

Poststructural Perspectives in English Teaching in Rural Colombia*

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Perspectivas pós-estruturalistas no
ensino de Inglês na Colômbia rural

Perspectivas postestructurales en la
enseñanza del Inglés en Colombia rural

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Abstract

This reflective theoretical article explores the intersection of poststructuralist perspectives and English Language Teaching (ELT) trends, specifically in rural areas of Colombia, addressing language policies that prioritize the utilitarian aspects of English while neglecting its intercultural essence. The objective is to advocate for a poststructuralist approach in reshaping English language education in rural Colombian contexts, challenging utilitarian paradigms to promote inclusivity, equity, and social justice within language learning frameworks. Drawing on extensive research and the author's ongoing doctoral studies, the paper explores intricate connections among linguistic trends, power dynamics, and language ideologies within ELT. The paper discusses the implications of poststructuralism in Colombian ELT, emphasizing the need for a paradigm shift. Embracing a more inclusive perspective, the study highlights the transformative potential of poststructuralist frameworks in fostering equitable language education.

Keywords

English language teaching; language trends; poststructuralism; rural English teachers

Resumo

Este artigo teórico reflexivo explora a interseção das perspectivas pós-estruturalistas e das tendências no Ensino de Inglês (ELT), especificamente em áreas rurais da Colômbia, abordando políticas linguísticas que priorizam os aspectos utilitários do inglês, enquanto negligenciam sua essência intercultural. O objetivo é advogar por uma abordagem pós-estruturalista na remodelação da educação em língua inglesa em contextos rurais colombianos, desafiando paradigmas utilitários para promover a inclusividade, equidade e justiça social dentro dos quadros de aprendizagem de idiomas. Basando-se em pesquisas prévias e nos estudos de doutorado em andamento do autor, o artigo explora conexões intrincadas entre tendências linguísticas, dinâmicas de poder e ideologias linguísticas dentro do ELT. O artigo discute as implicações do pós-estruturalismo no ELT colombiano, enfatizando a necessidade de uma mudança de paradigma. Abraçando uma perspectiva mais inclusiva, o estudo destaca o potencial transformador dos quadros pós-estruturalistas na promoção de uma educação linguística equitativa.

Palavras-chave

ensino de inglês; tendências da linguagem; pós-estruturalismo; professores rurais de inglês

Resumen

Este artículo teórico reflexivo explora la intersección de las perspectivas postestructuralistas y las tendencias en la Enseñanza del Inglés (ELT), específicamente en áreas rurales de Colombia, abordando políticas lingüísticas que priorizan los aspectos utilitarios del inglés mientras descuidan su esencia intercultural. El objetivo es abogar por un enfoque postestructuralista en la reconfiguración de la educación en inglés en contextos rurales colombianos, desafiando paradigmas utilitarios para promover la inclusividad, equidad y justicia social dentro de los marcos de aprendizaje de idiomas. Basándose en una extensa investigación y en los estudios doctorales en curso del autor, el artículo explora las urdimbres entre tendencias lingüísticas, dinámicas de poder e ideologías lingüísticas dentro de la ELT. El documento discute las implicaciones del postestructuralismo en la ELT colombiana, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de un cambio de paradigma. Al adoptar una perspectiva más inclusiva, el estudio destaca el potencial transformador de los marcos postestructuralistas en fomentar una educación lingüística equitativa.

Palabras clave

enseñanza del inglés; tendencias del lenguaje; postestructuralismo; docentes rurales de inglés

Introduction

As indicated by various research findings (Guerreiro-Nieto & Quintero-Polo, 2009; Guerrero-Nieto, 2010; Bonilla-Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016; Gómez-Sará, 2017; Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero-Nieto, 2018; Miranda & Valencia, 2019; Peláez-Henao & Usma, 2017; Roldán & Peláez-Henao, 2017; Usma et al., 2020; Peláez-Henao et al., 2022) and official documents from the government (Ministerio de Educación Nacional — MEN, 2005, 2006, 2015, 2016), Colombian language policies developed in recent decades have predominantly emphasized English as a utilitarian and technical tool essential in our globalized world. However, this focus often narrows down the intercultural essence inherent to language, which is enriched by human interaction and cultural mediation (Rublik, 2017). These aspects, fundamental to human communication, are at times restricted or even overshadowed.

Hence, the genuine purpose of literacy, envisioned as a means to explore social justice and address imbalances in accessing formal literacy practices within educational frameworks (Pangrazio, 2016; Darwin, 2017), often becomes obscured. In the midst of these challenges in defining the complex role of language, it is crucial to have a refined grasp of evolving language trends. In this regard, Haugen emphasized, “the notion of language as a rigid, monolithic structure is inaccurate. It served as a necessary simplification at one point in the field’s development, but can now be replaced by more sophisticated models” (Haugen, 1972, p. 325).

