

Chapter II

Towards an intercultural FL curriculum: fundamental considerations

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Introduction

Today, concepts associated with culture are being debated more widely in social contexts, not only in academic circles but also among political figures and in their proposals for inclusion, revalorization, and protection of the cultural manifestations of "other" communities. Multiculturalism, as a social phenomenon, and respect for diversity and the coexistence of more than one culture in the same territory, along with interculturalism as a concept of socio-political activism, have been transcending the discourses associated with the relationship between culture and society.

One of the instruments that has been erected as a political banner to comply with international and national guidelines on the recognition and defense of minority cultures is the educational systems of nation-states. It is through the curriculum that the guidelines for the integration of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, primarily, are intended to counter the homogenizing provisions promulgated by governments in power.

In fact, Colombia has spent more than two decades implementing a series of initiatives aimed at achieving constitutional recognition (Political Constitution of the Republic of Colombia, 1991) of being a multilingual and multicultural country. For example, the General Education Law (Law 115 of 1994); Curriculum Guidelines for Foreign Languages (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1999); the National Bilingual Program (2004); the Basic Standards for Foreign Language Competence (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006); the National English Program 2015-2025 "Colombia Very Well" (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2013); Law 1651, known as the Bilingual Law (2013); Project to Strengthen the Development of Foreign Language Skills (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2013); Colombia the Best Educated in 2025 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2015); Basic Rights of English Learning (2016),

Strengthening the Development of Foreign Language Skills Project (2013); Colombia the Best Educated in 2025 (2015); Basic Rights to Learning English (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016), Decennial Plan for Native Languages of Colombia 2022-2032 (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia, 2022), among other government proposals. However, the decision to implement a bilingualism made up of majority languages has left out the diversity of many peoples, languages, and cultures that also exist in our nation, despite some attempts at inclusion and recognition of minority cultures, from an integrationist perspective. For this reason, the design of an interculturality-based and a wide-ranging conceptual framework curricular proposal which considers, as the key commencement, an array of cosmovisions, multicultural practices and actions become more than a need whether we decide to seriously move towards an inclusive and healthier coexistence.

Problem Statement

In the framework of a natural exchange of linguistic and cultural interaction, the apprehension of a shared code of communication necessarily involves cultural elements of each of the communities in contact, which will be recognized, accepted, or rejected and internalized by the social actors involved, thus achieving intercultural integration, together with the linguistic assimilation necessary to achieve a balanced social performance. However, what happens when encounters between languages and cultures occur in formal instructional environments? The answer may be the conception and implementation of a curriculum based on some identity elements of a culture that will probably reach an institutionalized dynamic of (restricted) cultural information on some aspects related to customs, habits, history, beliefs, etc., which in some way will be reflected in and from the structure of the source language. However, in contexts of coexistence that involve multicultural encounters (arising for multiple reasons), the contact of languages and cultures could have cultural apprehension effects due to the possibilities of extracurricular experiences and interactions.

Within the multilingual and multicultural Colombian context, oriented by a national curriculum that encourages the contact of two majority

languages (while ignoring the linguistic and cultural variety of minority communities), the teaching and learning of foreign cultures can become complex if we take into account the social, economic, political, social, identity, cultural and historical aspects that must be considered in the design of a language curriculum that addresses intercultural interests. Currently, the national design can be interpreted, from the top-down model, as a post-colonizing or neo-colonizing model that, while enhancing the potential of a foreign language, minimizes the variety of the native languages of our territories.

Given the social context in which the country is debating between tradition and educational innovation, it is essential for public education to generate academic discussions in order to advance more equitable and inclusive curricular proposals that promote spaces for renewal and peaceful coexistence in our territories and communities, as well as in foreign communities.

The Ministry of National Education (s. d.) considers that the curriculum

is the set of criteria, study plans, programs, methodologies and processes that contribute not only to comprehensive education and to the construction of national, regional and local cultural identity, but also includes human, academic and physical resources to implement policies and carry out the institutional educational project.

