RAISING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN COLOMBIAN CLASSROOMS: A DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW

Sensibilización intercultural en las aulas colombianas: Una revisión descriptiva

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Sensibilização intercultural nas salas de aula colombianas: uma revisão descritiva
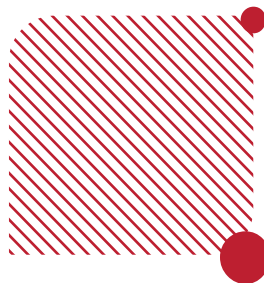
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Abstract: The study of intercultural communication in foreign language teaching opens up opportunities for interaction with new language and cultural practices, thereby making language teaching and learning a more meaningful process. Given the growth of publications about intercultural communication in the Colombian context, this article aims to systematize and analyze research that fosters intercultural awareness through strategic pedagogical planning. To achieve this goal, I analyze publications related to the development of intercultural awareness in the Colombian context between 2012 and 2019. Specifically, I explore the population benefited, specific topics of concern for educators, types of studies conducted, major trends in the results of the articles, and gaps and considerations for future research. Additionally, I present previous studies on culture and intercultural awareness at the international and national levels to connect them with the articles I selected. This inquiry systematizes and discloses advances in the field and analyzes what needs to be done to raise intercultural awareness in Colombian language classrooms. This serves as a good starting point to propose alternatives for a more comprehensive, meaningful, and just language learning and teaching experience.

Resumen: El estudio de la comunicación intercultural en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras abre espacios de interacción con nuevas prácticas lingüísticas y culturales que hacen de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lenguas un proceso más significativo. Dado que el contexto nacional colombiano ha sido testigo de un crecimiento de publicaciones sobre comunicación intercultural, este artículo tiene como objetivo sistematizar y analizar investigaciones que fomentan la conciencia intercultural a través de la planificación pedagógica estratégica.

Por ello, analizo publicaciones relacionadas con el desarrollo de la conciencia intercultural en el contexto colombiano entre los años 2012 a 2019. Para ello, exploro la población beneficiaria, temas específicos de preocupación para los educadores, tipos de estudios realizados, principales tendencias en los resultados de los artículos, brechas y consideraciones para futuras investigaciones. Además, presento estudios previos sobre cultura y conciencia intercultural a nivel internacional y nacional para conectarlos con los artículos que seleccioné. Esta indagación sistematiza y da a conocer los avances en el área y analiza lo que se necesita hacer para generar una conciencia intercultural en las clases de lenguas en Colombia, lo cual es un buen comienzo al proponer alternativas para una experiencia de enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas más integral, significativa y justa.

Palabras clave: Conciencia intercultural; Enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras; Aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras; Docentes de lenguas colombianas; Contextos de aprendizaje de lenguas.

Resumo: O estudo da comunicação intercultural no ensino de línguas estrangeiras abre espaços de interação com novas práticas linguísticas e culturais que fazem do ensino e aprendizagem de línguas um processo mais significativo. Devido ao contexto nacional colombiano ter sido testemunha de um crescimento de publicações sobre comunicação intercultural, este artigo tem como objetivo sistematizar e analisar pesquisas que fomentam a consciência intercultural através do planejamento pedagógico estratégico. Por isso, analiso publicações relacionadas ao desenvolvimento da consciência intercultural no contexto colombiano entre 2012 e 2019. Para tal, exploro a população beneficiária, temas específicos de preocupação para os educadores, tipos de estudos realizados, principais tendências nos resultados dos artigos, brechas e considerações para futuras pesquisas. Além disso, apresento estudos prévios sobre cultura e consciência intercultural em nível internacional e nacional para conectá-los selecionados. Esta indagação sistematiza e dá a conhecer os avanços na área e analisa o que se é necessário fazer para gerar uma consciência intercultural nas aulas de línguas na Colômbia, o que é um bom começo ao se proporem alternativas para uma experiência de ensino e aprendizagem de idiomas mais integral, significativa e justa.

Palavras-chave: Consciência intercultural; Ensino de línguas estrangeiras; Aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras; Docentes de línguas colombianas; Contextos de aprendizagem de línguas.

Introduction

The study of Intercultural Communication (IC) has contributed to the development of interlinguistic and intercultural understanding, helping to break social and geographic boundaries and building relationships among peoples of diverse origins. This is why preparing ourselves to understand, tolerate, and coexist in a friendly manner is urgent in this shrinking world where differences are to be seen as opportunities for sharing and complementing each other. Accordingly, "the globalization of the world community inevitably leads to cultural diversity. The changing cultural characteristics of neighborhoods, schools, the workforce, and social and political life make cultural diversity the norm rather than the exception" (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 29). The national Colombian context has certainly witnessed a growth of publications about IC. Thus, the systematization and analysis of research that fosters intercultural awareness through strategic pedagogical planning that is context-sensitive (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) and inclusive of learners' realities is deemed necessary.

The notion of culture as an inherent component of IC has been studied from anthropological, social, and linguistic views (Baker, 2015; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hall, 1959, 1998; Hall & Reed, 1990; Hofstede, 2011; Kramsch, 2013; Lough, 2002; Rey, 1996; Scollon *et al.*, 2001; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). IC has also been conceptualized as frameworks (Hofstede, 2011), patterns (Lado, 1957), and communicative practices attained through social interaction (Baker, 2015; Hall, 1959; Hall & Reed, 1990). Similarly, IC research is characterized by a wealth of terms such as intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), intercultural awareness (IA), intercultural sensitivity, intercultural adroitness, and cross-cultural communication (Bennett, 1998; Byram,
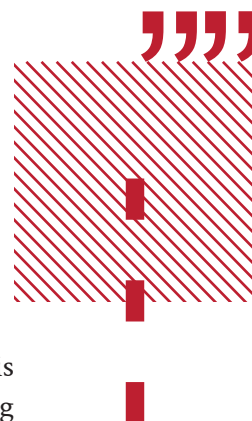
1997; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Deardorff & Jones, 2006; Hua, 2016; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Woodin, 2016).

In fact, it is essential to increase IA in foreign language (FL) classrooms (Baker, 2011; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Seider, 1981), which should be a space for reflection and interaction that prepares English teachers to approach language not as the ultimate goal but as a means for building relationships and making meaning out of experiences lived inside and outside the classroom. Since language is a central element to achieve this goal, language teachers are called to go beyond verbocentric views of language (Álvarez Valencia, 2016; Kress, 2000) and include the full repertoire of communicational forms and multiliteracy practices that may contribute to enhancing students' possibilities to make meaning.

