

IDENTITY IN COLOMBIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING JOURNALS: A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Identidad en las revistas colombianas de
enseñanza del inglés: Una revisión crítica
de la literatura

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Identidade nas revistas colombianas de
ensino de inglês: uma revisão crítica da
literatura

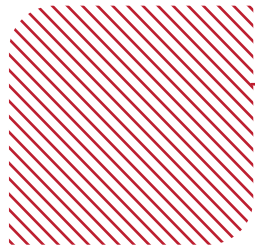
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Abstract: This paper presents a critical literature review of publications on identity in English Language Teaching and Learning in select Colombian journals from 2006 to 2019. The review analyzes 35 articles based on specific selection criteria to provide an overview of research methods, conceptualizations, and conclusions that had been derived from examining identity within the field of second and/or foreign-language education. The analysis reveals that the authors adopt poststructuralist theories of language teaching and learning, recognizing identity as a crucial construct to examine the connection between individuals and educational and social contexts.

Keywords: Identity; English language teaching and learning; Critical literature review.

Resumen: Este artículo es una revisión crítica de la literatura que examina las publicaciones sobre identidad en el campo de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés en algunas revistas colombianas entre 2006 y 2019. Teniendo en cuenta criterios específicos para seleccionar las revistas y las publicaciones, se analizaron 35 artículos con el fin de tener una visión general de los métodos de investigación, conceptualizaciones y conclusiones que se han derivado de examinar la identidad dentro del campo de la enseñanza de segundas lenguas y/o lenguas extranjeras. Se comprobó que los autores sitúan sus investigaciones dentro de las teorías postestructuralistas de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lenguas, aceptando la opinión de que la identidad es un constructo clave para explorar el vínculo entre los individuos y los contextos educativos y sociales.

Palabras clave: Identidad; Enseñanza y aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa; Revisión crítica de la literatura.

Resumo: Este artigo é uma revisão crítica da literatura que examina publicações sobre identidade no campo do ensino e aprendizagem da língua inglesa em algumas revistas colombianas entre 2006 e 2019. Considerando critérios específicos para selecionar as revistas e as publicações, 35

artigos foram analisados a fim de ter uma visão geral dos métodos de pesquisa, conceitualizações e conclusões derivadas do exame da identidade dentro do campo do ensino de segunda e/ou língua estrangeira. Constatou-se que os autores situam suas pesquisas dentro das teorias pós-estruturalistas de ensino e aprendizagem de línguas, aceitando a opinião de que a identidade é uma construção chave para explorar o vínculo entre os indivíduos e os contextos educacionais e sociais.

Palavras-chave: Identidade; Ensino e aprendizagem da língua inglesa; Revisão crítica da literatura



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Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to examine how the concept of identity has been explored in Colombian scholarship in the field of English Language Teaching and Learning (ELT&L) during the first two decades of the 21st century. This critical literature review will analyze the most significant journals in Colombia that focus on language education, bilingual education, and language teaching and learning to understand how the theory of identity has evolved. The journals that were selected for review are CALJ, GIST, HOW, ÍKALA, and PROFILE. These journals were chosen based on four pre-established criteria, which are: a) publication of articles in the field of foreign language education, b) publication in English, c) reporting works about the Colombian context with Colombian participants (or theoretical papers in the field), and d) availability online at the time of the search.

Four of the journals selected for this critical literature review (CALJ, GIST, ÍKALA, and PROFILE) were classified as B, and one (HOW) was classified as C, according to Publindex. This classification was valid until December 31st, 2020. Except for HOW, which is published by ASOCOPI, the other journals are published by universities in the country. These journals accept various types of

works, including empirical research, pedagogical experiences, and theoretical reflections, among others. All the journals provide open access to ensure that their articles are available online for the academic community at large. This has resulted in a wider local, national, and international readership, providing established and novice researchers with equal opportunities to share their work (See Appendix A).

Identity within ELT and learning in Colombian journals: the search for meaning

To conduct the search for articles that met the aforementioned criteria, a keyword search was performed on the journals' website, using the term "*identity*" in singular and plural forms, and focusing on the information provided in the title, keywords, and abstract. A total of 35 articles that addressed identity within the field of English language teaching were found. Table 1 presents the number of articles, sorted by journal and year of publication. CALJ had the most articles with 13 (37.1%), followed by PROFILE with eight articles (22.9%), HOW with seven (20.0%), and GIST with five (14.3%). ÍKALA had the smallest number of articles on the topic, with two (5.7%).

Table 1. Journals and their articles per year

No.	Year	CALJ	GIST	HOW	IKALA	PROFILE	Total
	2006	2					2
	2007	1	1				2
	2008	1					1
	2009					1	1
	2010					1	1
	2011	1					1
	2012	4		1		1	6
	2013			2		1	3
	2014		1			1	2
	2015			1	1	1	3
	2016		1	1			2
	2017	2		1		1	4
	2018	2			1	1	4
	2019		2	1			3
	Total	13	5	7	2	8	35
	Avg.	37.1	14.3	20.0	5.7	22.9	

Source. Author.

