EDITORIAL

English teaching and learning:
Intersections with culture and interculturality

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The intercultural perspective has knocked on the door of almost all disciplines of knowledge. From mathematics to sociology, the different weavings that make up the great tapestry of knowledge have recently been interwoven by the threads of the cultural. They are threads that generate a tone that had been absent in the chromatic distribution of the tapestry of knowledge in most disciplines. It is the tone of inclusion, of the superimposition of the human overtechnique, objectivity, productivity and the commodification of the vital experience offered by education. It is useless to learn about everything if education is not understood as a project of construction and co-construction and not of self-destruction of the human being and what surrounds him. Perhaps we have focused so much on knowing what is outside

of us that we often overlook the importance of exploring and understanding what lies within our own being. A look inside ourselves always reveals that we are beings who need to think about ourselves, to think about the Other and to think about ourselves in relation to the Other. That is to say, the construction of knowledge in our time invites us to the inclusion of diversity; to include ourselves, to include those human and non-human beings who live in co-presence with us. It is an invitation to the inclusion of the 'Other' in all their diversities, whether racial, linguistic, social, cultural, spiritual, ethnic, gender and species, among others. It is an invitation to discover the ontological relationality, respons-ability and interdependence among the beings that share this vital space (Barad, 2007).

Like many other disciplines, applied linguistics and, in particular, English language teaching have begun their own weaving around interculturality. That is, they have been concerned with understanding how to address the intercultural relationship that emerges when the semiotic resources of speakers of English meet those of speakers of other languages. Each interlocutor brings with them a repertoire of cultural semiotic resources; a set of meanings that have been the product of their coexistence and socialization process in different sociocultural groups including but not limited to family, region, nation, and ethnic, linguistic, professional, sex and gender affiliations (Álvarez Valencia, 2021). Thus, culture is that repertoire of semiotic resources subjectively developed by individuals in processes of inter-action with the human, animal, material and immaterial world. Despite being the product of a process of subjective appropriation, since individuals develop unique cultural repertoires, rather than unitary repertoires affiliated to a certain human group, semiotic-cultural resources acquire their status as cultural referents because they are anchored to processes of regularization, ritualization, conventionalization, coordination and group coherence (Álvarez Valencia, 2022).

The vision of culture presented above allows us to conceive interculturality as the encounter between members of different sociocultural groups who, in communication, leverage their semiotic resources, be it language, ethnicity, gender, or political identity to negotiate meanings. What is human interaction if not a negotiation of meanings through our semiotic resources? In foreign language teaching, the transnational vision of interculturality, understood as the interaction between speakers of different nations, has been overcome. The view has become more complex, with some authors indicating that intercultural encounters also occur within the same nations (Byram, 2021) due to the multiracial, multiethnic or multilingual nature of certain territories. However, as discussed here, in a more micro view of human relations, any interaction has the potential to be intercultural

given that individuals belong to different cultural groups determined by sex, age, ethnicity, language, region, nation, profession, among others. As an illustration, it is very clear that, in countries like Colombia, individuals from different regions (e.g. paisas and costeños) are socialized in diverse practices, beliefs, dialects and ideologies (repertoires of semiotic resources). Thus, in the encounter between representatives of both regions, intercultural negotiation is required. It is very common, then, that in daily interactions people are simultaneously negotiating meanings associated with their membership in different cultural groups from categories such as gender, sex, race, ethnicity, social class, etc. It is for this reason that intercultural encounters should be examined from the prism of the intersectional view, since human relationships are influenced by the various identity categories to which individuals affiliate (Hill-Collins and Bilge, 2006).
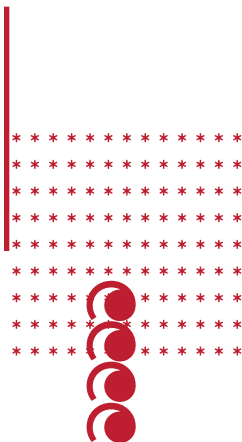
In the case of the English classroom, the intercultural relationship with texts or members of the English-speaking community constitutes one of the multiple manifestations of interculturality. Within the classroom, students constantly engage in intercultural negotiations based on their multiple identity affiliations. In a language class on a campus like Universidad del Valle, it is common to find AfroColombian and indigenous students, members of the LGBTIQ community, students from rural areas, and students with functional diversity in hearing and mobility aspects, among others. This fabric of diversities, constituted by the semiotic-cultural resources that students embody through their communicative styles, their corporeality, and their discourses, is negotiated through the foreign language. In this case, not only are students negotiating with the semiotic resources of the target culture, but they are also negotiating about their semiotic resources, using English as a vehicle.