This definition outlines profound criteria for culture and multiculturalism, as well as constructs such as the integral formation of individuals for whom a given curriculum is designed. However, the general state normative, oriented, and put into action by the Ministry of National Education, implies the homogenization of a curriculum that considers a homogeneous target population. In fact, the trend of interculturality as a predominant pedagogical proposal adheres to traditional positivist models, which view the cultural diversity of the country as another community that must be adopted and adapted to the majority community (Ibáñez-Salgado et al., 2012). It cannot be ignored, moreover, that the supranational curriculum has largely influenced the Colombian curriculum and has undergone different

approaches throughout history, just to cite a couple of examples, the rise of the industrial revolution that generated drastic changes in the economy, politics and society in general, and more recently, the advance of information and communication technologies in all fields of social apprehension and behavior.

The curriculum for teaching and learning foreign languages has not been immune to various foreign conceptions and designs, ranging from mostly structuralist approaches to the communicative approach. However, in the Colombian context, these initiatives have focused primarily on the foreign language as an object of study rather than as a means of communicative interaction and with little intercultural focus. It is also evident that the Colombian curriculum conceives of English as a foreign language and has overlooked the immense linguistic and cultural diversity of our country, with some exceptions, notably in the promotion of the ethno-education model.

The aforementioned considerations underscore the need for a reformulation of the criteria for inclusion and equity in the Colombian curriculum, to establish pathways for reflection and action that aim to reorganize a social order of coexistence, equity, justice, and peace for Colombian society. In this vein, it is believed that more research initiatives should be proposed as an initial stage for recognizing the current state of the question in relation to the integration of intercultural elements within the national curriculum, particularly in the foreign language curriculum.

Conceptual Insights

To theoretically support an informed interculturality-based curriculum proposal, the concepts of culture, curriculum, multiculturalism, interculturality, critical interculturality, and critical discourse analysis will be examined.

Culture

Culture is everything created by human beings. Their beliefs, habits, customs, ways of relating and communicating with others and with their environment, norms, sanctions, systems of coexistence, values, symbols, representations, goods, identity(ies), etc. Culture is generated collectively and is shared and transmitted inter- and intragenerationally.

Páez et al. (2003, p. 32) in their study of culture assert that, although there is agreement among social psychologists and anthropologists on the definition of culture as "socially acquired patterns of thought, feeling and action (Klineberg, 1954/1988; Ember & Ember, 1997; Kottak, 1994; Bodley, 1997)", culture remains a nebulous concept, so much so that about 105 definitions of this concept have been found. However, according to the authors, two large families of definitions have been identified: objective culture, understood as patterns of behavior in a habitat, and subjective culture, as shared structures of meaning. In this sense, the components of subjective culture, as stated by Triandis (1994), are classified as:

- Beliefs: what it is, how it is designated (categories, language, belief structures), and evaluated (attitudes).
- Roles: expected and proscribed behaviors for subjects who have defined positions within the social structure.
- Norms: rules and expectations that regulate desirable and undesirable behaviors, beliefs, and emotions for the members of the culture.
- Values: the relevant purposes and principles in life, with which people evaluate what is desirable, good, or beautiful, and which serve as a guide for daily behavior or as statements about how things should be (p. 3).

Within all this conceptual complexity about what culture implies, and understanding that any educational system is a product of human conception and execution, that is to say, a cultural elaboration, the question arises as to whether it is possible to teach and learn a culture. In very general terms, the family with its inter-family relations would be the first community in charge of "teaching" (meaning transmitting)

the basic characteristics and conceptions of the surrounding world with its social relations, the patterns of social coexistence, its attitudes, its beliefs and actions associated with its beliefs, etc., but undeniably consolidated by the habitual and constant interaction with its immediate environment.

However, in the traditional scheme of the school, where the normative based on a scale of reward and punishment according to the attainment of achievements preset by the education system prevails, the apprehension of culture would rebound on the system itself, and it would be socially invalid for natural cultural practices to be part of a curriculum. It is therefore necessary to discern the 'level' and 'scope' of culture in a context of language contact within the framework of educational institutions; and, above all, to reflect not only on the role of the culture of the mother tongue (CL1), that is, the one used daily by the educational actors, but also on the role of the culture of the target language (CL2).

