

Multilingual Teachers' Identity(ies) in the Colombian Language Classroom*

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Abstract

This chapter explores the identities of multilingual teachers in Colombia, focusing on how English dominance has shaped, limited, or erased other subjectivities within language education. Drawing on my personal trajectory as a teacher of English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, I critically examine the colonial legacies embedded in educational policies and institutional practices that privilege English. The discussion highlights the struggles and possibilities of teachers who resist English-only discourses by cultivating multiple languages. By linking multilingualism with identity, this study contributes to understanding how teachers negotiate professional recognition, pedagogical practices, and subjectivities in a context marked by linguistic hierarchies.

Keywords: Colombian education; coloniality; English hegemony; multilingual identity; teacher subjectivity.

* This chapter draws on my doctoral research project at Doctorado Interinstitucional en Educación (DIE-UD) and it investigates the construction of a multilingual teacher's identity.

Une introduction¹

I am a multilingual teacher who loves teaching English. In my case, I normally teach in a context where this language is mandatory. I must confess that teaching is one of my favorite things to do in life as it keeps me active as a professional and continuously learning. I teach English, *français*, *português* and *español*. Particularly with English, I do not feel the same connection as I do with other languages. I am certain that my self-image entirely changes when I switch from *español* to English: It is a whole new way of doing things. When I switch to *français*, I feel like I am seeing the world in a different way. Likewise, I am aware that it is constantly challenging to master these diverse languages. In fact, my personal learning process with *français* has been difficult. I have enjoyed it, but keeping it and investing time in it has been challenging. Regarding *português*, this language has been more autonomous for me, and my learning has been developed more because of personal interest than demands of the market or essential need.

In this context, in this chapter I would like to first unfold my interest in mapping multilingual teacher identities that rely on the ways languages are connected to personal realizations of different linguistic repertoires to affirm identities otherwise, from my own path as a multilingual teacher who speaks and teaches English, *français*, *português* and *español*. From this interest, I have been working on a literature review about the identities of multilingual teachers in order to start acknowledging what has been said about this. In this working research, I have noticed that in Colombia, the work conducted on teachers' multilingual identities is quite incipient. Possible, from different events happened in the country such as bilingualism motivation to get a better job or to travel, market demands, the launch of Bilingual Plan of Bilingualism by the government, among others, English has prevailed and sealed a kind of pact with the English language. Previous global research on multilingual identities has mostly addressed the connection between identity and pedagogy separately, focusing primarily on how these factors influence students' learning processes, motivation, or beliefs about multilingualism in teaching. This is why the second part of the chapter unfolds a discussion about multilingualism beyond applied linguistics approaches or students' affectations. Because, for me, it would be more interesting to see how our identity is linked to the languages we speak, to record the possibilities that a predominant language like English may have negated other languages, and to see if this has a direct impact on the identity of foreign language teachers who have cultivated other languages for different reasons.

To unpack the discussion, I start by reconstructing the trajectory of my multilingual journey. I would like to narrate how this path has led me to reflect upon several situations in which will, institutions, and societal and professional demands have shaped and influenced my relationship with language. By reflecting upon various situations, I aim to shed light on the significance of multilingualism and its implications in contemporary society. In the final part of the chapter, I would like to bring the reader to what I consider to be a colonial situation that emerges from these scenarios where English is predominant and where some possibilities have been neglected to multilingual teachers. As I navigate this narrative, I also dare to subvert this writing by inviting my linguistic repertoire to have visibility. Some excerpts are deliberately written in French, *português* and *español* in a call for heightened visibility and recognition of the diverse linguistic landscapes that exist.

Mon lieu d'énonciation²

My first contact with English was at school. I do not remember very well how, but I think that I learned English basics. For me, English was just another class to pass. I continued learning English as a school subject; I do not remember whether I was good or not, or if I even enjoyed it. Then, during 1999 and the 2000s—my teen years—that thought started to change for me because I discovered the technology of the time. My family acquired cable TV, and we had plenty of international channels to watch and enjoy. I started watching the channels that broadcast American TV series subtitled in Spanish. They were so cool, and I loved them not because of their content but because I enjoyed the language a lot. It is unclear to me why or how I could understand the jokes, the references, most of the words, and how the interactions and communication worked in that language. I fell in love with English.