The most prolific year was 2012, with six articles published, followed by the years 2017 and 2018 with four each. The publications about identity started in 2006 in these journals, with Mejía (2006) and Hernández Castro and Samacá Bohórquez (2006). Since 2006, articles about identity have been published continuously in any of the Colombian journals aforementioned (See Table 1).

During the first decade of the 21st century, seven articles were published: CALJ (4), GIST (1), and PROFILE (2). The first publication on identity appeared in HOW in 2012. The year of publication of the first article signals the relative newness of identity studies in Colombian journals. The second decade of the 21st century witnessed an important growth in the number of publications on identity (28 articles in total). The latest three articles appeared in GIST (2) and HOW (1) in 2019.

Generally, the theory of identity has been approached as an individual construct as well as part of an area of study like religious identity, political identity, etc. The articles reviewed here were in consonance with this type of organization, and thus, 11 areas emerged. In order of frequency, they were: Cultural Identity, ELT Teachers' Professional Identity, Language Learners' Identity, Pre-Service Teachers' Identities, LGBTQ/Sexual/Gender Identity, National/Regional/Local Identity, Identity, Linguistic/Language Identity, Social Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Youth Identity (see Table 2). *Cultural identity* and *ELT teachers' professional identity* were the most frequent themes among the publications; *LGBTQ/sexual/gender identity* and *national/ regional/ local identity* were grouped based on their particular domains, namely sexuality, and place, respectively. *Language learners' identities* and *Pre-Service Teachers' identities* are related to students pursuing an academic degree in language teaching. Four areas appeared only once: *linguistic/language identity*, *social identity*, *ethnic identity*, and *youth identity* (see Table 2). *English language teachers' professional identity* was one of the most frequent topics, partly due to the scope of the journals. *Cultural identity* also ranked higher, probably influenced by current interests in intercultural communication and language education.

The data showed that attention has been paid to traditional areas of interest in teacher education such as teachers' identity and learners' identity; however, little attention has been given to topics such as gender identity and local identity. The interest in these new topics indicates that global trends in language education have permeated scholarship in Colombia.

Table 2. Areas of study addressed in the articles

No.	AREAS OF STUDY	TOTAL	ARTICLE
1	Cultural identity	6	Guerrero Moya <i>et al.</i> , (2016), Gómez Rodríguez (2015), Escobar Alméciga and Gómez Lobatón (2010), Zuluaga Corrales. <i>et al.</i> , (2009), Cruz Arcila (2007), and Taylor (2007)
2	ELT teachers' professional identity	6	Torres-Rocha (2019), Castañeda-Londoño (2017), Torres-Rocha (2017), Guerrero Nieto and Meadows (2015), Fajardo Castañeda (2014), and Quintero Polo and Guerrero Nieto (2013)
3	Language learners' identity	4	Ortiz Medina (2017), Caviedes <i>et al.</i> , (2016), Galvis (2015), and Gómez Lobatón (2012)
4	Pre-service teachers' identities	4	Torres-Cepeda and Ramos-Holguín (2019), Díaz Benavides (2013), Castillo and Díaz Cortés (2012), and Hernández Castro and Samacá Bohórquez (2006)
5	Queer/LGBT/sexual/gender identity	4	Lander (2018), Rojas (2012), Rondón Cárdenas (2012), Castañeda Peña (2008)
6	National/regional/local identity	3	Flórez González (2018), Carreño Bolívar (2018), and Zwisler (2018)
7	Identity	2	Guerrero (2011) and Mejía (2006)
8	Linguistic/language identity	2	Arias (2014), Escobar Alméciga (2013)
9	Social identity	2	Benavides Buitrago (2017) and Jiménez Guamán (2012)
10	Ethnic identity	1	Soler (2012)
11	Youth identity	1	Bonilla-Salazar (2019)
	TOTAL	35	

Source. Author.

In the same way, one observation from the data was the extensive range of different words co-occurring with the term “identity”: 228 different expressions with 1,416 occurrences. Noun phrases combining adj/noun + *identity* or *identity* + adj/noun were common in forming uses of the word identity. In the articles, the word “identity” was used either as the head noun, as in “*gender identity*,” or the adjective (or modifier) of another noun, as in “*identity construction*.” Both words in these collocations were treated as one, as a noun

phrase, and as a lexical unit. This is a lexical sophistication phenomenon through which scholars working on identity show their knowledge of elaborate vocabulary (see McCarthy & Jarvis, 2010). The occurrence and co-occurrence of collocations with “identity” signal high frequencies of the use of sophisticated language in the texts and serve as the foreteller of a specialized field of knowledge. They both contribute to delineating identity as a broad field of study within ELT in Colombia, although a consistent definition of these terms in the articles needs to be more rigorous. Appendix B shows the most frequent expressions found in the data.