Within the didactic encounter in the classroom, the perceptions of the language teacher (and his own conception of his own culture and the culture to be taught) and those of the students (which may be a multivariate culture) come into contact with each other. It is in this intricate context, interculturally speaking, in which, surely, the actors of the didactic fact would enter into a conflict between the native and the foreign that could generate an uncertain state similar to a 'third culture in foreign language education' as Kramsch (1993, p. 236) calls it. The author supports this construct from three different perspectives: sociological, educational, and political, which have some points of convergence and divergence.

In the first instance, it refers to the dilemma between the curricular organization determined and implemented by the dominant educational systems and the cultural particularities of the students in the didactic encounter; here, on the one hand, the traditional conception of considering the student as a 'consumer' of teaching methods that pretend to provide the language models of the native speaker, which

would be the 'ticket of entry and acceptance by the target culture' (Kramsch, 1993, p. 236); and on the other hand, the alternatives of understanding, acceptance, modification or rejection of those canons by the students and the 'affective and cognitive' contribution of the native speaker, which would be the 'affective and cognitive' contribution of the students (1993, p. 236); and on the other hand, the alternatives of understanding, acceptance, modification or rejection of those canons by the learners and the 'affective and cognitive' input of the popular culture of the language class (1993, p. 237). Secondly, regarding the educational framework of culture, the author believes that foreign language teaching should be relevant to social life; in other words, learners should learn how to act in their environment, not only being able to name it in correct statements and lexicon. Kramsh stresses that "an educational philosophy that exclusively emphasizes doing things with words runs the risk of helping to maintain the status quo and, moreover, conflicts with the teaching of culture because intercultural competence is grounded in the paradox and conflict of seeing the world in an irreducible way" (1993, p. 240). Finally, in relation to the political perspective, the author defends the variety of styles, purposes, interests, and cultural variety of students in contrast to the hegemonic tendencies of the dominant political and institutional structures, which favor national benefit and economic competitiveness.

Taking into account these brief considerations that support the conception of a third culture as a result of the various educational encounters in the context of interculturality, the dilemma persists between the ways to acculturate (channel the student into the predominant sociocultural order) and, at the same time, provide them with the tools to defend and maintain the value of their own culture.

Multiculturality

The term "multiculturality" implies the existence, and sometimes the coexistence, of multiple cultures within a single national state (Barabas, 2014). However, the physical borders of states sometimes do not limit the coexistence of diverse manifestations clearly established and defined by the cultural communities in contact. The concept of multiculturalism also entails the description and characterization of the diverse cultures

that share the same territory, in order to promote acceptance and tolerance that foster peaceful and constructive coexistence.

Multiculturalism, on the other hand, also implies the recognition of cultural diversity and the right of existence and survival of minority communities. When it comes to demanding that states validate their full rights and adopt a socio-political stance, we are talking about the concept of multiculturalism.

UNESCO (2005), in Chapter III. Definitions, Article 4, defines the concept of cultural diversity as "the multiplicity of ways in which the cultures of groups and societies express themselves. These expressions are transmitted within and between groups and societies." This document also establishes a series of objectives and guiding principles to inform policies that foster relations between the diverse cultures that share the same state. In a quick reading, we can infer that the nations that are part of UNESCO are called to comply with the guidelines and responsibilities assigned in the conventions advanced by this international entity. The main guidelines focus on respect for their own cultural expressions, the safeguarding of cultures, and primarily the observance and fulfillment of human rights and fundamental freedoms associated with cultures and their manifestations. They also promote interculturality, solidarity, and the dignity of all cultures.

The latent original multiculturalism in Colombia's national territory is represented by nearly 64 aboriginal and creole communities and languages (Pineda Camacho, 2000). The exogenous multiculturalism generated by migrations and internal and external displacements has created a highly complex social and cultural landscape, particularly for the design, planning, and implementation of public policies, including education.