Language trends encompass the evolving patterns, shifts, and developments in language use, structure, and interpretation within specific contexts or broader linguistic landscapes (Sun, 2017). These trends involve diverse aspects, including linguistic phenomena, sociocultural influences, and educational practices. Additionally, they are molded by dynamic forces such as cultural, technological, and sociopolitical changes, which constantly reshape how language is used and understood. Simultaneously, they illuminate the intricate interplay between language and society, emphasizing the dynamic nature of language as a human construct. These trends cannot be confined to a singular perspective; rather, they reflect the changing nature of communication and the emergence of new linguistic forms and practices resulting from sociocultural factors that influence language use and interpretation.

In Chomsky’s research (MacNamara, 1972; Sobecks, 2020; Barman, 2012), the inherent structure and rules of language take center stage, highlighting

its essential role in shaping cognition and communication. Conversely, Butler’s perspective (Butler, 2021; Samata, 2019) focuses on language’s function in constructing societal norms and power dynamics. Butler challenges binary oppositions, urging for a critical understanding of language’s influence on identity. Shohamy’s (2006) perspective characterizes language as individual, flexible, vibrant, lively, and continuously changing. She contends that language lacks rigid boundaries due to its creative, expressive, and interactive nature. In the realm of language, individuals enjoy considerable freedom in expressing themselves through intonation, pace, spatial considerations, syntax, grammar, content, and topics, among other elements. Simultaneously, language serves as a tool for communication and creation, reflecting the inherently social nature of human beings who employ language within communal settings. Freire’s concept of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2020; Riasati & Mollaei, 2012) emphasizes language as a tool for social and political liberation, highlighting its transformative power in questioning oppressive systems and inspiring social change.

Collectively, these approaches to language enhance a comprehensive grasp of its intricacies, thereby enriching our understanding of human experience. An essential implication lies in the potential to perceive language trends as valuable insights into linguistics as a discipline and language education. Investigating language trends, particularly those related to English, holds paramount significance. It facilitates the understanding of the paradigms underpinning English Language Teaching (ELT) globally, with specific relevance to the context of Colombia.

In response, educational institutions must foster learners’ linguistic and intercultural competences, enabling them to participate effectively as global citizens and appreciate cultural diversity (Freeman *et al.*, 2018). Language teachers now have roles extending beyond traditional instruction; they are expected to take on added responsibilities as cultural, social, and political facilitators. This multifaceted role necessitates reflective teachers who promote personal autonomy and contribute to fostering peace, inclusion, and innovation in language teaching and learning environments.

The research problem at the core of this study revolves around Colombia’s prevailing language policies, which, by primarily emphasizing the utilitarian aspects of English within a globalized context, have overshadowed the intrinsic intercultural essence of language. This oversight holds significant implica-

tions for the genuine purpose of literacy, hindering its potential contribution to social justice and balanced access to formal literacy practices.

Utilizing research findings from the northern region of the Antioquia department (Peláez-Henao & Usma, 2017; Roldán & Peláez-Henao, 2017; Usma et al., 2020; Peláez-Henao et al., 2022) and the author's doctoral exploration of language as ideology and the construction of subjectivity among English teachers in rural areas, this article aims to explore the potential of moving beyond the utilitarian approach to English education, advocating for a poststructuralist perspective. The primary goal is to investigate how such a viewpoint can reshape English language education, particularly in rural Colombian contexts. By embracing this perspective, the study seeks to promote a more inclusive, equitable, and socially just approach to language learning.

This article is organized into three key sections. It commences with an examination of pertinent trends related to educators and the ELT domain, laying a robust foundation to support the call for a paradigm shift in language teaching. Subsequently, employing critical analysis, the paper digs into the poststructuralist perspective, unraveling the conception of language from functional linguistics to a more complex and dynamic framework intricately intertwined with cognition, communication, and socio-cultural development. The final segment of this paper presents tangible implications and prospects for the ELT field within the context of Colombia.

English Language Trends and Their Implication for the Colombian Context

Trends Related to English Teachers:

Embracing the Post-method Perspective in ELT

The ELT field has experienced a significant transformation. The once-renowned grammar translation methods have given way to the communicative approach, considered seminal and contemporary in context (Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Dos Santos, 2020). The evolution of approaches persists, leading us to what is now termed the post-method. This approach challenges even the use of the term "method," as it emphasizes the complexity, particularity, and context in ELT, surpassing any specific method or prescribed set of practices, placing prominence on meaningful language use within a broad context (Brown, 2002;

Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006). Additionally, this perspective acknowledges that language teaching and learning cannot be constrained to a single method or strategy since language is complex. Instead, it advocates for the unique characteristics of learners, their sociocultural backgrounds, and the specific context in which they are learning.