Regarding references, the data showed that the total number of sources cited in the 35 articles was 1.128, with an average of 32.2 citations per article. Sorted by national and international references, it was found that only 1.42% of the total number of references are from Colombian scholars. Why did Colombian scholars not cite more sources from the country? The answer could be partially explained by considering the relatively few articles published and the assumption that the area of identity is nascent in Colombia. What may be expected is that, as the field of study keeps growing in Colombia, the influence of Colombian scholars increases, so they gain the relevance to be influencers in putting forward a Colombia contribution to the theory of identity in language education.

From the international references, the data showed that 18 out of 35 articles cited Norton’s (1995, 1997, 2000) publications. The contributions of Bonny Norton to the Colombian scholarship view of identity within the field of language education are undeniable. Norton’s (2010) postulates about identity are drawn from a poststructuralist theory of language, which is seen as discourse. From this perspective, the relationship between language and identity is built from the notion that speech is closely linked to the person who speaks and that the speaker is linked to social relations. Thus, individuals renegotiate their sense of self as they interact socially in differing communities that are divergent and paradoxical. As such, Norton and Toohey (2011) claim that communication is an ongoing conversation that outsiders try to get into, sometimes unsuccessfully. That is why *usage* plays an important role in language communities since speakers attempt to convey meaning in social practice. The 18 articles under review follow poststructuralists’ views of identity that are in consonance with Norton’s premises.

The Beginnings of identity theory in Colombian Journals

Hernández Castro and Samacá Bohórquez (2006) and Mejía (2006) were the pioneering articles that addressed the topic of identity in the fields of language teaching and learning in Colombia. Hernández Castro and Samacá Bohórquez’s (2006) article aimed to explore the importance of national and foreign cultural

issues in language teaching. The article was the report of a small-scale research study conducted during a seminar on bilingualism in a master's program. The objective was to determine how students interpret cultural aspects embedded in foreign language learning. Hernández Castro and Samacá Bohórquez argued that culture is an element of people's identity that leaves a mark on their identities. They differentiated between cultural and social identity, pointing out that social identity is a tool to define individuals in relation to their roles and categories within their society, while cultural identity is something that individuals can be aware of as long as they accept the existence of other cultures. The authors suggested that throughout the study of foreign languages, learners also raise awareness of the foreign culture. Despite space limitations, authors who publish their works in journals should provide evidence that their theoretical approaches have considered different perspectives so that their products have the expected depth according to the publications, context, and state of the art of the topics under study. For example, Hernández Castro and Samacá Bohórquez (2006) did not thoroughly explain the differences between cultural identity and social identity and did not state their own contributions based on the sources and their findings.



Mejía's (2006) article, on the other hand, asserted that "there is a need for an equitable language policy that includes all the languages and cultures represented in the country" (p.152). It also sought to determine the influence of bilingual programs on society, especially on the issue of tolerance. In her discussion, Mejía referred to identity, establishing two main areas of analysis: national identity and bilingual school identities. Initially, she criticized the idea of people who believe that identity is something that can be lost when in contact with other cultures. She maintained that identity is something that transforms over time, influenced by experiences lived.

Mejía (2006) pointed out that identity is socially constructed; individuals hold multiple identities, and because people have multiple identity dimensions, they can shift their identities depending on the context they inhabit. Mejía asserted that what people understand about themselves is mediated by what others think of them. Thus, the cultures that bilinguals inhabit are seen as mirrors that reflect different instances of their identities, since those discourse communities are the cultures that shape their identities. In her view, if an individual's identity is found conflicted, they can feel disoriented, a sense of not belonging anywhere. Accordingly, Mejía made the point that school environments are favorable locations to raise awareness of the symbolic value of language; in those contexts, individuals may create a school language variety that symbolizes both the student's and institutions' identities. This aspect is significant since the no-

tion of a “native speaker” can be devised as a social construction. The foreign accent of a non-native speaker becomes part of a national identity, an element that is shared with other individuals of the same cultural background. Indeed, this is a meaningful contribution since, at the time, little attention had been paid to how someone’s accent constituted an expression of identity.

These two publications from 2006, which focus on identity in Colombian journals, are important because they adopt critical views about bilingualism. Furthermore, they contribute to the discussion about the role of identity in language education and provide insight into how identity is developed. According to the authors, individuals’ identity is influenced by their culture, which is a hallmark of who they are, even reflected in the accents people develop in the foreign language. Additionally, the context of students’ and teachers’ institutions may create a culture that transcends school borders and affects their national identity. However, the authors did not explain what identity meant to them or how it should be understood in the context of language learning.