Interculturality

The term interculturality has several meanings according to the socio-political contexts and the interests of some collectivities with power status; a fact that has led to a series of versions that make the concept of interculturality remain too general and, therefore, diffuse. Walsh

(2010), as outlined above, presents an overview from three perspectives with the purpose of providing elements of conceptualization and precision about the meaning and application of interculturality: (i) it refers to the 'relational' when it is treated as the fundamental conception of "contact and exchange between cultures, that is, between different people, practices, knowledge, values and cultural traditions, which could occur under conditions of equality or inequality" (p. 77); (ii) it refers to educational policies and their incidence and application in the educational sphere, i.e. the 'functional', in terms of adoption and adaptation to a current political model, and finally, (iii) it refers to 'critical' interculturality as a proposal in search of a better "understanding of critical interculturality as a political-social-epistemic-ethical project and as a de-colonial pedagogy (...)" (p. 76). As has been stated, the concept of interculturality fundamentally points to social interaction linked to cultural manifestations; in this sense, interculturality is descriptive, although it can also be prescriptive, i.e., when it refers to the set of norms governing social coexistence (Quichimbo Saquichagua et al., 2024).

On the other hand, from a semiotic perspective, particularly in the context of intercultural communication, interculturality refers to the use of language in the process of constructing, deconstructing, distributing, and maintaining culture. This process corresponds to the assignment of "negotiated collective meanings" (Parent et al., 2012, cited by Finol, 2017), i.e., it refers to culture as a process inherent to intercultural communicative interaction.

Interculturality can also refer to the processes of coexistence of native peoples or communities descended from former colonists; interculturality can also be related to migrations generated mainly by diverse social, political or economic causes; and interculturality can even be understood as a functional tendency of the states in which it occurs; that is, in this socio-political field, the concept of interculturality "does not question the post-colonial system in force and facilitates its reproduction", and "is rooted in the recognition of cultural diversity and difference, with the goal of its inclusion within the established social

structure” (Walsh, 2010, p. 77). In this case, it is the states that seek strategies of insertion in pursuit of cultural homogenization, which radically departs from the respect and promotion of cultures in their own essence of multivariety. In this case, interculturality as a political concern of the states, is associated with manifestations of power that seek to minimize, subalternize, attenuate and even exclude the cultural manifestations of minority communities that are in coexistence with majority cultural communities; or in the best of cases, the political determinations seek to achieve some level of acculturation of those minority communities in search of a homogeneous culture.

The concept of interculturality has also been used in most Latin American countries as a strategy of educational transversality, mainly oriented towards indigenous peoples (Quichimbo Saquichagua et al., 2024). This other form of state utilitarianism has become a positive discourse of inclusion to somehow counteract the manifestations of resistance of people traditionally subjected to regimes of exclusion, inequality, racism, domination, and inequity. In this sphere of reference, the same authors propose that:

(...) education from an intercultural approach is constituted as a counter-hegemonic educational proposal that questions positivist knowledge and avoids homogenization. Since the current disciplinary structures of Latin American universities, with their bureaucratic division of knowledge, severely hinder the approach to these issues. (p. 205)

The intercultural discourse in education, and more specifically in the different curricular proposals, has been presented as an evident demonstration of the interest of the states in safeguarding the international guidelines stamped in some organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), which watch over universal peace and coexistence. The question that arises is to what extent the curricular measures of intercultural inclusion are real and, above all, effective in a multicultural context such as the Colombian context.

Critical Interculturality

The critique of interculturalism, or this dominant idea of interculturality, emerged with those who have experienced the weight of the colonial in their own bodies, of the racialization and genericization of relationships and people, of the externalities that condition experiences anchored in subalternity as part of their struggles to be and to act. (Basail Rodríguez, 2022, p. 16)

Interculturality has become a social issue widely addressed in political proposals in Latin America since the 1990s (Walsh, 2010; Basail Rodríguez, 2022); an irruption that can be attributed, to a certain extent, to the claims and mobilization of native peoples in search of the vindication of their fundamental rights which have been, for a long time, ignored if not disdained, in terms of their lands, cultures and languages (De Sousa Santos, 2013; Miranda, 2020). This vision implies recognizing the existence of elements of "power, capital, and market" (Walsh, 2010, p. 76), with which the social dichotomy of domination and subordination that has been traditionally exercised in recent times has been established.

