is similar to hooks' notion of *white supremacist capitalist patriarchy* (1992), which explains racism as not only an action exercised only by whites against people of color, but also one that involves racism exerted by black people against themselves, as well as racism's links with class discrimination, male chauvinism, and capitalism.

Zapata Olivella was a Colombian anthropologist and writer interested in the situation of people of African descent in Colombian society. He advocated for intellectual maroonism (1997). Maroon was the name given to the slaves who escaped from colonial rule and created their own territories with their own rules, traditions, and languages; maroonism in this case means to break with the dependency on colonial ways of thinking and producing knowledge in order to create and utilize methods and epistemologies emerging from local contexts.

7 Author's translation. The original reads: "[inciten] posibilidades de estar, ser, sentir, existir, hacer, pensar, mirar, escuchar y saber de otro modo."

Freire's pedagogy provides a fundamental tenet for decolonial pedagogies in search for intervention rather than adaptation. Freire (2012) argues that politics cannot be separated from pedagogy since education offers people the possibility to exercise a critical reading of the world, enabling them to intervene rather than to accommodate to reality without questioning it. Walsh (2013, p. 40) argues that Freirean pedagogy is based on "critical praxis, not as fixed, identifiable and stable, but as a continuous process and practice of reflection, action, [and] reflection"⁸ which eventually leads to a critique of the self.

Many of the trends for language teacher development (Wallace, 1991; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Moon, 2000; Farrell, 2007; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Burton, 2009; Johnson, 2009; Richards, 2009; and Kumaravadivelu, 2012, among many others) are founded on Schön's (1983) cycle of reflection, which is very similar to the idea mentioned above. Reflective practice according to this author involves three stages: knowing-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-in-action. Knowing-in-action describes knowledge acquired during practice, which eventually becomes tacit knowledge, i.e. "knowing more than we can say" (Schön, 1983, p. 57). Reflection-in-action refers to instances in which both the execution and the reflection upon the action are carried out at the same time. Finally, reflection-on-action is connected to knowledge resulting from spontaneous, surprising, or unexpected turns while carrying out the action.

Schön (1983) also warns how the *routinization* of practice could prevent professionals from thinking about what they do; therefore, he includes in his theorization the moment of reflection on practice which could provide professionals with opportunities to critique tacit comprehensions matured over repetitive experience so that there is a possibility

8 Author's translation. The original reads: "*praxis crítica, no como algo fijo, identificable y estable, sino como una práctica y proceso continuos de reflexión, acción, reflexión.*"

for new uncertain situations to emerge in order to construct new knowledge. This contribution has been taken up in the field of language teacher development in which there is a need for an articulation between received knowledge constructed through research and theories and experiential knowledge gained by means of professional practice which contributes to avoiding routinization and consequently, instrumentality (Wallace, 1991).

Continuing with the foundations of decolonial pedagogy, Walsh (2013) describes Fanon's sociology as "as an essential methodology ... to study both the ways of being a human and the processes of humanization, de-humanization, and re-humanization in colonial contexts" (p. 45).⁹ Key elements in Fanon's thought are awareness-raising, self-agency and action, development of subjectivities, and self-reflection. Awareness-raising was addressed both to black people (living in the West Indies under the French rule) as cognizant of their oppression and to white people for being complicit in the maintenance of a colonial racial system.

This awareness means the recognition, visibilization and understanding of the problems brought about by coloniality result in a process of transformation implying (un)learning, invention, intervention, and action blossoming from colonized themselves. Maldonado-Torres (2005) explains that Fanon becomes something of a Socratic teacher in signaling the importance not only of educating racialized people, but mainly of teaching them not to become slaves to foreign archetypes; therefore, teaching is a tool to empower subalterns to act, that is, to recognize themselves and to do things on their own.

9 Author's translation. The original reads: "una metodología imprescindible... para estudiar tanto los modos de ser humano como los procesos de humanización, deshumanización y re-humanización en contextos coloniales."

Constructing a strong self-concept that is free of the complex of inferiority inherited from colonial experience is the aim of self-reflection and subjectivity development. However, it is understood that there is some lack of a unique subjectivity; instead, there is a command to interrogate and modify the modern/colonial rationality to create different ways of living, being, and feeling.