Furthermore, I started to ask for dictionaries, music, and books in English. We were not exactly millionaires, but we had what we needed: food on the table and education. But my mother made a big effort to buy those things I was asking for. I learned how to listen to English naturally by watching those series, music, and audiobooks, and my mother noticed it. She encouraged me to take an English course (they were a trend at the time) because her friend's son was taking it. I accepted the offer and entered Universidad Libre to start my formal education in the language. It was the first time I did not feel English as an imposition as at school: It was fun, and I used all the expressions I knew from TV shows. That made me noticeable as the girl who had a good English level.

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2 My locus of enunciation.

Time went by and in high school I was the girl who was good at English, so I used to do my peers' homework and compositions. At the time I went to a public school, and I felt that my classes were not as advanced as those of my neighborhood friends who studied in private schools or in other public schools. I already knew most of the things the teacher taught us, so I thought that English was too easy. Maybe that is why I pursued a career in languages. This makes me think of students at public schools who succeed at school, but their experiences of learning are ignored—those schools are not failure scenarios at all for them.

When it was time to enter a university and study something, I was certain that I wanted to study languages, so I just had to look for the university we could pay for. At that moment, there were not too many options for me. It was 2008, I was 18, and I did not work. My mother worked at a company, and she earned the minimum wage, so the options were few. I applied to Universidad Pedagógica, Universidad Distrital, and Universidad Nacional but did not pass.

When examining the obstacles faced by economically disadvantaged students in Colombia who aspire to study a language or pursue a career in languages, it becomes evident that socioeconomic factors significantly impact their educational opportunities and prospects. Firstly, limited financial resources pose a considerable barrier for these students. Language courses and materials, study abroad programs, and certification exams often entail substantial costs that are beyond the means of many disadvantaged individuals. This financial constraint hinders their ability to access “quality language education” and inhibits their progress in acquiring proficiency in a foreign language.

Furthermore, the lack of educational infrastructure and resources in economically disadvantaged areas exacerbates the challenges faced by poor students. Many schools in such areas struggle to provide adequate language instruction due to insufficient funding, outdated materials, and a shortage of qualified language teachers. The absence of language laboratories, libraries, and technological resources further restricts the opportunities for comprehensive language learning. As a result, students from these marginalized communities are possibly at a disadvantage compared to their more privileged counterparts who have access to better-equipped educational institutions.

In addition to economic and infrastructural barriers, cultural and societal factors also contribute to the obstacles faced by poor students in pursuing language studies or careers. The prevailing societal perception that other languages are secondary or non-essential subjects undermines the value attributed to language learning. This attitude often leads to limited support and recognition for language education programs, leaving disadvantaged students with few opportunities to cultivate their linguistic skills and limited motivation to pursue

careers in language-related fields. In Colombia, for people who do not have many economic resources to access a very high-quality private education, the first option is a public university. For many students, like me, entering one of these universities is a dream; for some, it becomes a conviction; for others, a personal and academic disappointment. We must study twice as hard and pay for extra courses to level the knowledge required in the entrance exams. Even, and if possible, pay for tutors or extra classes to arrive prepared to take an exam that we must also pay to take. I personally tried it. I invested money and effort, but it was not enough at the time, and I lost the opportunity to study at these institutions more than three times. It was disappointing and frustrating, but I wanted to study, and if I could not access this education, I had to look for another one. Not everyone has that option.

Due to my budget, my options were Universidad Libre or La Salle. Because of a family tradition I chose Libre, my mother's *alma mater* and my previous English school. When I started studying there, the degree was called *Licenciatura en Educación Básica con Énfasis en Humanidades e Idiomas Inglés y Francés* (Bachelor's Degree in Basic Education with Emphasis on Humanities and English and French Languages). The promise was simple: You will learn how to teach English and French to students at schools. In the first semester I had good grades in English; it was the easiest. *En français, c'était différent. J'ai eu de gros problèmes avec ça, peut-être parce que je n'avais aucune idée de comment ça fonctionnait. Je l'ai enfilé comme l'anglais, je n'ai pas considéré son essence. J'avais dans mon esprit que c'était juste une autre langue comme l'anglais. Bien sûr, à l'université, les professeurs nous ont appris la grammaire, la prononciation, le vocabulaire comme quand on débute avec l'apprentissage de l'anglais. Quand je suis venu demander conseil à mes professeurs, ils m'ont dit que je ne devais pas m'en inquiéter ; je connaissais l'anglais et j'étais doué pour ça. Donc le français était comme une chose supplémentaire mais pas aussi nécessaire que l'anglais. Ces mots traînaient dans ma tête mais transformaient le français en mon défi personnel. Je n'étais pas éduqué pour enseigner des « idiomas » comme le disait le diplôme, on m'apprenait à enseigner principalement l'anglais et si j'en avais peut-être l'occasion le français, comme un plus dans ma carrière pas aussi importante, à ne pas reconnaître.*³