In 2007, two articles were published: Cruz Arcila (2007) and Taylor (2007). Cruz Arcila carried out a qualitative case study about EFL learners’ development of intercultural understanding. In his view, individuals’ own culture determines the way they see others’ social or cultural identities and even change or affect others’ identities. However, the sole statement of identity awareness is not a guarantee to assert that an individual’s identity has been changed or “affected.” The article needs to provide more information about this process of identity construction. The author uses terms such as *cultural identity* and *social identity* without providing a definition, a comprehensive conceptualization, or an appropriate theoretical background. Cruz Arcila’s (2007) idea regarding the negative impact of being in contact with foreign cultures on a person’s identity lacks further development. The article does not present the reader with a consistent construct of identity or an explanation of how identities are transformed. It must be kept in mind that, within the theories of identity linked to language education, the language learner is a contextualized social being who inhabits inequitable and variable spaces.

Taylor (2007), on the other hand, investigated new identities while establishing contact with others who are not necessarily from different cultures but anyone people interact with. The study explored the process of subculture adaptation of college students. Taylor used the concept of the third space, where students live experiences that allow them to interact and understand new identities. She claimed that in interculturality, individuals must be people who “are more aware of their own lingua culture in a much deeper way and who are open to exploring new identities and perspectives as part of their daily contact with

others" (Taylor, 2007, p. 68). This is important because it reaffirms the power of awareness of one's own culture and intercultural encounters. Unfortunately, the author does not credit the word *lingua cultura* to Friedrich (1989), the linguistic anthropologist who introduced it to imply the inextricable connection between language and culture. Furthermore, the author provided little description of constructs such as *cultural identity* and *boundaries of identity* that was essential in her article. However, a positive achievement is that she linked identity with culture in a scenario where cultural identities result from interactions.

2008-2017: A Decade of Gains and Doubts

This section reviews some of the articles published between 2008 and 2017 that focused on pre-service and in-service teachers. Quintero Polo and Guerrero Nieto (2013) were the first authors to publish on elementary school teachers' identities. They held the idea that teachers are social beings who see themselves from their own perspectives as well as the perspectives of others. The authors believed that a teacher's identity materializes through their methodology and the way in which content is addressed; both method and content constitute the framework of teachers' practices. Within this structure, the identity of school-teachers is constructed based on their image and roles within the institutional setting, one of those roles being that of a researcher. They maintained that when teachers are active in the production of textbooks, materials, tests, and training courses, they also produce knowledge that can be shared with the local and international academic community. In turn, this helps teachers to build a sort of international professional identity that positions them within their own contexts. The findings of Quintero Polo and Guerrero Nieto (2013) showed that teachers may experience oscillating identities, which is a swaying occurrence between having power and being powerless. Another substantial point asserted by the authors is that teachers tend to exhibit a self-secure identity when they deal with classroom matters if knowledge is at play, but if it is about policies (i.e., planning, designing, or implementing them), they feel disempowered.

Díaz Benavides (2013) reinforced the notion that identity is a social phenomenon developed through interaction. A teacher's identity depends on the professional context and the way they interact with colleagues. Accordingly, if it is a student-teachers identity, it emerges in the context of the classroom, where they exercise their practicum. Additionally, the type of environment influences the sort of identity a teacher develops. The discourses mobilized through interaction in the institution are a factor in identity construction since teachers' and students' experiences and interactions are organized and negotiated through discourse. Diaz Benavides (2013) concluded that reflection is a vital component in raising awareness of teachers' identities.

Fajardo Castañeda and Miranda Montenegro (2015) highlighted another essential aspect of language teachers' professional development, which is the relationships they establish with their students and the institution they work for. Becoming a language teacher may not be a decision made when students start their degree; it is often when they do their practicum that they discover if they really want to develop a professional career as a language teacher. This is precisely what Fajardo Castañeda and Miranda Montenegro (2015) aimed to examine in their study: determining the impact of the pre-service teaching experience on their professional development. When teachers have their first teaching experience, they can gain meaningful insight that can motivate them to continue their professional education by advancing to graduate studies, living abroad, and even imagining possible teaching contexts where education could be better.

The idea of a global professional identity, introduced by Guerrero Nieto and Meadows (2015), suggests that teacher education programs should be oriented toward local and global issues so that future teachers can deal with the challenges they face in their profession. Guerrero Nieto and Meadows explained that critical pedagogy should be a component in the preparation of language teachers so that they can develop a global professional identity. Another component suggested by the authors was the communities pre-service and in-service teachers could create to strengthen their global profession and foster their professional identities. From another point of view, it is essential to recall Carreño Bolívar (2018), who insists on understanding the national identity and strengthening the value local cultures have on the exercise of the profession.