The post-method approach highlights the importance of learner autonomy, meaningful communication, and the integration of language skills within a broader socio-cultural framework. It encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners, continuously adapting and developing their teaching methods based on the evolving needs of their learners. Principled teaching, as outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2006), encompasses several fundamental attributes. It strives to optimize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, foster learner autonomy, heighten language awareness (while maintaining tolerance for learner errors), prompt self-discovery through learning and communication strategies, embed language input within a contextual framework, integrate diverse language skills, ensure social relevance as a vehicle for self-empowerment and expression, and prioritize the cultivation of cultural consciousness as a central objective in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, contemporary educational practices advocate for the utilization of learners' first language (L1) and exposure to various accents in listening activities and assessments (Ellis, 2020).

Shifting in Teachers' Profession

As we ponder the evolving landscape of the world, shaped by technological advancements, global interconnectedness, economic fluctuations, and environmental challenges, it becomes evident that the next two decades will bring profound shifts. Envisioning the future of education necessitates a thorough reevaluation of the role of teachers, a point emphasized by Trilling and Fadel (2009) in their extensive work. Reflecting on our own "peak learning experiences," a common thread emerges: challenging learning experiences supported by an environment where failure is not feared but viewed as a powerful teacher.

These reflections highlight the stark contrast between the evolving demands of the world and prevailing educational paradigms, where solitary learning and competition for teacher approval dominate. Technology, real-world challenges, meaningful projects, and the nurturing of creativity and innovation often take a back seat. Consequently, it becomes not just desirable but urgently necessary to undergo

a transformative shift in education. Teachers are now expected to facilitate learning, create environments conducive to skill development, and cultivate the *seven Cs* identified by Trilling and Fadel (2009): Critical thinking, creative skills, collaborative abilities, cross-cultural awareness, effective communication, proficiency in computing, and self-reliance in one's career. Achieving these goals requires teachers to comprehend students' diverse learning styles and employ varied strategies to engage learners effectively. The integration of technology has become indispensable, offering avenues for collaborative work and interdisciplinary teaching.

Moreover, the responsibility for education extends beyond teachers; it encompasses parents, administrators, communities, and students themselves. While teachers bear primary responsibility, they require institutional support, including funding, training opportunities, and time to implement innovative teaching methods and assessment practices. The evolving roles and increasing responsibilities underscore the need for comprehensive support systems, empowering teachers and promoting effective education in the 21st century.

Perspectives About a Current English Teacher

Considering the ever-shifting global landscape and the challenges faced by educators, these developments have specific implications for the field of ELT. As our understanding of communicative competence expands to embrace intercultural communicative proficiency, the criteria for effective English teachers are undergoing a profound transformation. The focus has broadened beyond native speaker status to encompass linguistic, instructional, and intercultural competence. Recent scholarly investigations into the concept Englishes and other trends such as Lingua Franca and the contributions of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in TESOL (Canagarajah, 1999, 2007; Graddol, 1997; Seidlhofer, 2011; Crystal, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 2007; McKay, 2002) have significantly reshaped our perspective on impactful English language instruction.

Canagarajah (1999, 2007) argues that NNESTs possess a distinct skill set that substantially enriches the language learning experience. NNESTs in their challenging language learning journey, have honed a repertoire of strategies to anticipate and navigate common learning obstacles. Unlike native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), who often undergo training in culturally and linguistically homogeneous environments, nnests bring forth a rich tapestry of cultural and

linguistic diversity. Yet, their role extends beyond this; they serve as wellsprings of inspiration and motivation, sharing their personal learning odysseys to underscore the attainability of linguistic competence (Braine, 2005; Cook, 2005; Llurda, 2005). This holds particular resonance in the Colombian landscape, where the prevailing narrative often suggests that true language mastery necessitates venturing beyond national borders. Moreover, NNESTs, attuned to the nuances of language, adeptly illuminate the distinctions and commonalities between the language under instruction and the learners' native tongue.

Trends in ELT

Expanding the Scope of Communicative Competence in ELT

The communicative approach, initially coined to address language as a means of social interaction, has evolved into a broader and debatable concept (Sun, 2017). Research in this field has introduced the notion of multicompetence, emphasizing a comprehensive perspective that encompasses the individual as a whole, transcending the limitation of the monolingual native speaker (Cook, 2012). Additionally, it expands and emphasizes the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), underscoring the need to educate individuals capable of engaging in a diverse and multicultural world that converges in common spaces (Cook, 2012). Multicompetence challenges the traditional view of bilingualism, considering second language (L2) learners as complete individuals rather than comparing them solely to monolingual native speakers.