It is also relevant that the context (Anglo-European) and languages (e.g., English) in which most IC studies have been developed have somehow shaped our understandings, beliefs, and feelings toward the cultural groups that surround us. Because of the need to undertake studies that consider the population involved from an insider's perspective, Eurocentric traditions (Baldwin, 2017) have recently been challenged. Different critical approaches such as critical race theory and postcolonial theories have objected to imposed Western frameworks to understand people of specific socio-cultural groups.

It is now essential to analyze the different physical and geographical contexts that have given rise to social, economic, historical, and other powers to understand the underlying discourses. Therefore, when examining how IC has permeated foreign language teaching (FLT), the history behind its origin must inform the current decisions that language teachers make. This is to bring about understandings and discussions that go beyond surface cultural practices (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015) that intend to blindly mirror what is foreign culture and ignore or reject one's own culture.

The examination of local academic practices regarding culture has been part of the academic discussion in Colombia. Álvarez Valencia (2014) presents an analysis of how culture in language teaching has expanded since its inception in Colombian scholarship. Through a review of what has been done in the field in the last decades, until 2011, the author portrays how FL teachers have developed research studies in the form of data-based, theory-based, or pedagogical experiences to examine the role of culture and the intercultural approach in their language classes. Thus, this paper aims to explore publications developed in the Colombian context between 2012 and 2019 that intend to raise intercultural awareness. Here, I analyze the population benefited, the most recurrent topics of concern for educators, types of studies conducted, major trends in the

results presented, and gaps and considerations for future research. This inquiry systematizes and discloses advances in the field and analyzes what needs to be done to raise intercultural awareness in Colombian language classrooms, resulting in a more comprehensive, meaningful, and just language learning and teaching experience.

Next, I present a general background on the study of culture and intercultural awareness, followed by some pioneering studies in the national context. After that, I mention the rationale behind the journals and articles selected; then, findings, discussion, and pedagogical implications are introduced. Finally, I conclude with considerations for further research.

A historical view of Culture

Attempting to conceptualize culture has taken several decades of work, and yet a plethora of possibilities rooted in different authors' views have resulted in the anthro-pological, social sciences, and applied linguistic fields (Baker, 2015; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hall, 1959, 1998; Hall & Reed, 1990; Hofstede, 2011; Kramsch, 2013; Lough, 2002; Rey, 1996; Scollon *et al.*, 2001; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009).

Baker (2015) affirms that "our definitions of culture will always be partial and open to revision and change" (p. 46). Its origin, from an etymological perspective, highlights the duality of culture as what is cultivated or grown, not naturally born (Baker, 2015). That is, being the result of knowledge that is received through social interaction. Hofstede (2011) characterizes culture through frameworks and examples of behaviors that may be anticipated, while Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) ponder the emic and etic dimensions of culture, considering it a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values.

The year 1957 gave rise to a definition of culture that was considered a complex area of study. Lado (1957) affirmed that "cultures are structured systems of patterned behavior" (p. 53). He illustrates how the concept of culture, based on studies done by anthropologists, has evolved "from an atomistic definition that describes it as a more or less haphazard collection of traits to one that empha-sizes pattern and configuration" (p. 53). Culture has also been defined based on its relation and influence on communication (Hall, 1959; Hall & Reed, 1990). Hall (1959) argues that "culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants; thus we must learn to understand the out of awareness aspects of communication" (p. 29). The complexity of culture and the little likelihood of being able to reach

measurement or comparison between cultures has also been highlighted (Hall, 1959; Lado, 1957; Lough, 2002). Culture is presented as a form of communication (Hall, 1959) and portrays what people do as a message that needs no words.

Trying to reify culture and differentiate between surface/objective (knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs) and deep/subjective culture (a complex, non-explicit, and unconscious whole) has been of major concern to building a definition (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hall, 1998; Lough, 2002; Scollon *et al.*, 2001). Nonetheless, a view of culture that is constructed in social action (Baker, 2015) considers specific traits and does not deny its fluid components. As such, the different views of culture demonstrate how influencing disciplines that have contributed to the study of culture have also added to the sometimes dichotomous or complementary definitions we know today.

From Culture to intercultural awareness

Distinct research agendas, developed by advocates from diverse disciplines, have permeated the field of FLT. Hence, the surplus of possibilities when approaching intercultural communication needs to be carefully considered. As such, Chen and Starosta (1998) define ICC as "the ability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and integrate cultural differences that qualifies us for enlightened global citizenship" (p. 28). ICC can be considered the umbrella term that comprises three interrelated concepts based on Chen and Starosta (1998) proposal: intercultural sensitivity (affective), IA (cognitive), and intercultural adroitness (behavioral). From this view, IA is the "cognitive aspect of ICC that refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how we think and behave" (p. 28). IA is, therefore, the specific concept that, in my view, supports the analysis of the studies developed in the Colombian context.

Additionally, Baker (2011) states that IA is "a conscious understanding of the role that culturally based forms, practices, and frames of reference can have in IC, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication" (p. 198). There is thus a need for developing IA to allow for successful intercultural encounters through the negotiation and construction of meaning.

Along with the previous definition, Baker (2011) proposes a three-tiered model of IA -Basic cultural awareness (CA): aspects of CA that are related to an understanding of cultures at a very general level with a focus on the first culture (C1). Advanced CA: More complex understandings of cultures and cultural frames of reference moving away from essentialist positions. IA: Moving beyond viewing cultures as bounded entities, and recognizing that cultural references and

communicative practices in IC may or may not be related to specific cultures. Baker (2011) also makes a difference between conceptual IA: Types of attitudes towards cultures and knowledge of cultures needed to successfully engage in IC; and practice IA: The application of this knowledge in real-time instances of IC.

All in all, the development of IA among FL learners is essential for catering to their cultural diversity and for exposing them to other views of the world through the language they are learning.

Global studies foci

Studies in the field of IC have adopted diverse approaches to exploring the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of communication (Bennett, 1998; Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Deardorff & Jones, 2006; Hua, 2016; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Woodin, 2016). However, despite the focus on IA by some scholars (Baker, 2011; Chen & Starosta, 1998), the specific link to language education has not always been established.

The concept of IC has been explored in various ways, including an understanding of culture as a dynamic and behavioral pattern of explicit and implicit behavior (Brice-Heath & Street, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Other research has focused on the development of the intercultural dimension of the person (Byram *et al.*, 2002) and ICC (Byram, 2013; Coperías, 2010). Furthermore, models and dimensions of ICC have been suggested (Bennett, 1998; Byram, 1997; Deardorff & Jones, 2006; Sercu, 2004), which have facilitated the measurement of its development.