Along the same lines of thought as Guerrero Nieto and Meadows (2015), Caviendes *et al.*, (2016) explored the collaborative work of pre-service EFL teachers to proofread academic papers and how this experience influenced their language learning identities. The participants worked in teams to develop their potentialities by negotiating their ideas, roles, arguments, and strategies to cooperatively work and construct knowledge and identity. Caviendes *et al.*, maintained that languages are vehicles for establishing relationships and positioning individuals. In this sense, the authors agreed with Norton's (1997) definition of identity, as Norton insists on the nature of identity as socially and situationally constructed. Caviendes *et al.*, (2016) affirmed that their participants embodied four identity positions during teamwork: the overconfident learners, the empowered learners, the mediators, and the outsiders. All of them emerged from social interaction, although it was not stated whether teachers move from one identity to another.

Contrary to the focus on national or global professional identity, Arias-Cepeda and Rojas (2017) suggested that a more cognitive approach should be emphasized in the professional development of language teachers. They point out

that “the implicit needs of such identity include the development of high order thinking and communicative skills in both languages, as well as the understanding of what language is (both as contextually-independent and as contextually-situated)” (p.141-2). In their reflection, they suggested a curriculum reform so that teaching programs could go beyond the emphasis on methodologies and language proficiency to find ways to ensure the development of bilingual teachers’ identities as intellectuals who can transform the curriculum and existing social structures. In consonance with these authors, Granados-Beltrán (2016) from a critical intercultural approach concludes that language teachers should recognize themselves as critical professionals who can produce knowledge.

Today’s buzzing ideas about identity in Colombian journals

The most recent publications on the subject of identity are from 2018 and 2019, and they include articles from all the journals examined. These articles provide an important overview of identity and language education theory in Colombia and the potential direction the field can take. There are four articles from 2018 and three articles from 2019 (see Table 1). Carreño Bolívar (2018) shared the findings of a pedagogical experience she conducted to develop university students’ intercultural competencies, with a particular emphasis on national identity as a means to raise awareness of interculturality. The first relevant point she addressed is that indigenous groups perceive their identities as an obstacle that hinders their access to standard education. While this issue was relevant to her article, it was not extensively developed. However, Carreño Bolívar observed that individuals must value their culture in order to build a *well-grounded identity*. She asserted that “our national identity has been undermined throughout history due to several issues dealing with historical, political, and social events that have created a collective sense of national shame” (Carreño Bolívar, 2018, p. 130). The author’s idea was that culture, country, and national identity should be matters of honor; individuals should not diminish their own cultures or nationalities, as doing so diminishes their identities. According to her, education plays a crucial role in fostering pride in national identity, as this mindset paves the way for a more liberal society. Although the author offers interesting insights into the issues surrounding the construction of identity among indigenous groups, little is said about the development of identity when individuals undermine their own cultures or the role that communities play in shaping their people’s identities. Concepts such as national identity require further development and definition in the paper.

Lander (2018), on the other hand, explored the link between queer identity and language teacher identity from a broader perspective. The study was framed within a poststructuralist perspective on identity and is in line with the claim that categories like sexuality may impact language teaching and learning (see

Norton and Toohey, 2011, for example). Lander's study aimed to determine the influence of the Colombian context on language teachers' identities. The participants were three gay male teachers, and their narratives serve as the basis for understanding their identities as homosexual language teachers in the Colombian context. Lander pointed out that identity can be either temporary or permanent, and it is a significant factor in individuals' identities. A positive aspect of this article is that the author provided a concise review of language teacher identity, emphasizing its importance for language teaching, as teaching shapes identity and is shaped by identity at the same time. Lander drew upon post-structuralist definitions of identity (Aneja, 2016; Gray & Morton, 2018; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Varghese *et al.*, 2005), which view identity "as something multifactorial that is in constant development, constructed in social processes using language and influenced by social context" (p. 91).

Lander (2018) also emphasized the strong role played by academic institutions in shaping teachers' identities. Regarding the social, cultural, and political setting, Lander referred to the concepts of "claimed identity" and "assigned identity" proposed by Varghese *et al.*, (2005) to underscore the significance of the workplace in an individual's identity. Lander acknowledged that gendered and sexual identities of teachers are still overlooked today, and there is a lack of literature on these issues. Drawing on Nelson's (1999) postulates, Lander, highlighted that sexual identities are produced and interpreted through interaction and discourse. He stated that discussing queer identity in the education system and publicly acknowledging one's sexual identity is not a common practice among teachers. In fact, Lander mentioned that social pressures may eventually compel teachers to reveal their queer identities, even though it is a private matter. According to him, teachers are encouraged to come out if they believe they have the right to embody their complete selves in their workplace. However, for some teachers, depending on the institution they work for, coming out may pose risks.