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Interculturality, then, is multifaceted, multidimensional and multidisciplinary as can be seen in the diverse approaches of the authors of this special issue. The volume includes reflections and state-of-the-art studies on topics that intersect or evoke the principles of interculturality and language teaching, such as English, from different angles. Quintero's (2022) contribution reflects on how the education of English teachers constitutes in itself an exercise of political action of which teachers in undergraduate programs are mostly unaware. The author argues that given the historical and political conditions of our country as well as its multicultural constitution, language programs

must be committed to the education of future teachers who respond to the social, cultural, and political processes and transformations of the country in a critical manner and based on principles of education for social justice. To achieve this commitment, interculturality has much to contribute, especially from the critical and decolonial perspective proposed by Latin American authors (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Walsh, 2009).

Jaramillo Cárdenas adopts a critical perspective, conducting a state-of-the-art investigation into the meanings attributed to trending concepts such as interculturality, intercultural competence, and intercultural communicative competence in Latin America. The author reports that, in spite of the great influence of conceptualizations and assessment models of intercultural communicative competence of Anglo-Saxon and European origin, there are developments of the intercultural perspective in the Global South. She indicates that from the 1990s onwards academics began more fluid discussions on the subject in "relation to discourses on ethnicity and supporting the idea of giving more voice to minority communities, making them more visible in their differences, problems, traditions, rights and ways of life" (Jaramillo Cárdenas, 2022, p. 12).

> Jaramillo Cárdenas concludes that while models of intercultural communicative competence for teaching English can serve as a basis for informing our own constructions, such models do not necessarily apply to our Latin American contexts. Therefore, the task for Latin Americans is to forge their own path in crafting models of intercultural education that reflect the realities of Latin America.

In "Linguistic ideologies, multilingualism and ELT in Colombia: A review of the literature" by Arias-Alzate (2022), the author analyzes how linguistic ideologies have a direct relationship with the meanings that people construct of languages, language learning, and multilingualism. As indicated at the beginning of this paper, individuals are the product of the meanings in which they are socialized within different cultural groups. Our repertoire of semiotic resources denotes all those meanings co-constructed or developed by ourselves that facilitate or even hinder our inter-action in daily life. Some of these semiotic resources are more quotidian, such as, for example, meanings about what it is to be a man or a woman. However, other meanings belong to more specialized spaces, as is the case of our visions about foreign language, multilingualism, among others. Arias-Alzate, through a review of literature in Colombian journals, reveals that the meanings associated with the concepts he explored mobilize ideologies that have been disseminated for years by agents promoting English in the world. In this

way, English is presented as a dominant language over other languages, while native speakers continue to be represented as the linguistic model to follow. This position of supremacy, reported by Arias-Alzate, promotes monolingual visions that ignore the multilingual nature and multiple identity affiliations of the members of Colombian society. The article concludes with a call to delve deeper into linguistic ideologies and their impact in different school contexts where multiple languages, cultural groups and identities converge.

The topic of identity and culture in English language teaching is explored in depth by Acosta Acosta, who in his contribution examines the approach to identity in different studies published in Colombian journals. To begin with, Acosta Acosta reports that "cultural identity had the highest frequency of appearance, probably influenced by the interest in intercultural communication and language education" (Acosta Acosta, 2022, p. 4). However, as I mentioned above, identity affiliations are influenced, and in many cases determined, by the cultural groups in which we are socialized or with which we engage. Each of these groups contributes to the construction of each individual's repertoire of semiotic resources, whereby different identity positionings are manifested. These positionings explain the results reported by Acosta Acosta, who identifies the following types of identities: professional identity of English teachers, identity of language learners, identity of language educators, LGBTQ identity, sexual identity, gender identity, national, regional, social, ethical, and youth identity. This multiplicity of dimensions of the self in recent years has been explored from a poststructuralist paradigm, being Norton (2000) a figure of great influence for Colombian academics who have inquired about identity in English language teaching. The author concludes that identity as an area of exploration is relatively recent in the field of language teaching in our country. Nevertheless, it is experiencing significant growth in terms of its conceptualization, study and reflection, encompassing the connection between students' identities, language, and teaching and learning practices.