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3 In French it was different. I had big problems with this, maybe because I had no idea how it worked, I put it on like English. I did not consider its essence. I had in my mind that it was just another language, it was exactly like in English. Of course, at the university, teachers taught us grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary as when you start with English learning. When I came for advice from my teachers, they told me that I should not be worried about it, I knew English, and I was good at it; so French was like an extra thing but not as necessary as English. These words

As we can notice, not many contexts provide scenarios to teach French. This happened, for example, in Colombia when English became mandatory. There is no doubt that the pact with English has neglected these other professionals' possibilities and ignored their struggles to win recognition, as it decreased opportunities for learners like me who were very curious and open-minded to learn new things. Furthermore, "it has also ignored the blighted past and future possibilities for different subjectivities and forms of bilingualism" (Méndez-Rivera, 2021, p. 19).

Back in 2008, the *français* instruction that I received at the university was not as strong as the English one in terms of time intensity, spaces, and opportunities. The demand for practicum spots as a pre-service teacher was mainly in English teaching contexts. If you wanted to teach or practice in French, you had only one school to do so, and there were few spots that were normally already full. These are situations or moments where we can see the pact with the English language reflected, that gave rise to dominant or mainstream discourses that resonated with my beliefs at the time—discourses that, to some extent, continue to influence my thinking. For example, nearly all the most admired scholars are mainly English speakers or writers, and it could be harder to publish and be recognized in other languages (Ferguson et al., 2011; Zhao, 2017). Besides, I often listen to the idea that English academic literature is one of the best and strongest ones when doing research. It is possible that when the academic community writes in English, they believe that they have a direct entry to the indexed magazines or the academic world. Just to give one example, articles written in other languages are rarely cited or made visible like those written in English.

English supremacy to me was strictly connected to global demands and related issues, so I did not foresee the negative consequences of English-only practices for the development of my multilingual identity and personal and professional development. *Algum tempo depois, o português apareceu na minha vida, não por causa da universidade, não por demanda do mercado, apenas por interesse. Claro, aprender, mas acima de tudo cultivar, não foi fácil. Comecei por conta própria, estudando como aprendi inglês. Então, o contato com a língua foi significativo, eu sentia que cantar em português era muito mais bonito do que cantar em inglês. Decidi viajar para conhecer este país. Lá descobri pessoas e lugares maravilhosos, mas, acima de tudo, uma conexão imensa com o idioma. Alguns odiavam que comparassem a facilidade do português com o espanhol. Outros*

lounged in my head but turned French into my personal challenge. I was not being educated to teach *idiomas*, as the diploma said. I was being taught to teach mainly English, and if I possibly had the opportunity, French, as a plus in my career that was not as important or worthy of being acknowledged.

sentiram que sua língua era sua marca, sua essência. Essa linguagem cheia de sabor e encanto não pode ser comparada sem conhecê-la, sem senti-la. Assim como o francês emite elegância, cultura, sonoridade, o português emite música, dança, energia, resistência. As línguas com as quais convivo permitem que meu ser flua de maneiras diferentes cada vez que falo com elas, penso nelas e as ensino. O tempo permitiu que eu certificasse o idioma como requisito para ensiná-lo. Ensine depois, ouvindo comentários ao longo do caminho - Porque você não melhora seu inglês- Você deveria ter certificado inglês primeiro do que português- Mas onde você vai ensinar português, um nativo é melhor, aqui em Bogotá há vários - Trabalhe por conta própria, trabalhe como professor de inglês.⁴

Another example resides in the possibility to teach or work with the language you have learned (with effort, dedication, time, and investment) and not be limited to the English-only hegemonic discourse. The pact with English has been detrimental to other subjectivities, with teaching practices that invisibilize the contact with other languages by failing to acknowledge and celebrate linguistic and cultural identities (Méndez-Rivera, 2021) of students and educators who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, leading to a loss of opportunities for individuals to utilize their language skills in various contexts, whether it be teaching, translation, interpreting, or any other field where multilingualism is valuable.