In terms of professional development Wallace (1991) makes a distinction between *training* and *development*. The author explains that training is usually an action carried out and administered by experts following a top-down approach that may silence subjects. Unlike training, development refers to initiatives teachers take on their own, not as an imposition, but as an exercise of their subjectivity. Another author supporting this idea is Day (1999), who claims "teachers cannot be developed passively, but actively, which means that they have to be centrally involved in decisions concerning the directions and processes of their own learning" (p. 3). Likewise, Díaz Maggioli (2003) defines professional development as "a continuous process in which teachers commit voluntarily to learn to adjust their teaching to their students' learning needs" (p. 1).

Finally, Ferry (1991) discusses the term *formation* (French original), which will be considered as equivalent to *development* for the purposes of this paper. He states that *formation* has been defined by referring to aspects related to it, though a definition of the concept per se has not been provided. He mentions that this term has been related, first, to the device used to support education processes; second, to the programs and contents in which *formation* is assumed as something that people receive from external entities to be consumed and digested. Finally, he claims this term could be interpreted as finding the adequate forms to exercise a craft or profession, that is to say, how a person achieves the condition to carry out a professional practice. Similarly, he claims that this search for the adequate form is determined

by the individuals' objectives and position. Thus, *formation* must be understood as "the dynamics of some personal development" (Ferry, 1991, p. 54).¹⁰ It is this personal and subjectivity development that Agray (2008) seems to be urging Colombian language professionals to think about. She asks in her article on societal demands

What happens with us, individuals who beyond being teachers are also subjects? ... What do we, language teachers, ask ourselves as members of Colombian society? ...Perhaps if we pose this question to ourselves from another locus, not from our teaching profession, but from our condition of subjects who feel, think, live, know, love, have contradictions, make mistakes, have problems, feel fear, etc., the answers might be different or ...even if they were the same, could allow us to assume in another way what is asked of us "on behalf of Colombian society" (Agray, 2008, p. 356).¹¹

In this sense, Kincheloe (2004) within the framework of a critical complex epistemology explains that the way teachers teach as well as their pedagogical principles cannot be separate from the way they see themselves; also, the author states that rarely are pre-service teachers confronted with the question of why they think as they do and, in general terms, about the construction of their *teacher persona* as linked to the social, cultural, political and economic environments which surround them. In the same line of thought, Kumaravadivelu (2012a) also points how important identity is in a postmodern perspective because it is linked to the recognition

10 Author's translation. The original reads: "*la dinámica de un desarrollo personal*."

11 Author's translation. The original reads: "*¿Qué pasa con nosotros, los individuos que por encima de ser profesores somos sujetos? ... ¿qué nos pedimos los profesores de lenguas extranjeras a nosotros mismos como miembros de la sociedad colombiana? ... Tal vez si nos hiciéramos esta pregunta desde otro lugar, ya no desde nuestra profesión de docentes, sino desde esa, nuestra condición de sujetos que sentimos, pensamos, vivimos, sabemos, amamos, tenemos contradicciones, cometemos errores, tenemos problemas, sentimos miedo, etc., las respuestas podrían ser otras o ... las respuestas, aunque fueran las mismas, nos permitirían asumir de otra manera lo que se nos pide 'en nombre de la sociedad colombiana.'*"

of the diversity and multiplicity of narratives about what people knows and does.

Concluding with the theoretical underpinnings of decolonial pedagogy, Walsh (2013) incorporates Manuel Zapata Olivella's ideas on writing as a tool for transformation since it works as a means of reflection regarding problems such as the articulation between race, capitalism, colonialism, and power, as well as people's dehumanization and alienation. According to Walsh (2013), Zapata Olivella presents a cultural manifesto calling for an intellectual and scientific position which favors colonized peoples, a historic comprehension capable of questioning and critiquing the inheritance left by coloniality and slavery with the purpose of overcoming intellectual colonialism, and the recognition of voice(s) as a tool to recover experiential knowledge (Zapata Olivella, 1997). The author highlights the need for recreating liberation strategies based on "rebelliousness of intellectual, artistic, attitudinal, and cultural maroonism" (Walsh, 2013, p. 60)¹²

In conclusion, the goal of decolonial pedagogy is to question, displace, and subvert of concepts and practices left by colonial inheritance with the purpose of intervening, constructing, creating, and liberating by means of a decolonizing practice. Díaz (2010), in a critical reflection about the fundamental aspects of decolonial pedagogy has outlined three main characteristics: a critical understanding of history, the redeployment of emancipatory educational practices, and the de-centering from the colonial episteme. A critical understanding of history involves questioning the imposition of foreign (European and North American) pedagogical thought systems as an indication of the so-called modernity of colonized subaltern territories. The redeployment of emancipatory pedagogical practices implies the location, recovery, and reevaluation of subjects, experiences, and forms of knowledge

12 Author's translation. The original reads: "*rebeldía del cimarronaje intelectual, artístico, actitudinal y cultural*."

tending to transform social reality (Díaz, 2010, p. 225). This aspect is also aimed openness to educational practices focused on the development of historical consciousness and the promotion of critical thinking as abilities transcending the classroom.