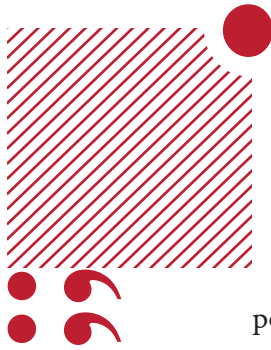
Lander (2018) asserted that queer teachers have to make conscious decisions about revealing their sexual identity, unlike heterosexual teachers for whom it is taken for granted. He also noted that his participants were not consistent in their descriptions of their sexual identity or their identities as language teachers and homosexuals. Furthermore, he pointed out that in the Colombian context, queer identity and language teacher identity can coexist peacefully: "it is individuals within institutions that play the greater role rather than the general ethos of an institution itself" (Lander, 2018, p. 99). The ideas presented in Lander's article were pertinent. He conducted a thorough analysis of identity and a comprehensive description of what it implies to hold a queer identity and a language teacher identity in the workplace.

On the other hand, Castañeda Peña (2008) presented the findings of a research project aimed at describing gendered roles in the classroom and their relationship with preschoolers' identities. Using feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, Castañeda Peña developed a theoretical framework that highlights context-driven shifting identities, where students experience power and perform their identities through discourse. An important assertion was that the perception of being proficient in languages is influenced by gender, particularly during certain classroom activities that position children based on their gender and discourse. Castañeda Peña (2008) suggested that since classrooms still exhibit traces of traditional gender roles, teachers need to be aware of how they and their students construct their identities through discourse and interaction. He argued that the duality of gender identity and language learning identity is discursively constructed from an early age (preschool). However, this topic remains underexplored, as research with preschoolers is limited, which is a strength of this study.

Zwisler's (2018) article, on the other hand, presented a mixed-methods study that aimed to determine if there were changes "in the perception and value of regional and national identity" (p. 259) after studying a foreign language. The data were collected through a survey administered to 400 college students from a public university. Zwisler agreed with the notion that identity is socially constructed through interactions, emphasizing that identities are not fixed. He argued that an identity remains active depending on the value attributed to it.

Zwisler (2018) suggested that language plays a fundamental role in the construction of identity and that identities are created by using languages in context and contrast to others' languages. In his view, affiliation represents the possibility of othering speakers and highlighting one's particular identity. Along the same line of thought, the author claimed that since nationality must be negotiated, it is the society that assigns meaning to social identity via a historical process. Obviously, language is essential in this construction because it marks loyalty towards a nation, a certain group, or its political ideas. The findings of the study led the author to assert that foreign language learning does not have a negative impact on regional or national identity, although more data could strengthen Zwisler's findings. In short, the article presents an enriching discussion of the term identity. However, it fails to acknowledge that assigning a positive value to a region or country through an opinion does not necessarily mean indexing the identity of an individual. A deep exploration of participants' voices should have followed to reach more solid arguments.

Finally, Flórez González (2018) conducted action research with 33 students from 11th grade at a public school in the northern region of the country. The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of students in relation



to their local identity and how it could be strengthened by establishing intergenerational conversations with elders of the community and writing chronicles that could reflect the stories of their families. Flórez González maintained that globalization brings cultures closer, affecting the way people conceive their identities, for example, when youths adopt social practices from other cultures. The author propounded that local identity is “the way that we identify ourselves as members of a community and as the manner in which the traditions, beliefs, and practices we share with that community can affect the way we see and conceive the world around us” (Flórez González, 2018, p. 196). Membership and interaction are key in local identity development.

The way Flórez González (2018) involved her students in the research project was challenging, as it is always hard to link school projects with the students’ communities and families. The study showed her conviction regarding the idea that languages are means to access cultures and identities. Learning a foreign language, she stated, facilitates the learning of foreign cultures as well as the understanding of one’s own reality and identity. She claimed that a language is “the medium through which [local identity] spreads” (p. 198). Likewise, she affirmed that local identity can be strengthened. If such a thing can be done, then local knowledge can be improved, and relations between students and local elders can be created or maintained.

Finally, Flórez González (2018) defined globalization from a local identity perspective: “globalization is conceived of as a practice of social exchange where local identity more than disappearing, emerges from its uniqueness and compares to other identities to enrich an intercultural approach” (p. 197). The author insinuated that at first, the local identity was a stranger living with them, then it became part of them, part of their identity. Although Flórez González suggested that local identity is something that can be learned and appreciated positively, she did not provide a clear description of the concept of strengthening identity. Additionally, the notion that students’ perceptions may not necessarily lead to the construction or strengthening of their identities should be taken into account. Flórez González’s argument that local identity can be strengthened was not entirely convincing, as she did not engage in a dialogue with existing theories on identity development or construction.