When certain possibilities are dismissed due to policies, new laws, hegemonic discourses, or even widespread beliefs, this can lead to serious and troubling consequences professionally and personally speaking for these multilingual teachers. On the one hand, if most of the legitimized knowledge is expected to be produced only in English, the other languages students have learned are often sidelined, forgotten, or regarded as irrelevant to their continued learning. On the other hand, introducing and maintaining the belief that a single language

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4 Sometime later, Portuguese appeared in my life, not because of the university, not because of market demand, just out of interest. Of course, learning it but above all cultivating it was not easy. I started on my own, the same way I learned English. Then, the contact with the language was significant; I felt that singing in Portuguese was much more beautiful than singing in English. I decided to travel to Brazil to have a vivid experience and real contact with the language. There I discovered wonderful people and places, but above all an immense connection with the language. Some hated that they compared the ease of Portuguese with Spanish. Others felt that their tongue was their mark, their essence. This language full of flavor and charm cannot be compared without knowing it, without feeling it. Just as French emits elegance, culture, and sound, Portuguese emits music, dance, energy, resistance. The languages I live with allow my being to flow in different ways every time I speak in them, think about them, and teach them. Time allowed him to certify the language as a requirement to teach it. Teach it later, listening to comments along the way; What don't you improve your English; you should have certified English first before Portuguese; but where are you going to teach Portuguese, a native is better, here in Bogotá there are several; work on your own thing, work as an English teacher.

is more than another and that it is important to speak in it to be heard or read somehow destroys the knowledge that was formed with history, that is, it erases others and invalidates what is known of them. Many would even say that this is why translations exist, but translation can modify, adapt, and prevent the essence of the ideas from remaining. Thus, among many other consequences that I will surely find and share later, maintaining these ideas of a hegemonic discourse denies the possibilities of being and performing for these multilingual teachers.

These practices open the way to dispossession and a kind of withdrawal of other subjectivities. According to Quijano (2007), this Eurocentric knowledge framework and widespread beliefs have been used to legitimize and justify colonial domination. The prevalent English imperial discourse has played a significant role in establishing a hierarchical framework for civilizations, where Western knowledge is often positioned as superior while other forms of knowledge are unfairly labeled as primitive or backward. This hierarchy has had adverse effects on multilingualism, which can be viewed as a form of hidden knowledge colonialism. For instance, the dominance of English has led to the neglect or devaluation of other languages, such as *français*. In this context, multilingualism, and the diverse linguistic capabilities it encompasses are not given the recognition and respect they deserve, thereby perpetuating a system that undermines the linguistic diversity and cultural richness of non-English languages. There are people who believe that these other languages are a privilege and that those who speak them are an elite. But, despite this belief, other languages have their own undervalued possibilities and connections with their speakers, regardless of their geopolitical location. That is why this research is intrinsically linked to me and to teachers that somehow identify with this scenario.

Situation coloniale sous examen⁵

Blaise Pascal (1670) a *dit que le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas* (has said that the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing). From this reflection, I would like you to know how my lived experience and my heart led me to the previous enunciation in this text. A few years ago, I worked at a very well-known university in Bogotá. I was a member of the foreign language program as a *professeure de français*. I had plenty of projects working and increasing their potential. Furthermore, I encouraged my leader and my colleagues to create a more substantial curriculum in *français*, as well as events and visualization of languages other than English. English was the dominant language because it was

5 Colonial situation under examination.

the emphasis of the program, but students were also being formed and certified to teach other languages (in this particular case, *français* and *português*).

I am convinced that students need to understand that, although English is one of the most important languages, they should also develop their multilingualism as an integral part of their identity—something that is not always encouraged in other teacher education programs. To expand the idea of making other languages visible, I started by creating the first hotbed to include *français* in their research and provided another subjectivity to balance the large number of projects focused exclusively on English. When we got our first recognition, some (multilingual) teachers joined me, and we offered the students the chance to be a part of national events on languages that also included *français* as a significant language. We invited some native and non-native speakers to share with our students their struggles being a *français* teacher in an English-speaking emphasis and how they can also develop their potential in a language field being multilingual. They shared with their peers and teachers all their knowledge in this language as well as how balancing their learning processes is important for their future. Suddenly, *le français* started to get on the radar, and more and more students started to study it and promote it in the program.