In addition, some works have studied the inclusion of IA in the foreign language university classroom (Baker, 2011; Boghian, 2016; Rappel, 2009), while others have explored the conditions, beliefs, and understandings required for IA development (Liu, 2016; Wang, 2014), such as integrating literature and communication in FLT (Kramsch, 2013). Developing awareness of the interrelation between language and culture in meaning-making has also been explored (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Colombian authors on the move

Intercultural communication has been a topic of interest in Colombian classrooms as well, given the fact that teachers have addressed the need to go beyond the development of linguistic awareness and to consider the social and cultural understandings of local communities. Álvarez Valencia (2014) reviewed publications in the intercultural field of FLT in Colombia; his work revealed that

"the influence of sociocultural perspectives has propelled language teachers to move from a linguistic approach toward an intercultural approach to language and culture" (p.1). Álvarez Valencia also found a variety of topics being explored, including conceptual aspects of culture, the role of culture in language teaching, and the development of IA.

Other topics that have moved authors in the local context regarding culture and IC deal with learners' perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of cultural elements (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015; Ramos *et al.*, 2012); developing IA through exposing students to literature and cultural content (Castañeda-Usaquen, 2012; Fandiño, 2014; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2012, 2013, 2014; Ramos, 2013); and developing sociocultural consciousness, critical interculturality and cultural agency (Bautista, 2017; Bonilla & Cruz, 2014; Calle-Díaz, 2017; Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Viafara & Ariza, 2015). Several recent studies have leaned toward multimodality in language learning and experiential learning for cultural development (Álvarez Valencia & Fernández Benavides, 2018; Fernández Benavides, 2019; Llanes Sánchez, 2018).

The previous studies, as well as many others that will be analyzed in the subsequent sections, are illustrations of how the FL classroom has become a space to welcome students' realities while opening their horizons through meaningful, context-driven language learning and teaching.

Journals and articles selected

Colombian scholarship has evolved considerably in the last two decades, as more teachers and teacher educators are concerned with bringing research closer to the language classroom. This awareness has given teachers the possibility to start bridging the gap between theory and practice, between what is mandated from above, and the reality we face in our daily teaching and learning practices, which echoes the attainment of "particularity, practicality, and possibility" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538). The surfeit of topics being explored is the result of current trends in language teaching that this century is unveiling and has to do with the search for new and better ways to provide language education that is meaningful and that prepares students to better face their personal and professional lives.

This review condenses publications that have contributed to the development of an intercultural perspective in the Colombian context from the years 2012 to 2019. A detailed search of the 97 open-access issues published in six national peer-reviewed Colombian journals was conducted. The criteria for selecting the journals (see Figure 1) were the journals' focus on topics concerning FLT

and that included IA. I went over every issue and initially selected the articles based on the description of the study, which related to the intercultural field and explored or was addressed to the Colombian context. Afterward, I read every article to find commonalities and categories of analysis.

Figure 1. Journals selected, current index rank, and number of articles
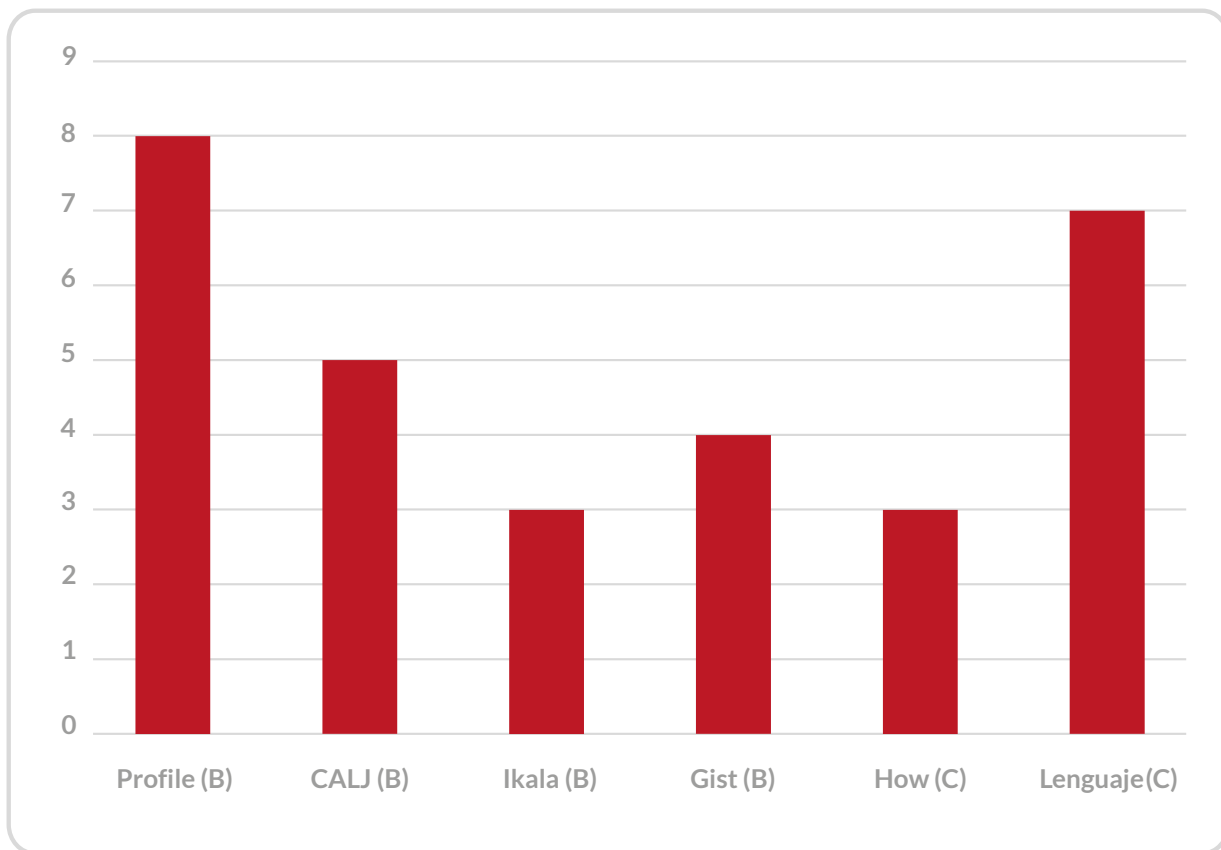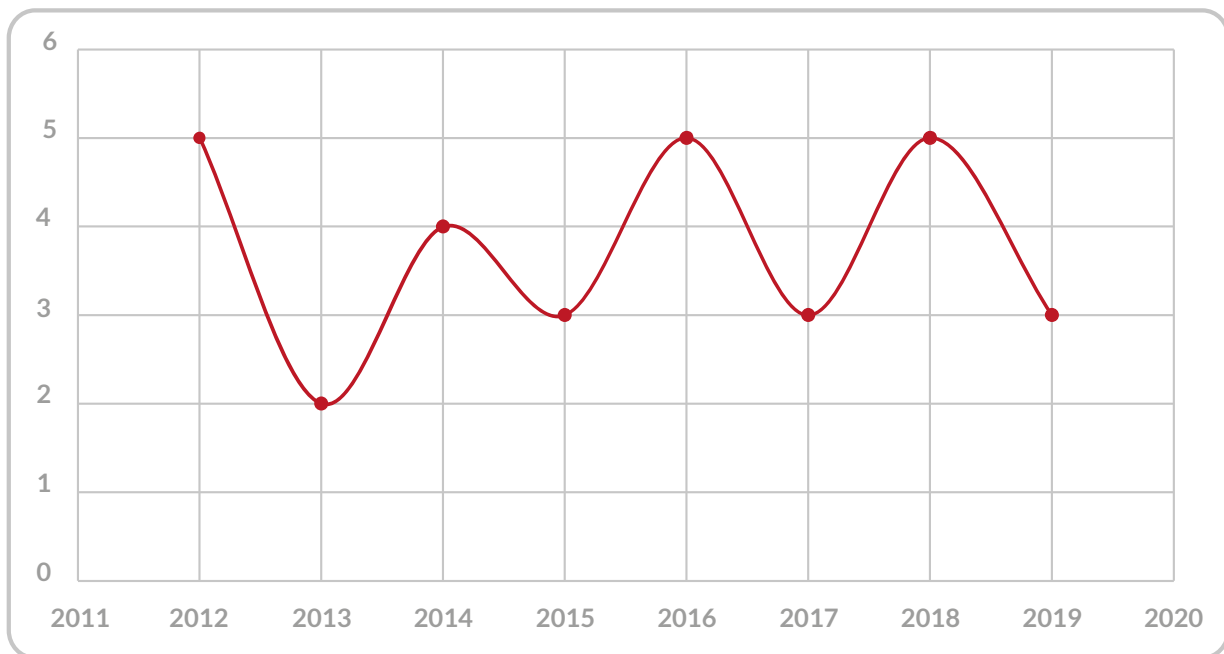