This shift acknowledges the unique strengths and abilities of bilingual learners. Intercultural communicative competence encompasses the skills needed to interact appropriately with individuals from different cultures. Teaching ICC involves incorporating both local and international cultures, with less emphasis on solely studying the culture of native English speakers. The goal is to produce language users who can effectively utilize English as a lingua franca, contributing to global communication (Sun, 2017). By exploring these dimensions of communicative competence, ELT practitioners can foster effective intercultural communication, promote cultural sensitivity, and equip students with the skills necessary for successful interaction in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts (Honna, 2005).

According to Florez-Montañón et al. (2022), effective communication extends beyond mere linguistic proficiency, encompassing a broader spectrum that

involves both the communicator and the recipient. ICC necessitates qualities such as openness and respect, wherein diverse values and customs are acknowledged and not merely perceived as different from the norm. It also entails empathy and tolerance, signifying an understanding and acceptance of varying behaviors and perspectives, even when in disagreement. Sensitivity and adaptability are crucial facets, demanding the capacity to adjust to others' emotions and ways of thinking. Furthermore, ICC hinges on a foundation of knowledge and critical cultural awareness, involving an understanding of social groups, values, and cultural practices, and the adept application of this understanding in real-time communication and interaction.

Content, Curriculum Design, and Evaluation in ELT

Aligned with the preceding trend advocating for a broader concept of communicative competence, the current landscape in English Teaching necessitates a more intricate approach to English instruction. Language is viewed not merely as a tool for general communication but as a means to delve into specific aspects. Methodologies such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Content-Based Language Instruction (CBLI), and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Gessese, 2018; Boothe, 2023; Mahan, 2022) are gaining prominence in teaching practices. To implement these approaches, teachers must integrate broader, interdisciplinary elements into the curriculum, enabling students to acquire content knowledge and linguistic competence simultaneously. English is thus positioned as a tool for learning various subjects, fostering a view where it serves as a means, not an end in itself.

This shift extends to teaching materials, which are undergoing transformation by incorporating content reflecting global perspectives (Godwin-Jones, 2015; Nunan, 2015, 2022; Corbett, 2022). This transformation facilitates students' identification as global citizens, fostering a perception of a more diverse world. The curriculum is evolving with universalist perspectives, enriching a comprehensive understanding of knowledge and science as content-based and theme-based are incorporated into language learning (Reynolds et al., 2022). Consequently, assessment methods are also changing, with expected outcomes aligning more closely with social interests and reflecting real-world issues. Evaluations now emphasize competencies such as critical thinking, discernment, reflection, human relations, and respect for diversity and culture — aspects that were once considered less significant (Mulyadi et al., 2020).

The Integration of Information Technology in ELT

With the abundance of online resources, teachers can leverage technology, including the internet, YouTube, and e-books, to enhance lessons and engage students (Towndrow & Pereira, 2018). This technological integration has transformed teaching approaches, making it easier to introduce real-life issues, foster meaningful discussions, and connect students globally. However, it's crucial for teachers to guide students in navigating the vast information available, ensuring effective use for learning goals. In ELT, a paradigm shift is observed, blending traditional literacy with critical literacy in the digital age. Luke's (2003) emphasis on sociocultural and political contexts aligns with this trend, echoed by Anstey and Bull (2006) urging transformative application. Miller (2010) advocates for a comprehensive literacy perspective, including digital video, while Stein (2007) challenges linguistic-centric approaches, emphasizing multimodality's role in creative transformations. This holistic approach recognizes the digital era's influence, emphasizing the need for integrating new media and literacies into ELT methodologies.

These trends, challenging the existing power structures deeply embedded in elt, aim to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable approach to language education. Particularly, the poststructuralist perspective, which emphasizes critical analysis and the deconstruction of power relations (Baxter, 2016), profoundly influences the landscape of language education. The next section critically analyzes the evolution from functional linguistics to a poststructuralist approach in the study of language and its implications for understanding language as a multifaceted and dynamic entity interwoven with cognition, communication, and socio-cultural development.

Deconstructing Linguistic Evolution: Poststructural Insights

This section explores how the concept of poststructuralism extends and diverges from structuralist theories of language, particularly those associated with Saussure. Saussure posits that the meaning of signs within a specific language system is determined by their relationships, and each linguistic community has its own conventions for assigning value to signs. Poststructuralists both elaborate on and critique Saussure's ideas, especially regarding struggles over social meanings within language that structuralism may not fully address. Structuralists perceive signs

as having arbitrary meanings and linguistic communities as relatively homogeneous and consensual, while poststructuralists argue that societal practices of signification are arenas of struggle. They regard linguistic communities as diverse spaces characterized by conflicting claims to truth and power.