I was so excited about the fact that, in my view, I was contributing to students' professional and personal identity and to enriching the language program from my small role in it. But some subjectivities might have felt threatened or uncomfortable with *le français* recevant *un peu plus d'attention que l'anglais*.⁶ So, it started to create a very distressing atmosphere. A few weeks later, *il y a eu un changement dans la direction du programme et je ne pensais pas que mon travail en valait la peine. J'ai décidé d'arrêter. Non seulement à cause du changement, mais aussi parce que j'étais épuisé, j'ai donc choisi ma santé mentale en premier. Aujourd'hui, j'ai été informé que le foyer, l'équipe et les événements étaient annulés, et qu'ils devaient maintenant chercher une autre personne pour tout reconstruire depuis le début. J'ai dû chercher un autre travail et heureusement je l'ai trouvé mais devinez quoi : il s'agissait d'enseigner l'anglais, car les places de français ou d'autres langues étaient ou prises ou moins payées que l'anglais. Ne vous méprenez pas, j'adore enseigner l'anglais, mais je voudrais savoir s'il y a d'autres enseignants qui ont des difficultés similaires et comment ces expériences les ont formés pour devenir des enseignants d'anglais dans un contexte politique et éducatif comme celui de notre pays*.⁷

6 French was receiving a bit more attention than English.

7 There was a change in the direction of the program, and I didn't think my work was worthwhile. I decided to quit. Not only because of the change, but also because I was exhausted, so I chose

Literature on English teachers' identities has been influenced, in general, by broader societal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional practices (Gu & Benson, 2014; Mosquera-Pérez & Losada-Rivas, 2022). They are subjected to various discourses and power relations that prescribe and regulate what it means to be an English teacher. These discourses can include notions of expertise, professionalism, and desirable teaching practices. But beyond English teachers' identities, which, as evidenced, have had a very long trajectory in academic literature, I would like to unpack identities that have not yet been explored such as English teachers who are also multilingual speakers because they have resisted the dominance of English, both politically and academically.

According to Mosquera-Pérez & Lozada-Rivas (2021), from a historical perspective, the concept of language teacher identity (LTI) has been linked to the collection of customs, convictions, and conduct that define educators deeply involved in the field of language instruction. By acknowledging the historical dimension of LTI, these authors shed light on the complex interplay between language teaching and individual identity formation. They emphasize that language teachers' identities are not static but are continuously shaped by sociocultural and educational factors. Such an understanding prompts us to consider the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and teaching approaches that language educators bring into the classroom, acknowledging the rich tapestry of experiences that contribute to their professional practice.

The pact with English has meant, in terms of the curricula adaptation for many language teacher education programs, the colonization of teachers' identity to fulfill hegemonic discourses (Méndez-Rivera *et al.* 2019), the dispossession of other subjectivities, and the perpetuation of colonial legacies in education. The discourses that we have been hearing in our era of globalization, progress, and expansion call for strengthening a hegemonic idea about what should be and what should happen to each one of us at a professional, academic, and personal level. Our identity is linked to contributing to a single model to be copied, to remain rooted in what has been brought from abroad, and to be indifferent to what is ours. The convictions with which we as teachers and our students perform every day are part of a great bombardment of supremacy that inhibits

my mental health first. Today I was informed that the hotbed, team and events were cancelled, and they are hoping to find another person to build it from scratch. I had to look for another job and, luckily, I found it, but guess what: it was teaching English, because the French or other language places were either taken or paid less than English. Do not get me wrong, I love teaching English, but I want to know if there are other teachers who have similar situations and how these experiences have shaped their identities to become English teachers in a political and educational context like the one in our country.

others. Many aspects have been addressed and problematized from a less colonizing discourse. These include knowledge (Quijano 2002), power and authority (De Sousa Santos, 2018; Fanon, 2005; Mignolo, 2007), culture (Moloney, 2022; Walsh, 2018), identity (Hall, 2011; Trotter, 1990). However, as has been discussed in this chapter, it is also evident that a coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, 1992) prevails and predominates when we allow one language to have more power over another.