Source: Author.

The selected journals have been indexed for over a decade in the Colombian indexing system (Publindex) for academic publications, established by Colciencias, the entity that regulates research and publications nationwide. These journals have a history of academic excellence, which has kept them moving up in national and international rankings. However, in 2017, Colciencias modified the system, resulting in the lowering of the ranking position of all journals. This has demanded greater efforts to continue publishing high-quality papers and keeping up with national and international standards. Thirty articles that met the requirements were retrieved from the 97 issues consulted up to October 2019. Figure 1 displays the number of articles selected

per journal, highlighting *Profile*, edited at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, with eight publications, and *Lenguaje*, edited at Universidad del Valle, with seven publications.

Figure 2 depicts the number of articles published per year, which illustrates how much attention scholars are paying to this area of study. The years 2012, 2016, and 2018 had the most publications, while publications in 2013 were scarce. Nonetheless, there is no significant difference across the years, and the limited number of publications suggests that there is still work to be done in proposing nationwide alternatives that guide the inclusion of an intercultural perspective in FLT.

Figure 2. Number of Articles Published by Year in all Journals Reviewed
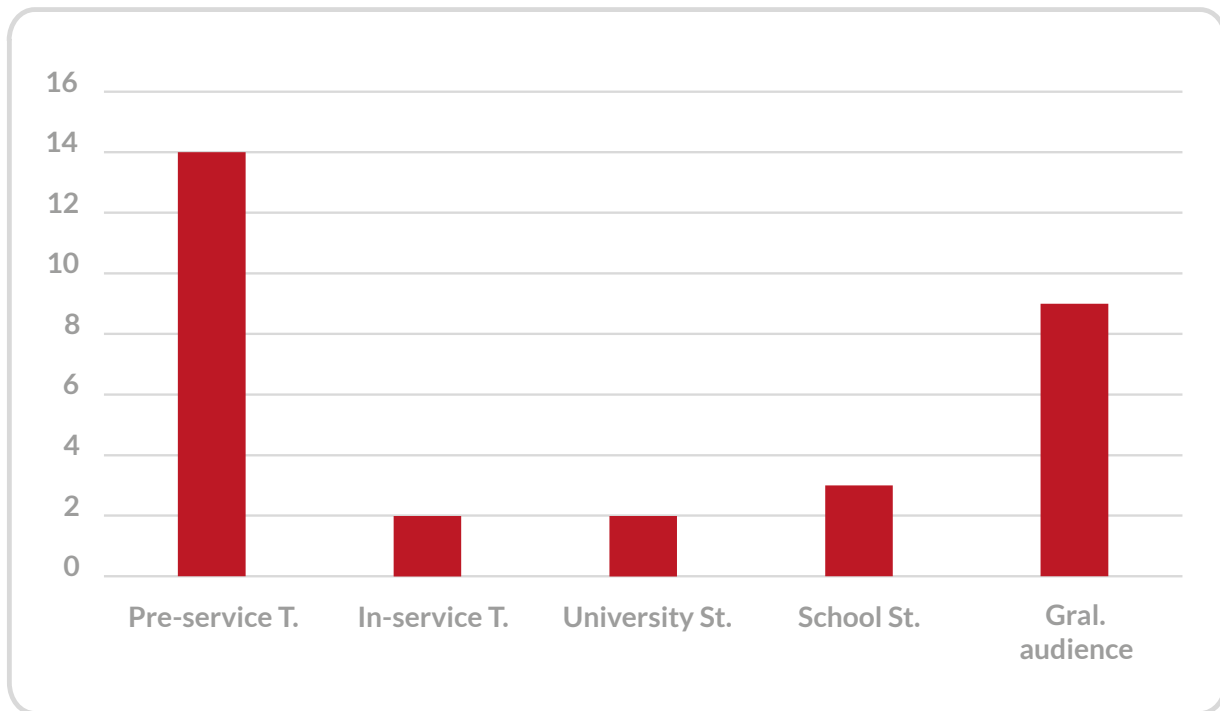

Source: Author.

Findings

The inquiry provided relevant data to examine the population benefited, most recurrent topics of concern for educators, types of studies conducted, major trends in the results presented, gaps, and considerations for future research. Remarkably, IC in FL education has received notable attention in the global academic community because of the acknowledged interest to know more than the linguistic code to be able to effectively communicate (Byram, 2013).