Originating from influential scholars like Althusser (1984), Bakhtin (1981), Derrida (1987), Foucault (1980), Kristeva (1984), and Lacan (2006), poststructuralism encompasses diverse and competing viewpoints on the relationship between language, meaning, and identity. Despite their disparities, these theorists share fundamental assumptions. They collectively assert that identities are shaped and regulated through discourses, depicting individuals not as passive recipients but as active agents capable of resistance and subversion. For these scholars, language functions as a regulatory force, compelling adherence to socially accepted speech and behavioral patterns. These commonly held views are rooted in specific principles, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The Poststructuralist View on Language Principles

The first principle highlights the inherent interdisciplinary and autonomous nature of language study, emphasizing its crucial role in human cognition, communication, and societal evolution. Chomsky (1986) pioneered autonomous linguistics, exploring the innate structures governing language, while Derrida (2016) introduced interdisciplinary perspectives, emphasizing language's interconnectedness with philosophy, literature, and culture in works like *Of Grammatology*. Sociolinguistics, exemplified by Kendall and Tannen (2015), merges linguistic analysis with sociocultural insights, showcasing the multidisciplinary nature of language research. Cognitive linguistics, seen in Lakoff (2008), integrates linguistics, cognitive science, and anthropology, emphasizing transdisciplinary study. The autonomous nature of language, highlighted by Saussure (Key & Noble, 2017), remains pivotal, although a postmodern perspective, as in Rorty's work (2020), challenges autonomy, advocating for an interdisciplinary stance. This interplay enriches our understanding of language's profound significance in human existence, fostering a holistic perspective beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries (Key & Noble, 2017).

A second principle guiding linguistic evolution challenges the notion of language as a detached system of rules, recognizing it as a dynamic, socially embedded practice. The concept of communities of

practice by Lave and Wenger (1991) stresses the contextual and social foundations of language learning, asserting that "language is part of practice, and it is in practice that people learn" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 85). From a sociocultural perspective, this principle, supported by scholars like Bakhtin (1984), views language not just as a tool for communication but as a means for constructing meaning, negotiating identities, and engaging in the social world. Bakhtin (1984, p. 202) notes that "words are not encountered neutrally but are saturated with others' interpretations". Examining language as a social practice reveals the intricate interplay between language and society, shedding light on how meaning is generated, negotiated, and reshaped through communicative interactions. This perspective has significant implications for ELT, emphasizing the importance of nurturing communicative competence that goes beyond linguistic proficiency to include an understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of language use. Aligned with poststructuralist thought, this approach underscores the inseparability of language from power dynamics, ideologies, and cultural norms, as emphasized by scholars like Benesch (2017) and Foucault (1982).

A fundamental principle of language lies in its essence as a vital tool for cognition, human communication, and personal as well as socio-cultural development. Beyond communication, language serves as a conduit for the formation and expression of thoughts, ideas, and emotions (Evans & Levinson, 2009), granting access to collective knowledge and societal wisdom (Perlovsky, 2007). It acts as a dynamic bridge, connecting personal experiences with broader cultural contexts and enabling the construction of individual and collective identities. It is through language we know and inhabited the world. In this respect, Ellis (2019, p. 39) notes that "language cognition is shared across naturally occurring, culturally constituted, communicative activities".

The aforementioned is substantiated through the poststructural perspective on language, contending that the concept of a singular and stable meaning in language is disputable. Meanings are viewed as social constructions, negotiated through discourses, and historically developed (Bourdieu, 1991; Derrida, 2016; Foucault, 2013). This standpoint prompts essential inquiries into the debate surrounding the role and ideology underpinning the policies shaping and executing English education in Colombia. Poststructuralism prompts queries about the reasons and mechanisms through which power structures propel English into society. These inquiries lead to further questions concerning the identity fashioned through discourses surrounding English, such as

those promoting competitiveness and positioning it as a global language. A poststructuralist perspective encourages a critical examination of how the principle of language's role in cognition, communication, and personal development is constructed, negotiated, and influenced by power dynamics within broader socio-cultural contexts.

The final principle shaping the language perspective centers on the intricate relationship between discourse, cognition, and society (Van Dijk, 2014, 2017). Discourse serves as the medium through which cognition is communicated, constructed, and negotiated within the broader societal framework. It functions both as a mirror and a shaper of cognition, reflecting individual mental processes while influencing thought patterns. This triadic relationship underscores the inseparability of discourse, cognition, and society, emphasizing language's constitutive force in societal interactions.