This has also had an impact on a social and political level, as we see more and more schools and political initiatives that promote the inclusion of other languages in school curricula. Mejía (2016) mentions that Colombia recognizes its ethnic and cultural diversity in an official capacity. However, it has not implemented a comprehensive educational approach that acknowledges and celebrates this diversity while also facilitating the country's integration into the global economy. This implies that Colombia has not fully maximized its potential to participate in the global market despite its recognition. In this context we understand, according to Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero Polo's (2009) commentary on the National Constitution of 1991, that Colombia is acknowledged as a multicultural and multilingual nation where there is a convergence of Indigenous languages, creoles, many foreign languages, and Spanish. The recognition of Colombia and the focus on Indigenous languages is clear, but it is worth mentioning that several foreign languages and cultural diversity are mentioned. *Mais ces autres langues sont cachées d'une certaine manière, et nous ne savons pas si nous pouvons simplement parler de langue indigène, par exemple, ou des langues actuelles que nous pouvons voir dans les programmes d'études comme le français, le portugais ou l'espagnol.*⁸

When we elaborate on multilingualism as a term, we understand from García (2013) that it refers to the ability of an individual or community to use and understand multiple languages proficiently, regardless of the number of languages involved. It can refer to a wide range of language abilities, from basic conversational proficiency to advanced levels of fluency. So, it is important to identify the relationship between identity and multilingualism. Both in Colombia and internationally, these identities have not been sufficiently explored—as can be seen in the literature review, which reveals trends related mostly to applied linguistics approaches. Thus, multilingual teachers are on the spot when it comes to teaching better through multilingualism, dealing with students' multilingualism

8 But these other languages are hidden in some way, and we don't know whether we can simply speak of Indigenous languages, for example, or of current languages we can see in degree programs such as French, Portuguese or Spanish.

in the classroom and, motivating students to reach multilingualism for their future teaching practices.

These results reflect an understanding of multilingualism shaped by Western perspectives, where classrooms often include students from diverse countries, cultures, and languages. Many challenges in such settings arise from multilingual environments and the role of bilingual or monolingual teachers managing them. However, the situation in Colombia differs significantly, as most school classrooms have predominantly monolingual or bilingual students over extended periods. But I want to unveil what could be said about teachers like me, who have been cultivating other languages even though English is the predominant teaching language at schools or universities. English-only as an imperial discourse has reduced the possibilities that multilingual teachers in Colombia have of speaking about their own identities.

As a language teacher of languages other than English, and as someone who has been immersed in the world of languages out of personal interest, I have been genuinely committed to the academic process of professional development for foreign language teachers—not only in English but also in other languages. *Isso moldou minha identidade de maneira diferente, continuo cultivando, mas tem sido difícil conseguir um emprego ou reconhecimento na área de ensino ou uso de outros idiomas.*⁹ In my geopolitical context,¹⁰ doors have been opened to professional growth in the language field. Since the launch of the National Bilingual Plan in 2004, I have noticed how the need to learn a new language and the demand for teachers who could cover this need has increased. It should be noted that the language included in this plan was English. This fostered the strengthening of learning and teaching of this particular language. However, for various reasons, several individuals, like me, choose to strengthen not only English but also other languages.

9 This has shaped my identity differently. I keep cultivating them, but it has been difficult to get a job or recognition in the field of teaching using other languages than English.

10 I refer here to the Colombian geopolitical context, where the lingering effects of European colonization, particularly Spanish colonization, continue to shape the country's language, culture, and power dynamics. Marginalized groups, including Indigenous communities and Afro-Colombians, face ongoing struggles for recognition and agency within dominant power structures. The exclusive focus on English as a mandatory language further marginalizes local languages, perpetuates linguistic and cultural homogeneity, and reinforces the dominance of Western knowledge systems (Mejía, 2016).

Quelques contributions possibles¹¹

Over time, the identity of the English teacher has been explored in various parts of the world and from different perspectives. According to Behin *et al.* (2018) English teachers' identities are influenced by broader societal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional practices. They are subjected to various discourses and power relations that prescribe and regulate what it means to be an English teacher. These discourses can include notions of expertise, professionalism, and desirable teaching practices. Nowadays, many countries are increasingly adopting educational programs in schools with the goal of enhancing students' proficiency in multiple languages to prepare them for success in an interconnected global society. So, multilingual teachers are hired all over the world to meet these kinds of demands.

The main problematization focuses on those possibilities that have been denied to multilingual teachers due to the predominance and command of English in the field of foreign languages. This does not allow work, efforts, and investment in other languages to be visible, problematized, or studied. I intend to begin by exploring the identities that have been denied in this area, especially after the educational policies whose hegemonic discourse positions English as the language of progress and success (Méndez-Rivera, 2021). This includes the growth of foreign language institutions offering French courses, which, although not as in-demand as English, still provide the opportunity to teach this language (Méndez-Rivera *et al.*, 2020), among others.