Population targeted

Research studies have been conducted with different populations in mind. Remarkably, nearly half of the projects have been carried out with pre-service teachers (see Figure 3). The 14 groups of pre-service teachers targeted are part of studies conducted by teacher educators from the public sector, as presented in Figures 4 and 5. Some common goals include exploring their perceptions of language, culture, and the intercultural perspective (Arismendi-Gómez, 2014; Díaz & Quiroz, 2012), implementing classroom strategies (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2012; Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Oviedo & Álvarez, 2019), and examining the benefits of study abroad programs in identity and agency construction (Colorado, 2019; Viafara & Ariza, 2015).

Figure 3. Population Being Studied

Source: Author.

A general audience is targeted by publications that aim to bring changes to the way FLT is perceived. Consequently, the authors question current trends and address issues relating to the development of IA and critical citizenship as absent elements in the national curricula, standards, and textbooks (Calle-Díaz, 2017; Díaz & Rua, 2016; Fandiño, 2014; Nuñez-Pardo, 2018). Additionally, foreign language learners who are not part of school or university academic

programs are also benefitted by proposals that bring language learning closer to communities or foster IA and critical cultural consciousness on current local and global topics (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2018; Llanes Sánchez, 2018; Moncada Linares, 2016; Usma & Moya, 2017). The data also indicate that elementary and secondary school students have not been widely researched, with only three articles published (see Figure 3) by school teachers, highlighting the need to pay more attention to these populations and their learning processes.

Researchers' profile and affiliation

Teacher educators seem to have solid agendas that set a trend in the research under review (see Figures 4 and 5). The twenty contributions retrieved, which range from fostering intercultural awareness to building a critical intercultural discourse, are a path that many teacher educators are walking along with pre-service teachers. Although limited in number, these articles are evidence of a shift that teacher education programs are experiencing because teacher educators are discovering the need to do research that involves their teaching practices and will benefit their students as future educators.

Figure 4. Researcher's
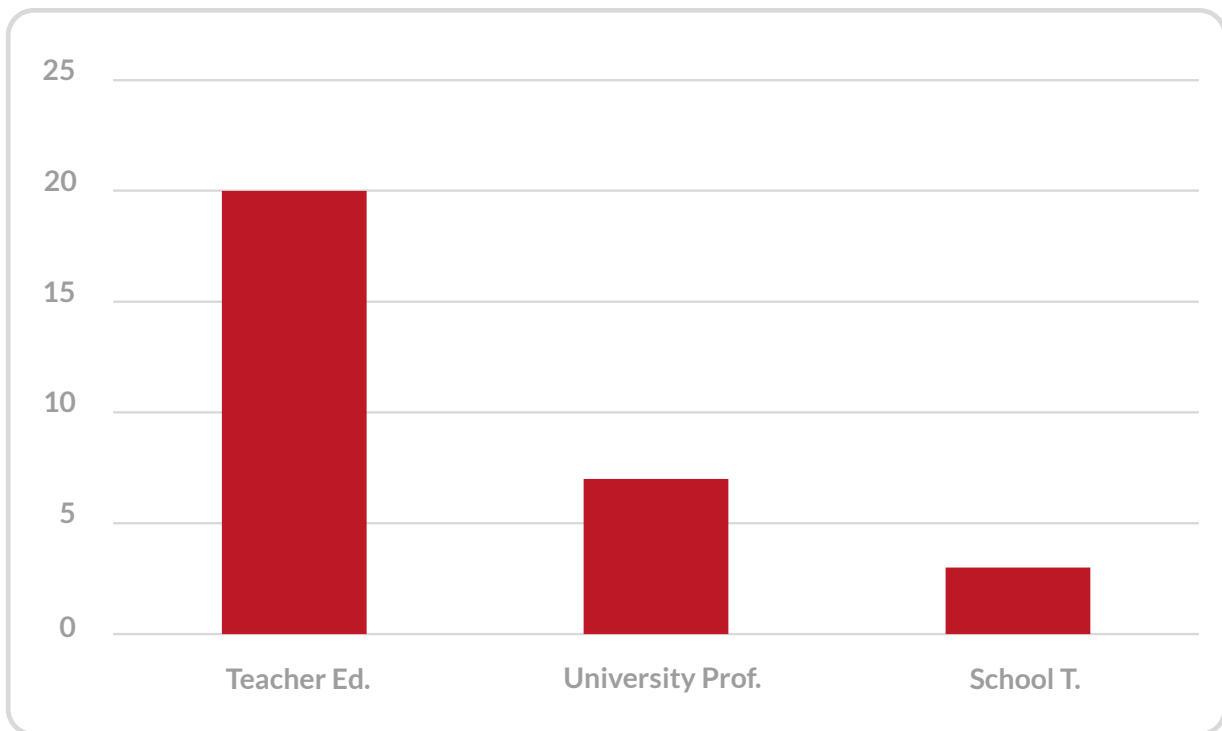
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Figure 5. Researcher's affiliation
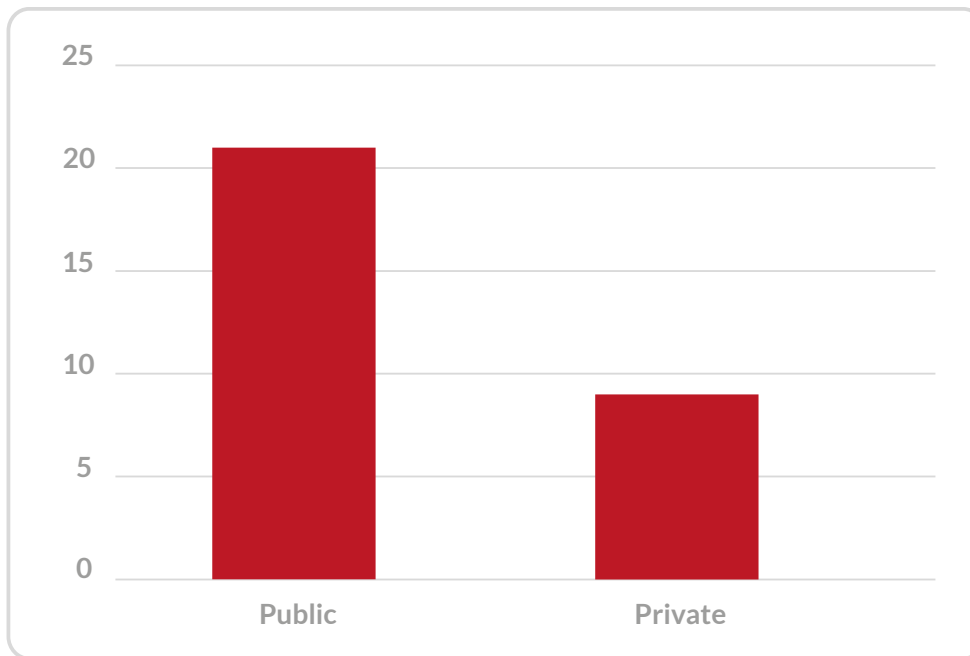
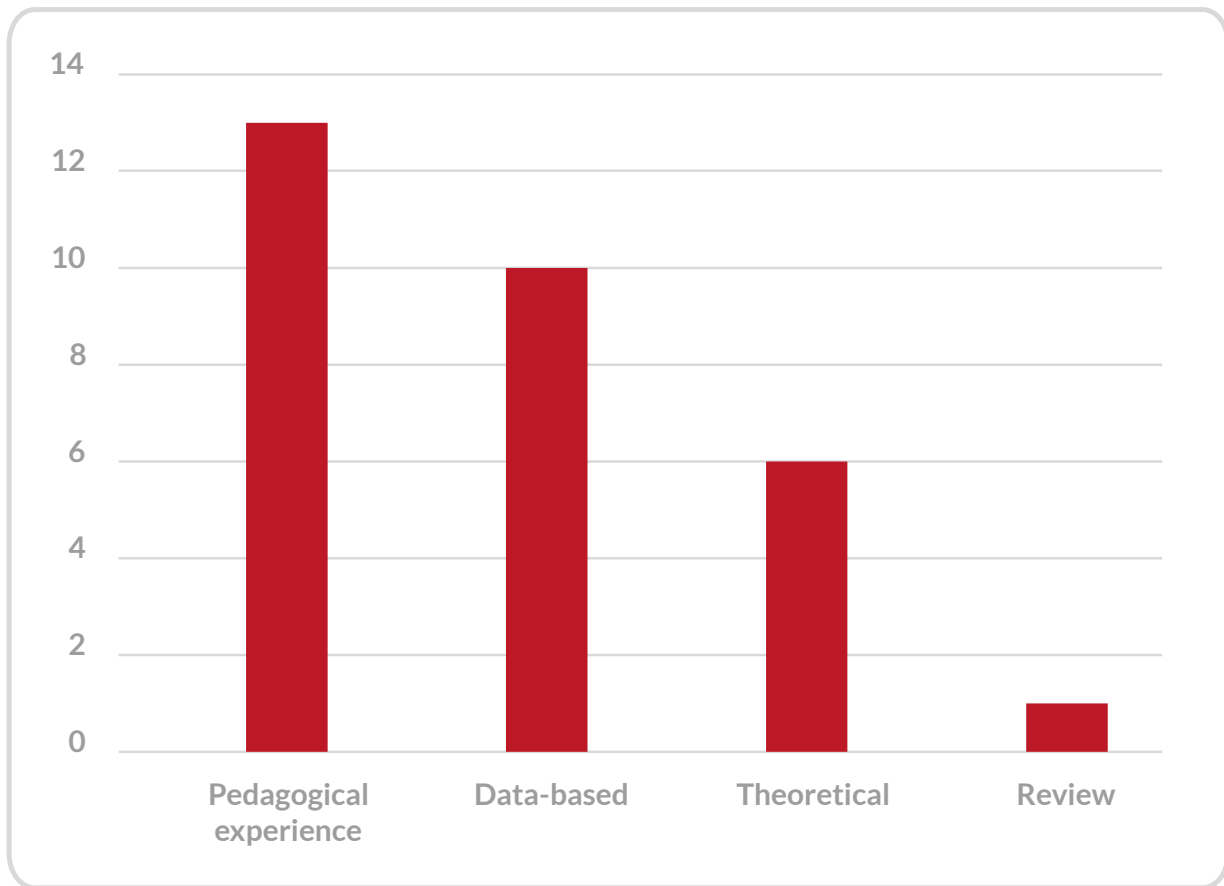