Undoubtedly, the recognition of the multiple diversities that students embody through their identity affiliations requires reflection and intercultural awareness. This is clear in the contribution of Castro Garcés who reviews published articles on "research that promotes intercultural awareness through strategic pedagogical planning" (Castro Garcés, 2022, p. 1). The author reports interesting results that contribute to enrich the findings of the research studies or reflections compiled in this volume. For example, intercultural awareness may emerge from different approaches to culture in the classroom, including

students' perceptions of language, culture, or interculturality; through pedagogical interventions or the narratives of students participating in study abroad programs. In line with previous studies (Álvarez Valencia, 2014), there is a persistent tendency to concentrate research in the university context and with students of foreign language teacher education programs. However, the author stresses that this aspect is positive given that "if we want to expand the intercultural perspective in the country, ...these 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" (Castro Garcés, 2022, p. 24). The article ends with an invitation for teacher education programs to articulate perspectives such as community-based pedagogies and funds of knowledge that facilitate engagement with communities and an opportunity for intercultural understanding.

The different articles that make up this issue contribute additional threads to the intricate fabric of interdisciplinarity, gradually weaving together the perspectives of different disciplines, thus giving rise to new ways of seeing, knowing, and being in the world. In essence, giving birth to new meanings or semiotic resources. These new meanings in applied linguistics are materialized through the different approaches to the teaching of English and its relationship with culture, interculturality, decoloniality, identity, languages, ideologies and other interpretative frameworks that, as can be seen in the different contributions in this issue, present a hopeful panorama of Colombian and Latin American academia. The preference for critical interpretative frameworks, the adoption of post-structuralist perspectives on language and identity are visible signs of an epistemic change -in the way we know-, but at the same time an ontological change -in the way we know ourselves and conceive ourselves-.

Considering all of the above, the various reflections and studies presented in this issue leave us with several questions and challenges to ponder. The greatest of them consists of being able to glimpse the final result of a colossal tapestry; a collective construction to which we only have partial access, as if we were standing in the middle of one of the figures of the Nazca Lines. However, unlike the tapestry of geoglyphs created by our ancestors in the Nazca desert, which make sense when viewed from the air, the tapestry of the knowledge of the humanities and sciences is symbolic and unfinished. Since none of us can envision it in its entirety, the collective participation of all of us is necessary. Through individual and disciplinary contributions, as we weave and perceive different aspects of the tapestry, we can collectively reconstruct a comprehensive image of what
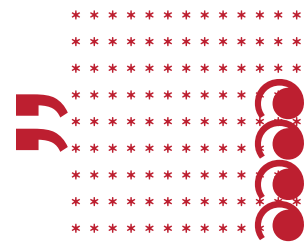
humanity, as a species, has woven together thus far. That is the great challenge of the human being: to be able to visualize collectively what we have woven and, from there, seek to understand it.
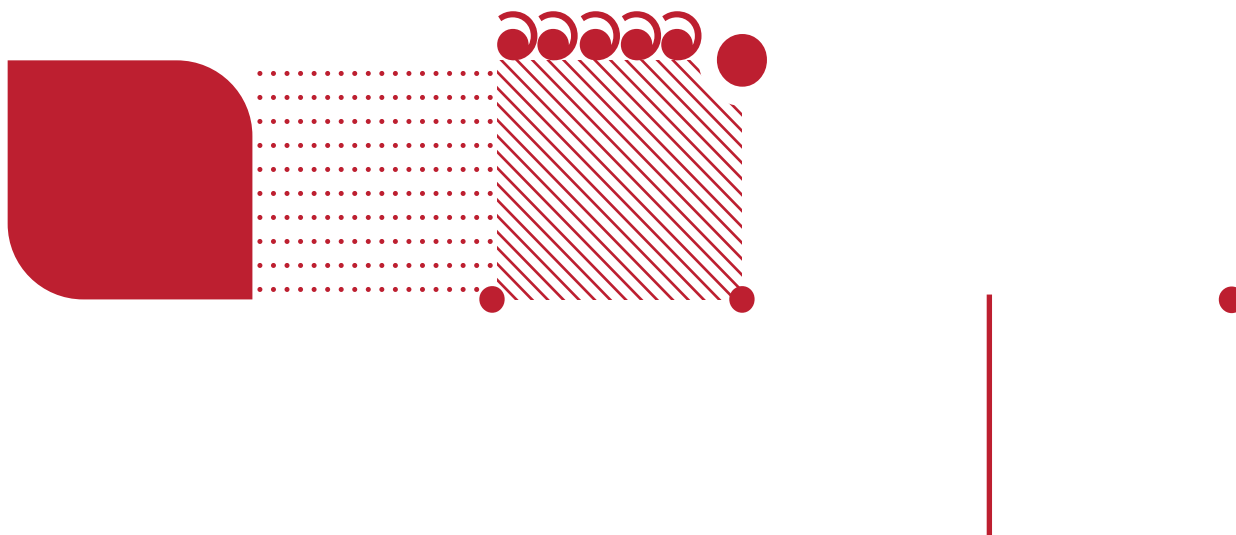
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