From a poststructuralist perspective, this relationship takes a nuanced and transformative dimension, challenging the conventional view of language as a neutral tool (Bakhtin, 1981; Derrida, 1987; Foucault, 1980; Kristeva, 1984; Lacan, 2006). Discourse is not a neutral conduit but an active force constructing socio-cultural realities, influencing cognition deeply tied to discursive structures. Society, seen through poststructuralism, is a complex interplay of power relations and discursive formations shaping cognitive processes and linguistic expression.

In ELT, this interplay is crucial in Colombia's educational landscape. A poststructuralist perspective reveals language's complexity, intertwined with power dynamics and societal constructs. Discourse emerges as an active force shaping socio-cultural realities, challenging the belief that cognition is an individualistic process detached from a broader societal context. This reassessment prompts questioning prevailing discourses positioning English as a panacea for success (Guerrero, 2010). Derrida's (1985) emphasis on deconstruction as dismantling cultural, philosophical, and institutional structures rooted in textual origins aligns with this critical approach, maintaining skepticism towards all systems and employing a hermeneutic of suspicion.

To address these challenges, in the following section, this paper advocates a shift to a poststructuralist perspective. This transformative lens, especially potent in rural Colombian contexts, promises a more inclusive, equitable, and socially just approach to language learning. By embracing this outlook, the study pioneers a path toward a deeper understanding

of the intricate interplay between language, culture, and education, offering vital insights for reshaping educational policies and practices.

Beyond Language Hierarchies: Implications for Rural Context

Drawing on extensive research in the northern rural region of Antioquia (Peláez-Henao & Usma, 2017; Roldán & Peláez-Henao, 2017; Usma et al., 2020; Peláez-Henao et al., 2022), as well as studies analyzing language policies in Colombia, particularly their impact on English teachers as policymakers, it becomes evident that educational and linguistic policies often align with global political and economic agendas (Usma, 2009). These imported reform discourses have tended to overshadow local knowledge, marginalizing it in the process (González, 2007; Guerrero, 2008). Research also underscores the challenges faced by both urban and rural communities in implementing these policies (Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila, 2014; Correa et al., 2014; Usma, 2015). Moreover, scholars have critiqued these policies for their failure to recognize the active roles that various educational actors must play for successful reform implementation in the country (Correa & Usma, 2013; Guerrero, 2010).

Furthermore, these policies have restricted language, particularly English, to a mere tool in the global context, stripping it of its intrinsic cultural and cognitive richness. What is concerning is that these policies propel English as the sole relevant language, disregarding the teaching and learning of other languages globally. Colombia, as indicated by the cited studies, has adopted this perspective. What options do teachers in rural areas have? While in major cities there are some opportunities to teach languages like French, German, or Portuguese, in rural regions of Colombia, this choice is limited. How can English teachers in rural areas navigate this landscape?

Applying a poststructuralist approach, this section delves into critical inquiries, offering four key points as pathways to deconstruct the prevalent perception of English as a monolithic and hegemonic language. Instead, it advocates for a transformative paradigm that emphasizes equity, inclusivity, and a socially conscious approach tailored to the varied contexts of rural Colombia. This decolonial transition in language education represents vital strides toward envisioning and enacting teacher education that embraces diversity and eradicates inequalities.

Deconstruction of Language Hierarchies:

The poststructuralist perspective challenges the prevailing narrative that elevates English to a superior status within the Colombian context. In the field of English language teaching, this perspective necessitates a critical examination of embedded power dynamics within language hierarchies. The prevailing and hegemonic status of English demands rescuing teachers' voices and research to promote a decolonial turn in language education (Sharkey, 2022; Fandiño Parra, 2021, Ubaque-Casallas, 2023). Educators are called upon to scrutinize the undue privileging of English while marginalizing other languages, notably indigenous languages and local dialects.

A fundamental starting point is the cultivation of awareness regarding Colombia's rich linguistic diversity. While the rural region of northern Antioquia might not directly experience the presence of indigenous communities, educational stakeholders, in line with UNESCO's conviction of the inherent value of linguistic and cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2009, 2019), have a crucial responsibility to anchor pedagogical practices in decolonial perspectives. The prevalent promotion of English as a hegemonic language inadvertently accentuates English-speaking cultures, often at the expense of disparaging Colombian indigenous heritage. Colombia, inherently multilingual, boasts an intricate tapestry of languages, including 65 native languages, 2 creole languages, 1 Rom language, and a sign language (Ospina-Bozzi, 2015).