Note. Source: Author.

Types of studies

Most of the articles reviewed present pedagogical experiences (see Figure 6), which are derived from teachers' practices and inquiries in the classroom. Castañeda-Usaquén (2012), for instance, explores high school students' development of intercultural awareness through the design of specific material for the English class. Ramos (2013) aims to include the intercultural component in a research and pedagogy class, and Oviedo and Álvarez (2019) explore how lessons tailored to their students can enhance their cultural knowledge. The contexts explored permeate different levels of instruction, from high school to university settings, as well as different contexts, including rural (Ramos *et al.,* 2012) and urban schools. The methodologies lean towards qualitative studies that help unveil students' perceptions through surveys and narratives and propose the implementation of pedagogical strategies and the analysis of students' artifacts to understand their gains throughout the teaching process.

Figure 6. Types of Studies

Note. Source: Author.

Following this, data-based articles delve into topics such as cultural agency, as a result of travel abroad experiences (Viafara & Ariza, 2015), culture in FL education (Arismendi-Gómez, 2014), and pre-service teachers' ideas of intercultural practices in their academic programs (Olaya & Gómez, 2013). These articles reveal university teachers and teacher educators' interest in exploring local and national intercultural practices in order to create a state-of-the-art overview of what is being done in the field. They follow a qualitative approach and use questionnaires, observations, interviews, and the exploration of official documents to understand the realities encountered.

Next, theoretical articles analyze citizenship education and EFL standards (Calle-Díaz, 2017), cultural content in EFL textbooks (Gómez, 2015), and topics on critical interculturality (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). These articles reflect

upon bringing theory closer to the language classroom and propose innovative means to do so. For example, Moncada Linares (2016) explores how studying concepts such as *othering* can contribute to the development of critical CA. The methodologies used include a documentary analysis of language teaching standards, an examination of the role of the textbook in FLT, and an analysis of the theoretical development of the intercultural perspective. They contribute to a better understanding of the field and serve as the basis for creating proposals that include essential elements for the intercultural perspective to be more visible in the national context.

Finally, there is one review article by Nuñez-Pardo (2018); the author presents the role of the textbook as a biased device in language teaching. Textbooks are underpinned by ideologies and cultural elements that do not necessarily promote intercultural understanding. Through a critical analysis of textbooks from a decolonial perspective, Nuñez-Pardo (2018) proposes alternatives for contextualized language teaching.

Recurrent topics of concern

The thirty articles explored, deal with several topics related to culture and intercultural language teaching. After analyzing their commonalities, I grouped them into three broad categories that condense the most relevant contributions of each article as follows: (1) From cultural content to intercultural understanding; (2) fostering intercultural awareness; and (3) building a critical intercultural discourse.

1. From cultural content to intercultural understanding

The first group of articles analyzes cultural content in FLT materials and academic programs and the need to find ways to develop intercultural understanding. There were twelve articles in this category, which were further divided into three subgroups.