Critical interculturality, according to Basail Rodríguez (2022), is established as

(...) a theoretical-political exercise, situated and permanent, of criticism of (multi/inter) culturalism under the critique of the sense and meaning of the terms with which the debates on differences, inequalities and diversity operate, as well as the logics of historical processes and the cultural transformations that they bring with them and that are confronted. (p. 19)

From these postulates, it can be inferred that critical interculturality transcends the epistemic limits imposed by a political-cultural proposal, which apparently aims to reconcile the establishment and the social demands of the "others" within the framework of the state's official regulation. In this vein, Walsh (2010) argues that "the approach and practice that emerge from critical interculturalism are not functional to the current societal model, but serious questioners of it" (p. 88), i.e.,

it controverts its manifestation and state-controlled power relations 'from above', from subalternating functions. In sum, "Functional interculturalism responds to and is part of the interests and needs of the dominant social institutions; critical interculturalism, on the other hand, is a construction of and from the people who have suffered historical subjugation and subalternization" (Walsh, 2010, p. 88).

Critical interculturality is based on a theoretical framework that addresses structural, colonial, and racial issues and focuses on the examination of structures, power relations, and social dynamics. It encompasses the political, as well as its social and cultural policies, and addresses conceptions related to knowledge, being, and life itself (Walsh, 2010). In other words, it seeks to rescue the ancestral, its relations with nature, and the respect and understanding for the original cosmovisions, as well as the social relations of equity, equality, and inclusion, from an emancipatory perspective that challenges the colonially imposed and naturalized.

Culture and Curriculum

The traditional trend in foreign language education "has limited the teaching of culture to the transmission of information about the people of the [FL] country of origin, and, above all, about their attitudes and worldview" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 205). This pedagogical and didactic constraint, which, it is worth mentioning, has its roots in the historical focus of FL teaching oriented mainly to its forms and functions, and in the scope of developing a 'skill' devoid of any intellectual value. In fact, even today, in the educational system, the effectiveness of teaching is valued in terms of the practical operationalization of the FL. In this vein, "it is believed that the sole responsibility of the language teacher is to make his or her students speak and write as well and as fluently as possible. Depth and breadth of thought belong to other disciplines" (Freed & Bernhardt, 1992, cited by Kramsch, 1993, p. 4). The authors argue that this trend has trivialized the teaching of foreign languages and, in turn, has made the teaching of culture a particularly contentious issue.

It cannot be denied that language involves much more than the ability to decipher a linguistic code; however, it also has the potential to be the vehicle for acquiring a particular way of experiencing the realities in which an individual acts and interacts. In this scenario, the apprehension of culture should be one of the core elements of a FL curriculum and that of the teaching of any foreign language. However, the question is, which culture: that of the language teacher, who probably shares the culture of their students, or the culture of the target language? In any case, ideally, when going beyond learning the structural patterns of the target language (TL), the learner will necessarily enter the communicative space, that is, the 'real' use of a language, which implies recognizing and understanding, as well as adapting or adopting foreign cultural models. This consideration leads us to the dichotomy of whether it is necessary to first 'handle' the structure of the TL before beginning the study of the sociocultural use of the language, or, conversely, whether it is more convenient to start with the structure and culture simultaneously.

Kramersch (1993) states that traditionally culture has been viewed as simply information conveyed through language, rather than an inherent attribute of language itself. However, if language is considered a social practice, then culture should become the core of language teaching. The author emphasizes that "the cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection of language proficiency" (p. 8). This implies that in the process of teaching and learning a FL, the development of 'cultural awareness', understood as the discernment of the social contexts in which the language is used, must be considered. In other words, it is necessary to approach language as text and language as context, that is, to understand "language as an expression of the thoughts and intentions of an individual and language as an expression of the knowledge and expectations of a community" (Kramersch, 1993, p. 10).

Halliday (1982) and Halliday and Hasan (1989) argue that both language, understood as a form of expression of personal meaning, and language as a reflection of the social order, correspond to two sides of the same coin that are complementary rather than opposites. In this vein, the occurrence of a text in a specific context implies the significant

interaction not only of what is expressed adequately with the structural and semantic selection of the language but also in the intentionality and purpose of a text, as it is emitted and as it is received and interpreted; in this case of interaction, we talk about the text as discourse, which implies the realization of a text in a particular situation by the social man who expresses it and who attends to it. Halliday (1982) even emphasizes that language not only "expresses" the social structure and system, but also actively symbolizes the social system (p. 11), that is, it both determines and is determined by culture.