The most recent articles published about identity come from GIST (2) and HOW (1). First, Torres-Cepeda and Ramos-Holguín (2019) sought to analyze “what student-teachers’ narratives unveiled about the construction of their identity as language learners, and the connections made with being future in-service teachers” (p. 6). The participants of the study were 13 student-teach-

ers from Modern Languages at a public university in the Eastern ranges of the Colombian Andes. The authors pointed out that teacher educators influence student-teachers identities as learners. By establishing a relationship between discourse and identity, they maintained that an interactional environment is mediated by discourses through which identity is taught. They used the term “identity construction” consistently throughout the article. They claimed that identity is built on two constructs: first, *personal epistemology*, which is about beliefs and points of view towards knowledge and knowing their genesis, and their assessment. Second, *communities of practice*, which are the resulting spaces of individuals’ interactions and originate from the realization of individuals’ actions where their voices become collective voices, and the collectivities, in turn, shape individual voices. One of the strengths of the article was its clear construction of a theoretical framework on identity. The link between the theory about identity and the analysis was somewhat delineated at the end of the section.

Second, Bonilla-Salazar’s (2019) article was about youth identity. Its aim was “to unveil salient aspects of youth identity that emerged from students’ inquiries about music in English” (p. 60). It adopted a qualitative exploratory case study carried out at a public school in the center of Colombia with a group of 10th-grade EFL students. Despite the novelty of the topic, the article did not provide a clear definition of youth identity, which was the central focus of the study. Additionally, the connection between identity constructs, local knowledge, music, and social integration with imitation could have been more thoroughly explored. The article would have been strengthened by a more detailed explanation of how social identity construction was assessed in the study. Finally, a more comprehensive consideration of data could have enhanced the study’s findings.

Third, Torres-Rocha’s (2019) article was a reflection on the pillars of “globally-minded EFL teacher professional identity” (p. 153). He stated that if teachers build a “global professional identity,” they will be able to understand that teaching has to do with both local and global contexts, they will challenge imposed colonial policies and harmful standards, and they will become teachers who foster transculturation.

Torres-Rocha (2019) claimed that “the identities that teachers bring to contexts and how they are reconstructed during teacher education” (p. 160) are essential for ELT education changes. Also, the author discussed the concept of teacher cognition, which included “practical knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and personal theories of teaching” (p. 161). According to Torres-Rocha, the new teachers’ identity must reflect a balance between internal and external factors. Torres-Rocha bet on the idea that it is in intellectual ability where

teachers have to look in order to develop a “critical professional identity” that casts the teaching and learning of English. Torres-Rocha’s (2019) reflections about how awareness of expertise will make teachers move away from “externally imposed perspectives of professionalism” contests the establishment of profiles that are dictated by institutions such as Ministries of Education’s official policies that do not consider the experiences, beliefs, practices, and roles teachers have in their institutions.

Torres-Rocha (2019) adopted a social psychology approach, coupled with the theory of communities of practice. He explained that personal identity encompasses everything that characterizes the inner self (interests, likes/dislikes, knowledge, beliefs, personal theories, etc.), and that social identity is the characterization of individuals’ membership to different social groups and collectivities such as teachers’ associations, cultural or national entities, and classes determined by income, educational level, etc. Therefore, the Colombian ELT is a community of practice that “has emergent structures, complex relationships, dynamic boundaries, ongoing negotiation of identity, and cultural meaning” (Torres-Rocha, 2017, p. 44). Hence, language teachers bring their personal identities to the ELT community, and it is within that community that they build their social identity as language teachers.

Finally, Torres-Rocha (2017) upheld the idea that external discourses have influenced local identities mobilized by language policies. Professional language teachers’ identities are reconstructed as a result of foreign language policies in the country. The author asserted that the policy from the National Bilingual Program prompted his participants “to become better language users and reflective practitioners and therefore better language teachers with or without the help of the authorities” (Torres-Rocha, 2017, p. 53).

Findings: strengths and flaws

The link between identity and language learning has been indisputably established as a comprehensive theory that brings together the learner and the social world (Norton, 2013). Bonny Norton stands out among other scholars who focus on identity. Particularly, her 1995 article has greatly contributed to establishing identity within a poststructuralist paradigm and as an area of research in its own right (see Block, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Some of the articles reviewed here supported their theoretical background on Norton’s contributions. By far, Norton was the most important reference in the literature about identity and language education in these articles. However, one limitation of some articles was the lack of a clear theoretical source that connected to a particular theory of identi-

ty. Furthermore, when tracing their references and the connections with the subject matters of the articles, it was found that some of them did not include sufficient references to present a robust theoretical framework that could help the authors to back up their arguments.