Articles in Group A identify cultural content. For example, Gómez (2015) analyzes how culture is presented in textbooks and uncovers surface cultural content in them. He advises teachers to include deep cultural elements to encourage more substantial intercultural development in their classes. Nuñez-Pardo (2018) also identifies challenges in the conception of an intercultural perspective in textbooks. After reviewing the historical role of textbooks, she advises teachers and text designers "to be aware of hidden messages in materials" (p. 235) and to promote gender equality. In line with this view, Fernández Benavides (2019) explores intercultural elements in a language learning website. He refers to the

modes of communication present and also to the limited view of culture or "superficial construction of interculturality" (p. 67) in the lesson he analyzed. Díaz and Rua (2016) question the cultural components included in the national standards for foreign language teaching. They assert that the standards introduce culture but in a basic and formulaic way; therefore, they suggest the need to acknowledge students' cultural practices and contextualize those presented in the standards. To support this view, Olaya and Gómez (2013) emphasize the need to promote the teaching of culture from a critical perspective.

The articles in group B explore learners' views of culture. Three studies concentrate on asking pre-service teachers about cultural education in their academic programs (Arismendi-Gómez, 2014; Diaz & Quiroz, 2012; Olaya & Gomez, 2013). The study developed by Arismendi-Gómez (2014) acknowledges the paramount importance of cultural and intercultural practices in language learning; accordingly, the author explores teachers' perceptions of such practices. He finds that his academic program has a specific course with a high intercultural component and that teachers of other classes recognize the importance of this component in language learning. Some teachers include cultural elements in their classes through the use of authentic material; many other teachers acknowledge the relevance of culture, but when it comes to planning their lessons, they do not conceive culture as an integral part of language learning. In this regard, Atkinson (1999) declares that the language learning and teaching field has "adopted a received, commonsense view of culture that seems to merit little discussion" (p. 625). Diaz and Quiroz (2012), correspondingly, explore pre-service teachers' conceptions of cultural education; while all participants acknowledged the need for cultural education for comprehensive language learning, the authors see the results of this inquiry as a source for the development of material and activities for cultural education. An additional study explores the role of culture in the Bilingual Colombia Program (Fandiño, 2014). The author proposes the incorporation of culture beyond ethnocentric views and through teaching strategies that are inclusive of students' cultural identity.

Articles in Group C report on curriculum development and the implementation of pedagogical activities to move towards intercultural understanding. In this regard, Oviedo and Álvarez (2019) design customized lessons to help pre-service English teachers gain cultural content knowledge. This is made possible through the adaptation of class material and the use of activities based on student's learning styles. To elaborate more on this, Saniei (2012) advises that much of the success in language acquisition is possible when "teachers provide students with materials which focus on both language and sociocultural components. This would lead to viewing culture as an essential part of a syllabus" (p. 10).

Similarly, but in a different context, Ramos *et al.* (2012) encourage students' intercultural understanding in a rural school by including their context in the lessons because of the differences that exist between rural and urban education. Tomlinson (2003) supports this view when he proposes local criteria for developing material. Additionally, Herrera (2016) intertwines language and culture through a pedagogical proposal that underlies the subject as an entity in the world. To conclude, cultural education is explored by Díaz (2012) who advocates for one's own knowledge to get to know and understand 'the other'. She points to the need to design a curriculum that acknowledges diversity.

2. Fostering intercultural awareness

This second group consisted of eleven articles that addressed intercultural as a perspective, competence, dimension, or awareness. I have created three subcategories as follows:

Group A presents literary texts as an alternative for developing intercultural awareness. Gómez (2012, 2014, 2018) contributes widely with three publications in which he develops different literary strategies with authentic material, short stories, and international news to include elements of deep culture in his classes. Gómez (2018) argues that "ICC cannot be enhanced by just identifying and learning by heart lists of general facts of surface culture such as tourist places, holidays, historical events, food, etc." (p. 189). He states that throughout his pedagogical proposal, "learners recognized that they learned about controversial cultural traditions and complicated beliefs of deep culture…" (p. 195), which is a step towards having learners become more critical intercultural individuals. Byram (1997) also acknowledges the role of literary material in FL educational contexts for learners to critically evaluate and be aware of ideologies that facilitate ICC development.

Articles in group B provide evidence of the role of encounters with individuals and their communities as meaningful opportunities to expand one's own intercultural perspective. Carreño (2018) encourages students' interaction with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and unveils their perspectives towards diversity. She suggests that "sharing about their cultures and their social contexts allowed students to speak up their minds regarding several concepts and aspects of society" (p.129), which is a good contribution to students' intercultural awareness. Llanes Sánchez (2018), on the other hand, took her students to a rural setting so they can encounter individuals who were culturally different with the objective of leading them to experience cultural learning and gain intercultural competence. She affirms that "cultural knowledge may be

constructed collectively rather than individually. Factors such as the nature of encounters and interactions in which learners are involved play a central role in growing culturally" (p. 239).

The last category identified involves a mixture of pedagogical implementations to attain the intercultural goal. In group C, we find the use of materials based on specific cultural practices, adapted for a specific group of students to make sense of foreign cultures (Castañeda-Usaquen, 2012). Bautista (2017) conducted a project that aimed to find opportunities to raise sociocultural awareness by connecting the EFL class with the local and global context. She suggests that "by gradually empowering students to go beyond the walls of the classroom, they were able to expand their global and local knowledge" (p. 151). Usma and Moya (2017) report on an intercultural proposal that contrasts students' own language and culture with the target one to potentiate their communicative skills. Similarly, Ramos (2013) describes a pedagogical experience with pre-service teachers in a research class to develop intercultural awareness in topics related to education. Finally, the use of fiction for enhancing ICC is a strategy implemented by Herrera (2018). He proposes collaborative learning to recreate intercultural spaces through the creation of fictional worlds. Herrera's work evokes the initiative of Michelson and Dupuy (2014) who use global simulation in a language course to foster intersemiotic awareness through a variety of discourses and fictional social roles.

3. Building a critical intercultural discourse

The following seven articles report on attempts to build a critical intercultural discourse. I have established two subcategories based on the following. Group A deals with the effect of experiencing other cultural groups. The first example is the work developed by Colorado (2019), who analyzes pre-service teachers' identity construction after being part of an international sojourn. The author highlights the role of interaction in participants' perceived changes. This study is aligned with Viafara and Ariza (2015) who remark on the need to pay more attention to the agency in future language teachers. For the authors, what matters is what learners do with cultural knowledge, how much they grow, and the kind of people they become, as well as the impact these experiences have on their lives and their communities. In fact, Charbonneau (2008) describes the experiences that foreign language students live when going to the country where the language is spoken, which is compared to uniting two worlds; two ways of thinking because each language shapes how we learn and see the world.