Multiculturalism in the Curriculum

At a global level, the multicultural movement has focused on vindicating marginalized peoples and protecting their human and civil rights. This is achieved through democratic participation, which guarantees their independence from traditional dominant groups. Soriano (2002), quoted by Castro Suárez (2019), rescues some ways of being and doing in multicultural education:

- Technological or positivist model. It addresses the challenges posed by interculturality in the educational system and is based on the acquisition of skills by students, which educational experts design and implement. Its orientation is fundamentally technical and compensatory, as the objective of multicultural education is to compensate for the deficits of cultures other than the majority one, whether these deficits are real or perceived.
- Hermeneutic or interpretative model. This suggests that intercultural education should focus its projects on improving self-knowledge, as all students should be encouraged to foster the development of intercultural cooperation and reduce prejudice and discrimination. The moral perspective is evident in this model, which aims to enhance the subjects' abilities to achieve a deeper self-understanding, thereby stimulating intergroup cooperation.
- Critical or sociopolitical model. The proposal for multicultural education focuses fundamentally on modifying the curriculum

to adapt it to the demands posed by moral democracy, which are incompatible with the cultural domination of some human groups over others. In this sense, intercultural education aims to engage teachers and students in modifying both the social situations and the ideological supports that lead to social and cultural discrimination.

The above models have been implemented (except the critical model) to a certain extent, independently or in a complementary manner in the Colombian curriculum, but with the particularity that the cultural and linguistic variety of the country has been ignored, except in the designs of some curricula of a few institutions. It follows that it is imperative to approach the critical model that rescues the segregation and subalternization to which minority communities have been subjected since the times of colonization.

As for the foreign language curriculum, cultural references have traditionally focused on contemporary Anglo-Saxon cultures as a subtle way of sustaining and even reproducing such foreign cultural characteristics. In this sense, national educational models and systems continue to contribute to promoting neocolonial paradigms that have delegitimized the undeniable reality of the existence and multicultural coexistence, as well as the latent intercultural practices in Colombia.

Interculturality in Colombia

Article 5 of Law 115 of 1994 (also known as the Education Law) outlines the purposes of education in accordance with Article 67 of the Political Constitution. Among these purposes we highlight paragraph 2, which reads: "Training in respect for life and other human rights, peace, democratic principles, coexistence, pluralism, justice, solidarity and equity, as well as in the exercise of tolerance and freedom." Explicitly, the Political Constitution of Colombia has determined that education throughout the Colombian territory must foster the essential principles of human existence and their relationships of coexistence with their environment, in a fair, supportive, and equitable manner. In

other words, it is understood that the general rule does not permit any type of marginalization, subalternation, subordination, or exclusion for any Colombian citizen in terms of their educational development and training.

For its part, numeral 6 establishes that "The study and critical understanding of the national culture and of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country, as the foundation of national unity and identity" (Ministerio de Educación nacional [MEN], 1994, p. 2). However, the same official orientation proposes a differentiated education for "some", the majority, and for "others", the minority, under the designation of ethno-education.

Ethno-Education

Colombian Law 115 of 1994, in its Chapter 3, corresponding to education for ethnic groups, and more precisely in its Article 55, refers to the definition of ethno-education as "(...) education for ethnic groups that is offered to groups or communities that make up the nationality and that have their own culture, language, traditions, and indigenous jurisdiction and privileges. This education must be linked to the environment, to the productive process, to the social and cultural process, with due respect for their beliefs and traditions." Declaratively, education for ethnic groups promotes a codification that explicitly projects a category of exclusion towards these groups with "their own culture, language, and traditions." There is also an allusion to "respect for their beliefs and traditions" in an evident manifestation of compartmentalization in relation to the homogenized dispositions towards the generality of the nation.

More recently, Law 1381 of 2010 provides rules on the recognition, promotion, protection, use, preservation, and strengthening of the languages of Colombia's ethnic groups, as well as their linguistic rights and those of their speakers. According to Article 20 of this law, education is decreed that:

The national, departmental, district, and municipal education authorities, as well as those of the peoples and communities where native languages are spoken, shall ensure that the teaching of these languages is compulsory in the schools of those communities. The intensity and modalities of teaching the native language or languages, as opposed to the teaching of Spanish, will be determined by agreement between the State educational authorities and the authorities of the communities, within the framework of ethno-educational processes, when these are designed.