In a previous exploration of how multilingualism and multilingual identities have been approached in the sphere of foreign language teaching, psychology and sociolinguistics throw up ideas directly linked to trends in motivating students to learn several languages (Dressler, 2015; French, 2019; Portolés & Martí, 2018; Zheng, 2017). They emphasize the importance and positive impact of having a multilingual teacher in foreign language classrooms with multilingual students, although sometimes they acknowledge exceptions where students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This contrasts with contexts such as Colombia, where it is usually the teacher—not the students—who is multilingual. Teachers' beliefs about multilingualism (typically regarding their students) and how these beliefs influence their pedagogical practices are also important considerations (Forbes *et al.*, 2021; Portolés & Martí, 2018).

Finally, one of the most popular aspects within the studies on the multilingual identity category is the need for and importance of interaction between

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11 Possible contributions.

multilingual students and teachers (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Solsona-Puig et al., 2018) to improve students' linguistic and sociolinguistic skills as well as promote the learning of various languages.

Globally speaking, and as we can see, the identity of teachers who, like me, have cultivated several languages despite the predominance of English and the demands of the market has not yet been explored. Despite the ideas and discourses about the obsolescence or non-importance of the teaching of other languages and even their exclusion from the elites, teachers who teach other languages have become predominant. It is crucial to challenge the narratives that dismiss the teaching of languages other than English as obsolete or unimportant. By presenting evidence and arguments that demonstrate the ongoing relevance and significance of multilingual education, we can counteract these misconceptions. This exploration could contribute to highlighting the impact of cultivating diverse languages, as well as strengthening the value of multilingual teachers' subjectivities, personal pedagogies, and beliefs in the language field.

A nível nacional, este estudo pode fornecer ao campo do ensino de línguas estrangeiras na Colômbia uma compreensão geopolítica das identidades multilíngues que informará o campo ELT sobre identidades. Essas outras razões que foram ignoradas pela pesquisa corrente dominante sobre identidades multilíngues em demandas de mercado, benefícios de cognição, estratégias pedagógicas, entre outros. Para expandir a compreensão das identidades multilíngues, é valioso conectar-se com campos relacionados, como psicologia, sociologia, antropologia e estudos culturais. Essas disciplinas fornecem perspectivas e estruturas adicionais para compreender de forma abrangente as complexidades das identidades multilíngues, adotando abordagens interdisciplinares, a criação de uma compreensão mais rica e holística dessas identidades e suas implicações para vários domínios.¹²

Au niveau local, cette recherche contribuera à déballer les mécanismes de connaissance du pouvoir au sein des systèmes éducatifs colombiens qui entrent en jeu les possibilités des enseignants de faire de l'enseignement autrement. En

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12 At the national level, this study can provide the field of foreign language teaching in Colombia with a geopolitical understanding of multilingual identities that will inform the ELT field on identities. These other reasons have been ignored by mainstream research on multilingual identities in market demands, cognition benefits, pedagogical strategies, among others. To expand the understanding of multilingual identities, it is valuable to connect with related fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. These disciplines provide additional perspectives and frameworks to comprehensively understand the complexities of multilingual identities by taking interdisciplinary approaches, creating a richer and holistic understanding of these identities and their implications for various domains.

dévoilant les mécanismes de connaissance du pouvoir au sein du système éducatif colombien, nous pourrions mieux comprendre les barrières structurelles qui entravent les possibilités des enseignants d'enseigner autrement. Cette expansion aide à mettre en lumière les défis systémiques qui doivent être relevés pour favoriser un système éducatif qui permet aux enseignants de s'engager de manière critique dans leur pratique, d'explorer des pédagogies alternatives et de mieux répondre aux divers besoins des élèves, mais aussi des enseignants.¹³

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13 At a local level, this research will help to unpack the mechanisms of power knowledge within Colombian education systems that hinder teachers' opportunities to teach differently. By unpacking the knowledge mechanisms of power within the Colombian education system, we may better understand the structural barriers that hinder teachers' opportunities to teach differently. This expansion helps shed light on the systemic challenges that need to be addressed to foster an education system that enables teachers to engage critically with their practice, explore alternative pedagogies, and better meet the diverse needs of both students and teachers alike.

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