Some authors examined in this review argued that they situated their studies within a poststructuralist approach to language learning. This agrees with trends in applied linguistics, and ELT in particular, in the last two decades. The ideas presented by Aneja (2016), Varghese *et al.*, (2005), Norton and Toohey (2011), American Psychological Association (2002), Norton (1995), and Canagarajah (2004) are reflected in articles that align with poststructuralist theories of identity. Poststructuralist theories provide a fresh perspective on language education, specifically in the context of second language teaching and learning. Central to these theories is the view of language as a contextualized entity and a site of struggle for individuals. "In poststructuralist theory, subjectivity and language are seen as mutually constitutive, and are thus centrally important in how a language learner negotiates a sense of self within and across a range of sites at different points in time" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 417). The methods and results presented in the articles that adhere to poststructuralist theories of language and identity coincide with the understanding that identity is essential to understanding the relationships established by language learners and teachers in their academic, working, and social contexts. Contexts are tied to the social aspects of communities. What seems to be positive is that the articles addressed different topics and the research methods explored several contexts and populations.

One shortcoming of several articles found in this review is that their authors did not provide or adopted a particular definition for fundamental concepts such as identity or the self. Several authors either failed to define or poorly characterized their areas of study (e.g., social identity, professional identity, sexual identity, identity politics, etc.). This is a serious omission because if terms or subject matters are not clearly defined or presented, the authors risk being inconsistent. Data analysis and findings are better expressed and understood when fundamental terms have been properly defined. Moreover, the way authors define terms could considerably affect how readers understand their claims.

In some articles, it was difficult to see how researchers were able to establish the changes in identity of their research participants. There was insufficient rigor in explaining how participants in the studies developed or reshaped their identities. More detailed analysis and data illustration would have improved the readers' understanding of the research process and how the participants' identities developed.

On the positive side, most, if not all, of the authors of the papers reviewed are language teachers. This is a positive aspect as it reflects their involvement in research and the link between teaching, research, and publishing. Additionally, there was a significant variety of contexts where identity has been studied. The participants were from different levels, although college students, modern language pre-service teachers, and language teachers were the most common participants in the studies.

Conclusions

This literature review has revealed that the development of identity theory in Colombia is in the process of gaining clarity and stability. Theoretical concepts are still being constructed, but despite the critiques mentioned in this review, there are promising positive aspects. It is noteworthy that most of the studies were conducted as research projects within Colombian schools and universities, with Colombian students and teachers as participants. This provides valuable insights into how issues of identity in language education are being addressed in the local academia. The authors who have studied identity have highlighted the complexity of addressing areas such as gender identity, teacher/professional identity, etc. The field of language teaching in Colombia is currently experiencing a new reflective wave, where the study of identity connects individuals and their identities with teaching and learning practices. Since 2006, only a few studies have dedicated significant efforts to delve into the self, the human being. Thus, there is a necessary shift towards a more humanistic and less technical approach, even though the field is still in its early stages.

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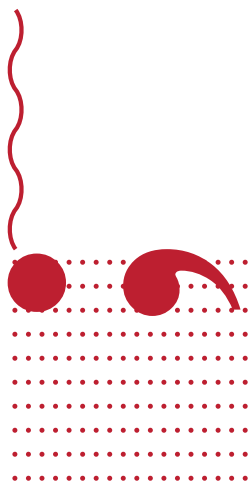
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Appendix A. Information about the journals²

Journal	CALJ The Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal	GIST Education and Learning Research Journal	HOW	ÍKALA Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura	PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development
Sponsor/ Publisher	Universidad Distrital, Bogotá	Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana ÚNICA, Bogotá	ASOCOPI, Colombian Association of Teachers of English	Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín	PROFILE Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá
Focus/ Scope	It publishes completed and ongoing research relevant to the field of language education.	It publishes results of national and international research in the field of language education.	It published within the field of education, specifically the teaching and learning of EFL/ESL	It publishes empirical, conceptual, and exploratory research, and creative works on languages and cultures.	It publishes on learning and teaching of EFL/ESL and teacher education.
Type of articles	Research articles and reflections on praxis	Research, reflective, and review articles	Reports on pedagogical experiences, reflections and revision of themes	Empirical studies, reviews, theoretical and methodological articles, and book reviews	International readership of pre- and in-service teachers
Audience	Local, national and international community of educators (EFL and language acquisition)	Language, bilingual educators, innovators in language teaching	Teachers of English	Worldwide academic community interested in languages and culture	Teachers of ESL and EFL, teacher educators and novice teacher-researchers
Language of publication	English or Spanish	English	English	English, Spanish, and French	English
Frequency of publication	Twice a year	Twice a year	Twice a year	Three times a year	Twice a year
Publindex Classification	B: Valid up to and including Dec. 31, 2020	B: Valid up to and including Dec. 31, 2020	C: Valid up to and including Dec. 31, 2020	B: Valid up to and including Dec. 31, 2020	B: Valid up to and including Dec. 31, 2020

Appendix B. Identity expressions

No.	Word/Collocation	TTL
1	identity	559
2	social identity	81
3	professional identity	56
4	cultural identity	47
5	teacher identity	46
6	local identity	44
7	national identity	44
8	identity construction	39
9	sexual identity	25
10	regional identity	22



Notas

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² The information in this table was taken from the journals' website.