By deconstructing these hierarchies, English language teachers in Colombia can create an inclusive and equitable educational environment valuing diverse linguistic practices. This transformative approach involves acknowledging the linguistic and cultural wealth within local communities, encouraging students to explore their linguistic repertoires, and advocating for a multilingual approach that honors the significance of all languages spoken in Colombia. Through this discerning analysis, English language education can actively dismantle entrenched power relations, fostering inclusivity and empowering language learners to embrace and celebrate their linguistic heritage.

This nuanced perspective serves as the foundation for transforming language education paradigms in Colombia, fostering a profound respect for linguistic diversity and cultural pluralism. The engagement of the poststructuralist framework in Colombian ESL education actively challenges prevailing ideologies that prioritize English as a symbol of cultural superiority. Through fostering nuanced discussions

and encouraging critical reflection on cultural identities, the approach dismantles stereotypes. This transformative process, utilizing English as a tool for inclusive dialogue, significantly contributes to Colombia's peace process (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Florez-Montañón et al., 2022).

Examination of Linguistic Ideologies:

Engaging poststructuralist principles in English language teaching in Colombia prompts educators to critically analyze linguistic ideologies shaping language education (Woolard, 1992; Kroskrity, 2004). The context, associating English with social status and dominance (Hurie, 2018), demands scrutiny of ideologies perpetuating hierarchies. In Colombia, as in many Latin American countries, a subtle yet pervasive ideology of colonization persists. Many Colombians believe that nothing valuable originates from their own territory, including their language. This belief drives the perception that learning English, associated with wealth and imperial dominance (Hurie, 2018), is imperative. This mindset reinforces the notion that English is the most important language, linking competence in English with social superiority, and demanding critical interrogation to foster inclusivity and challenge entrenched hierarchies.

Interrogating these ideologies challenges the link between English competence and social superiority, fostering inclusivity. This approach explores language's entwinement with power dynamics, social stratification, and identity formation, addressing issues like language privilege and the impact of policies on marginalized communities. Through critical reflections, educators empower students to question linguistic hierarchies, fostering a socially just and inclusive language learning experience (Hurie, 2018; Fandiño Parra, 2021; Cruz-Arcila, 2020; Gómez-Vásquez *et al.*, 2018).

Empowering Rural Educators as Policymakers:

Embracing a poststructuralist lens in English language education in Colombia not only transforms educators, especially those in rural areas, into proactive policymakers (Pelaez & Usma, 2017), agents, and political subjects within the education landscape but also necessitates a nuanced understanding of their roles in a complex interplay of factors. In rural contexts, where traditional power structures often prevail, educators find themselves in a unique position to leverage their roles. By adapting the curriculum to be more contextualized and relevant to the unique needs of their students, they open avenues

for meaningful education. Making pedagogical decisions, such as integrating authentic materials that resonate with local experiences, becomes pivotal, fostering a connection between education and the students' everyday realities (Viáfara-González & Pachón-Achury, 2021). Moreover, encouraging independent student work and nurturing self-reliance and critical thinking skills are essential aspects of this transformative process.

Within this transformative landscape, educators assume deliberate stances, resisting imposed syllabi that might not align with students' interests and community contexts. Through fostering critical language awareness among students, educators facilitate a deep understanding of the social, cultural, and political dimensions of language use. This awareness empowers students to challenge dominant discourses, stereotypes, and inequalities entrenched in language. Armed with the tools to critically analyze how language shapes their identities and relationships, students become active participants, confidently navigating linguistic landscapes with agency and autonomy. This empowerment through critical language awareness not only enriches students' personal and professional lives but also cultivates a profound sense of agency, self-expression, and social justice, paving the way for a more equitable and inclusive society.

However, this transformative journey is not devoid of challenges. Cruz-Arcila (2020) noted that rural English teachers in Colombia navigate their professional practices and identities amidst the influence of two distinct yet interrelated factors: the national elt policy, with its specific architecture, objectives, and demands, and the intricate sociocultural contexts of rural teachers, encompassing social problems, community values, and aspirations. These teachers configure their professional identities in response to the unique circumstances inherent in rurality and external pressures imposed by linguistic policies.

Despite the inconsistencies in their sense of professional success, their negotiation of these complexities represents alternative constructions of good teaching, challenging the norms promulgated in language policies. This situation underscores the necessity for a reconfiguration of belief systems concerning what teachers should know and do. In essence, this transformative process demands not just a change in pedagogical approach but a fundamental shift in the philosophical underpinnings of education, calling for a dynamic, adaptable, and contextually sensitive teaching paradigm.