Finally, de-centering colonial episteme critiques traditional forms of knowledge production, which are characterized by disciplinary boundaries and alleged researcher objectivity. Hence, there is some need for exploring other new ways of knowing which recognize “the view of the subject, his/her ethical, values, historical, and epistemic orientations as key variants in the activation of educational processes” (Díaz, 2010, p. 228).¹³ Decolonial pedagogy also implies seeing learning as a meaning-making process evidenced in the appropriation and critique of reality based on subjective experience.

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Counter-hegemonic Teacher Development: Experiencing Decolonial Pedagogy

There are very few experiences of trying to implement decolonial pedagogy in teacher development programs. One example is Huergo & Morawicki’s (2010) process of curricular transformation in a program at Universidad de Buenos Aires. Based on their research experience, the authors argue that teacher development revolves around the notion of recognition since understanding schooling entails being aware of both the emergence of new subjectivities and new forms of development which currently incorporate technology, media, and urban youth discourses, among others. Recognition includes different dimensions: recognition of the other and his/her different culture, recognition of experience, voice, and knowledge in educational communication

and recognition of the educational scenarios as cultural spaces.

Recognition of the other and his/her different culture relies on acceptance of the other as an equal who belongs in the same field and has the “capacity to play the same game and play it well” (Huergo & Morawicki, 2010, p. 135). This is a key component of critical interculturality since people are encouraged to establish true cultural contacts stripped of a commercial or consumption interest, unlike in multiculturalism. hooks (1994) explains that radical pedagogical practices have to insist on the fact that everyone’s presence in a classroom is recognized; this means that teachers should value everyone’s presence since any absence would influence classroom dynamics given that every student is seen as a contributing member of the class.

Recognition of experiences, knowledge, and voice in educational communication has to do not only with how teachers and students master school dynamics, but also with how they are able to interpret and incorporate knowledge gained by other means such as ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in the school space. Voice is considered an important element to recognize since it allows individuals to read, dialogue with, and incorporate school experience, as well as to mediate between classroom discourses and those alien to them; that is to say, both students and teachers construct meaning through the use of their voices

Transgressive pedagogy as described by hooks (1994) also means recognizing how the voices of students from marginalized groups have been silenced, being self-aware of how the distribution of power in the classroom may maintain those silences, and finding ways to respond to such situations. In this sense, Giroux (1992) states

13 Author’s translation. The original reads: “*la perspectiva del sujeto y su orientación ética, valórica, histórica y epistémica como variantes clave en la activación de procesos formativos.*”

You can’t deny that students have experiences and you can’t deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process even though you might say these

experiences are limited, raw, unfruitful or whatever. Students have memories, families, religions, feelings, languages and cultures that give them a distinctive voice. We can critically engage that experience and we can move beyond it. But we can't deny it (p. 23).

It is important to recognize these experiences since they inform teachers about how students apprehend and talk about the world and because, based on the understanding of these experiences, teachers can truly establish a process of co-construction of knowledge that accounts for students' cultures, topics, projects and languages.

The final dimension involves the recognition of the school not only as the physical space prescribed by architectural design and spatial dispositions and regulations, but also as the cultural space subjects grant meaning to by going around, establishing relationships and integrating it into their lived experiences. This dimension also involves different notions of time, such as the instrumental time for planning purposes, the practical time understood as duration, and the subjective experience of time.

Huergo & Morawicki (2010) claim that decolonial pedagogy stresses liberation as a key element of Latin American memory, whose goal is to recover the meaning of public education by recognizing identities, subjectivities, and the dissemination of knowledge, voices, and experiences. As such, the challenge of liberation is opening up spaces for diversity in contexts of justice and equality. This notion of recognition also makes a fundamental part of what Walsh (2007) calls critical interculturality inasmuch as one of its functions is the construction and redeployment of an-other way of power, knowledge, being, and living. Likewise, it poses an interrogation to "structures and institutions serving to position groups, practices, and thoughts within a colonial logic" (Walsh, 2007, p. 12).¹⁴

14 Author's translation. The original reads: "las estructuras e instituciones que han servido para posicionar grupos, prácticas y pensamientos dentro de una lógica colonial."