Another remarkable study is the one carried out by Bonilla and Cruz (2014), who explore and analyze critical sociocultural elements embedded in the teaching of English in rural contexts. The population targeted in their research was

in-service teachers who were already facing the challenges of diversity in education, thus, making the study relevant for its immediate contextual application.

Group B is concerned with reflective and critical teaching that fosters critical intercultural education. We begin with a reflection paper that discusses alternatives for citizenship education (Calle-Díaz, 2017); then the critical turn in intercultural studies is explored in the language classroom through works that introduce topics of deep culture (Gómez, 2015). Another paper focuses on the inclusion of other cultures while appreciating diversity (Moncada Linares, 2016). Finally, Granados-Beltrán (2016) introduces some of the principles of the decolonial turn in ELT and advocates for transcending the instrumental role of language teaching. He draws on Kumaravadivelu (2016), who first introduces decolonial views in ELT and has prompted language teachers to develop a critical intercultural perspective, to not just mirror but take a stance beyond an "idealized version" of the other (p.77).

Discussion and pedagogical implications

Exploring and analyzing all the issues contained within the six journals studied allowed us to develop a panoramic view of national research in the field of IC, its connection with IA, and the advances and gaps we need to bridge. The national bilingual plan triggered finding alternative means for approaching FLT in the country. This era, which started in 2004 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014), transformed teacher educators' research agendas. As a result, theoretical reflection papers and pedagogical strategies to improve specific skills in language teaching became a common thread in publications. Additionally, more teacher educators started to explore the intercultural component, go beyond instrumental teaching, and call for reflection and action.

This means that filling the gap of bringing research closer to the language classroom is crucial to better educate future language teachers who can make informed context-based decisions. Since in-service teachers have benefited little from research in this area of inquiry (Bonilla & Cruz, 2014), professional development programs are crucial to support those practitioners in their everyday struggles, achievements, and disperse contexts and levels of instruction.

It is essential to highlight that the different types of studies analyzed in this paper have gone from exploratory and descriptive to interpretive and analytical, underlining proposals that aim to bring practical pedagogical interventions to the classroom through the integration of literature (Gómez, 2015) and fictional worlds (Herrera, 2018), among others. Such proposals are remarkable, but not

so many, and not so widespread, which marks a good beginning for a line of inquiry that is slowly advancing in our national context.

Gómez (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018) has been the biggest contributor to the field as he examines pre-service English teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward aspects of culture and intercultural competence and develops different literary strategies to include elements of deep culture in his classes. Other contributions include Fandiño (2014), who explores the incorporation of culture in the teaching of English as a foreign language within the framework of the *Colombia Bilingue* Program, reflecting upon the readiness and need for including culture in our teaching practices as we approach and reflect upon our own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as those of others. Additionally, Bonilla and Cruz (2014) study unexplored settings as an attempt to explore Colombian rural settings, which is key to understanding the inequalities present in our system. This hard work on the part of researchers, knowledgeable about the context, makes it possible to start reducing such gaps. Granados-Beltrán (2016) highlights the need for decolonial pedagogies to reach far as English teachers and to empower our students to do the same.

Colombian scholars, through their publications, voice national realities regarding policies, and economic and contextual inequalities, and thus disclose the need for having critical intercultural citizens. They attempt to go beyond a linguistic view, to include other aspects that are relevant to bring about real communication processes that transform their students' realities.

The research agenda being developed by Colombian scholars is driven by the urge to have our students access context-driven FL education that brings possibilities (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) of empowerment, uncritically replicating foreign practices, and possibilities of change. The topics being addressed are paving the way toward the reconciliation of theoretical reflections and pedagogical practices. As such, these articles highly contribute to raising intercultural awareness and are a step forward in the development of FL learning and teaching in Colombia.

Conclusion and Considerations for further research

This review aimed to explore studies published in Colombian journals on intercultural communication, with a special emphasis on intercultural awareness. After analyzing the threads waived by contributors, it is essential to remark on the role of teacher educators as models in the development of proposals to raise intercultural awareness.

The categories of analysis that emerged from these studies were based on the population that participated in the studies, the types of studies developed, as well as the most recurrent topics of concern for educators. As a result, it was noted that most studies involve pre-service teachers, which is promising if we want to expand the intercultural perspective in the country because those future teachers will be more aware of the role of the cultural dimension in the variety of contexts and levels of education they will teach.

The recurrent topics of concern were grouped into specific categories based on the particular foci of the authors. The three big groups described the cultural views that lead to intercultural understanding, the fostering of intercultural awareness, and the building of critical intercultural discourse, thus raising critical awareness towards FLT and favoring a decolonial and localized perspective (Canagarajah, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2016).

The data revealed that educators in Colombia have advanced from silently receiving and passing knowledge to processing, understanding, and doing research themselves. Colombian scholars have crafted more context-sensitive language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) and designed curricula more aligned with students' needs and realities. Even so, it is essential to continue building on the existing literature to be agents of change. Additionally, research should be directed to elementary and high school classrooms, from an insider's perspective, where homeroom teachers are lead researchers.

To continue bridging the research-teaching gap, new projects should aim at exploring communities of practice through community-based pedagogies (Clavijo-Olarte & Ramírez-Galindo, 2019), drawing on funds of knowledge (González *et al.*, 2005). As an example of academic projects that have positively impacted in-service teachers and their students in Colombia, Clavijo-Olarte and Ramírez-Galindo (2019) report on a series of research projects that involve teachers and students in "local mapping to explore social, cultural and linguistic aspects of their surroundings in each institution" (p. 54). These projects recognize the resources that students and their communities provide for learning English and align with the concept of Funds of Knowledge coined by González *et al.,* (2005), which recognizes students' potential and validates the knowledge brought from home and their communities. They affirm that "people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (pp. ix-x). To accomplish this acknowledgment, the authors document funds of knowledge of homes and communities in order to break stereotypes, build knowledge and make meaning, open teachers to intercultural understandings, and bring those experiences to nourish the school curriculum through those experiences.

It is also necessary to encourage teacher educators to expand their research foci to include schoolteachers as research participants and as researchers themselves. As a matter of fact, involving in-service teachers guarantees the addressing of real classroom situations and the immediate application of pedagogical strategies for further and faster development of intercultural awareness in FLT. All in all, it is in the hands of teachers at all levels, and of teacher educators, to change the future of education, which can only be done through inquiry, reflection, and action.

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Notas

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