Disrupting Binary Oppositions:

In Derrida's philosophy, binary oppositions serve as the cornerstone of Western thinking, segregating concepts into dichotomies such as good/evil and right/wrong (Derrida, 2005). This philosophical construct challenges established hierarchies, advocating for a paradigm where meaning lacks certainty and interpretations are boundless, opening endless avenues for exploration. Shohamy (2006) argues that language, inherently dynamic and boundless, has historically been subject to manipulation, serving as a tool to delineate group membership ("us/them"), signify inclusion or exclusion, define loyalty or patriotism, and denote economic disparities ("haves/have nots"). Moreover, language has been wielded as a means of control, imposing specific languages and linguistic norms, governing who has the right to use it, and reinforcing social, economic, and personal ideologies.

Yet, English trends have evolved into a multifaceted language, shaped by speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Approximately 80% of English users are multilingual, acquiring English as an additional language (Crystal, 2019). Despite differences in pronunciation, lexis, and grammar from native English, studies affirm that localized linguistic features do not hinder effective communication (Canagarajah, 1999). Multilingual speakers, encompassing individuals from various linguistic origins, navigate communicative challenges with versatility, emphasizing the adaptability of English as a global lingua franca. In this context, it's essential to debunk the misconception around accents. An accent represents one's unique way of speaking, encompassing phonological aspects like stress, rhythm, tone, and intonation. Contrary to common belief, accents are not limited to foreigners or immigrants; in fact, everyone speaks with an accent, making non-accent a nonexistent concept (Kumaraivelu, 2001).

In the context of elt within Colombia, the post-structuralist perspective disrupts entrenched binaries like native/non-native and standard/variation, acknowledging the dynamic and multifaceted nature of language. This shift fosters inclusivity, celebrating linguistic diversity, and empowers students to explore their identities, challenging the rigid social constructs imposed by linguistic norms. Deconstruction theory, as advocated by Derrida (2005), becomes imperative in elt, unraveling these entrenched hierarchies and paving the way for a more equitable and enriched educational environment.

Conclusion

This reflective theoretical work aimed to propose a poststructuralist approach for transforming English language education in rural Colombian contexts, focusing on challenging utilitarian paradigms to advance inclusivity, equity, and social justice within language learning frameworks. To achieve this objective, a comprehensive exploration of English language trends was presented. Pertinent trends involving English teachers encompassed the embrace of a post-method perspective in elt and the evolving roles and heightened responsibilities, redefining the criteria for an effective English educator. Additionally, trends in teaching English included the broadening of the scope of communicative competence in elt, innovations in content delivery, curriculum design, and assessment methods, as well as the swift development and integration of information technology in elt.

The paper underscored the linguistic evolution guided by poststructuralist principles, providing a theoretical foundation for English Language Teaching in rural Colombia. This marks a departure from the utilitarian paradigm that traditionally positioned English as a singular pathway to success. These principles shed light on the dynamic evolution of the linguistic landscape. The first principle underscored the interdisciplinary and autonomous nature of language study, emphasizing its pivotal role in human cognition, communication, and societal development. A second principle challenged the perception of language as a detached system of rules, recognizing it as a dynamic, socially embedded practice. A foundational principle underscored language's vital role in cognition, human communication, and personal as well as socio-cultural development. The final principle was oriented towards the intricate interplay between discourse, cognition, and society, shaping the perspective on language.

Finally, this article highlighted implications that the poststructuralist paradigm could bring to the elt field in the rural region where the research study is being conducted. Deconstructing language hierarchies, promoting language diversity, and examining linguistic ideologies are tangible steps in this deconstructivist vision of language. Empowering rural educators as policymakers involves recognizing language as a social practice embedded in power dynamics and cultural contexts, marking a departure from isolated linguistic analyses.

This emphasizes language's role in identity construction and societal power relations. Understanding language as a tool woven into human existence resonates with poststructuralist ideals of fluidity and

context-dependency. In Colombia's rural education context, this perspective offers inclusivity and social justice. By deconstructing prevailing discourses, educators can foster equitable learning environments, celebrating linguistic diversity and challenging power structures, reshaping English Language Teaching practices profoundly.

While this paper digs into the complexities of elt in rural Colombia from a poststructuralist perspective, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Although rooted in prior studies, this research stems from ongoing doctoral inquiries in the rural northern region of Antioquia. The exploration, while deep, does not cover the entire spectrum of challenges faced by these teachers. Therefore, more extensive and varied studies are necessary to comprehensively grasp the multifaceted realities and political nuances of English teachers in rural Colombia. The paper's theoretical analysis acts as a crucial stepping stone, emphasizing the need for broader research that encapsulates the diverse narratives and experiences of these educators, ensuring a more holistic understanding of their roles and challenges within the Colombian educational landscape.

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