Even though, as was stated at the beginning of this article, this is a theoretical account about the notion of critical interculturality, in terms of practical applications, some initial implementations have been made in three academic spaces of the BA in Bilingual Education at Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana (ÚNICA). The first course is titled Language, Culture and Identity and is studied in the first semester. The main goal of this subject is to analyze the interplay between language and different identity markers such as class, race, gender, sexuality, and also the link between language and ideology and national identities, among other aspects.

The second subject is Intercultural Communication, studied in the third semester, in which aspects such as multiculturalism, histories, conflict, and other aspects are studied. Some examples from different places in the world are analyzed, and the theoretical basis is provided by texts by Martin & Nakayama (2010) and Holliday, Hyde & Kullman (2010), who follow a critical approach towards intercultural communication. Finally, the course titled Pedagogy and Second Language is studied during the fifth semester. Its goal is to offer students an understanding of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies. However, the course activities include an analysis of national policies on bilingualism, a study of traditional ELT methods, and also an analysis of their applicability in light of different Colombian contexts. Finally, the course includes a unit on the post-method and how it can relate to Colombian local situations.

The theoretical foundations supporting these implementations is the *pedagogy of the question*, as discussed by Freire & Faundez (2013), as well as elements of *problem pedagogy* as proposed by Medina (1997) and Ortiz (2009). There is also incorporation of popular culture and experience, as suggested by hooks (1994, 1997). Some other changes have been incorporated in terms of content, activities, and resources, but as was previously stated, this is a general overview of actions, and

a more detailed explanation exceeds the scope of this paper.

A Path for Initial Teacher Education Programs

Undoubtedly, culture has always been a part of language teaching. Nonetheless, it has usually had a superficial approach focusing either on the four F's: foods, fairs, folklore and facts (Kramsch, 1991). After the consolidation of the European Union and the creation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, there has been a move towards the development of intercultural communication understood as "(...) the capacity and ability to enter other cultures and effectively and appropriately, establish and maintain relationships, and carry out tasks with people of these cultures" (Moran, 2001, p. 5), as well as towards the notion of intercultural communicative competence as proposed by Fantini (2000) and Byram (2008), involving different skills related to knowledge, attitude, meta-cognition, and political awareness.

Although these are commendable goals, perhaps due to their origin in North American and European backgrounds they seem to serve the functional interculturality described by Walsh (2010). This means that the focus on recognition conceals the source and maintenance of inequalities existing in subaltern regions such as Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia sustained by historical and social factors.

Critical interculturality serves as a point of intersection of transgressive pedagogies, such as critical, indigenous, feminist, and queer pedagogies, since it involves not only recognizing other cultures, but also learning from and interacting with them. Additionally, it implies the development of critical consciousness towards coloniality so as to uncover contradictions and transform realities, based not only on the reading of the world but also on the reading of the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Lastly, as explained

above, decolonial pedagogy based on critical interculturality aims at a transformation of both teachers and students, building communities of learning, acknowledging different voices, and respecting and incorporating personal experience as a part of constructing knowledge.

Conclusion

In terms of initial teacher development programs, the implementation of critical interculturality includes recognizing the subjectivities of aspiring teachers as constructed by previous experiences in the academic field and an acknowledgement of an ongoing teacher identity project that might be different for each individual. It is important for language teachers to recognize themselves as professionals who are able to construct rather than consume knowledge by engaging in educational research that enables them to be critical of language teaching fads.

Strengthening literacy is also of paramount importance not only in terms of academic texts, but of the other discourses permeating school contexts such as images, Internet, popular culture, and media in general. Finally, future language teachers need to be aware of their role as public intellectuals (Giroux, 2012), who are able to critique issues of coloniality and inequality affecting not only their educational contexts, but also their lives as subjects.

As Huergo & Morawicki (2010) argue, the focus of the decolonial option is not on curricular devices, though they may be re-shaped for these purposes, but mainly on the recognition of subjects and their practices. Acknowledging complexities and tensions among different subjectivities in the current world is the key element of an ethical and political decolonial project. The use of critical interculturality as a tool for decolonializing practice in initial language teacher development programs has yet to be explored.

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