Despite these official initiatives of protectionist regulation, the inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant minority peoples seems to be a functional action of complacency of the state in the face of the growing demands of those communities, rather than a real and effective recognition of the value of the cultures that demand integration instead of an obligatory inclusion in the majority cultures. In this sense, the tension between the functional and homogenizing vision of the state and the vindicatory claim of the peoples in the social and educational contexts remains latent (Miranda, 2020).

Conceptual Trends in Intercultural Curricula

In an exhaustive study of the literature on critical intercultural pedagogy and curriculum, Blanchar and Arbeláez (2023) identified conceptual tendencies that can be summarized in three broad trends: i) critical and intercultural pedagogies and education; ii) critical and intercultural curricula, and iii) participatory action research (PAR).

The first category argues that critical and intercultural pedagogies can be understood as concepts that validate pluralism, diversity, and the social and cultural complexity of society, both within and outside the school environment. Likewise, it theorizes that these can determine pedagogy and education as challenges that seek to promote various ways of life, seeking not only to improve coexistence, but also to develop community and overcome educational, social, and cultural gaps, which are especially evident in socially and culturally deprived contexts (Blanchar & Arbeláez, 2023, p. 11). In other words, this category

emphasizes that education must be understood from an eminently socio-historical perspective and propagated beyond the limits of the school as a social construct. However, it is also limited by dominant socio-cultural conceptions.

Related to this same category, the authors find how proposals materialize according to the actors who conceive and execute them; on the one hand, top-down initiatives in which institutionalized actors exert influence from the hegemonic toward communities; and on the other hand, bottom-up actions, which attempt to emerge from communities seeking to rescue their social and cultural roots in opposition to state trends.

In short, this category includes proposals for inclusive, pluralistic, and critical education that rescues the feelings and worldviews of indigenous communities in the design of public policies for educational spaces. It is therefore a question of influencing, from the community base, a critical intercultural education of Eurocentric references that opens up the possibility of thinking of ourselves as social actors of our own destinies and future projects of a plural, multi- and intercultural society, capable of coexisting and progressing within frameworks of equity, equality, respect, solidarity, and real democracy.

With regard to the category related to critical and intercultural curricula, the literature reviewed points to the crystallization of micro-curriculum design initiatives that respond to critical, intercultural, and decolonizing educational parameters. Furthermore, it is emphasized that proposals must include the direct and effective participation of the communities to which they relate, so that these communities' views are reflected in these proposals.

The authors Blanchar and Arbeláez (2023) understand a critical and intercultural curriculum as "the set of perspectives, actions, programs, projects, or any social, cultural, and environmental efforts, inside and outside of school, that are self-managed to advance forms of recognition, growth, and collective development of diverse populations

and their forms of community life" (p. 13). Clearly, this perception of the curriculum encompasses an inclusive and participatory conception because it covers community actors themselves and the social contexts involved. Furthermore, the projection of the curriculum beyond the boundaries of institutions links the formal aspects of a traditional curriculum with the objective and subjective realities of the territories and their historical and everyday interrelationships.

A review of the existing literature on this subject enables trends to be classified into two interconnected groups: firstly, on the one hand, there is the recognition of multicultural existence, which has classrooms as its meeting point, and on the other hand, the recognition of the presence of numerous social environments outside them, which need to be added to curriculum projects by institutionalized actors in the education system. In the second group, the critical and intercultural curriculum must incorporate elements of "self-recognition and external recognition through concrete actions that transcend the officially established international discourse" (Blanchar & Arbeláez, 2023, p. 14) into its design for implementation. From these perspectives, it is assumed that the traditional top-down curriculum is no longer relevant in an intercultural context. On the contrary, the participation of all actors involved in the process of inclusive, participatory, and democratic citizen training is highlighted in its development, design, regulation, and implementation, with the aim of promoting coexistence and individual and collective improvement.

Finally, studies related to participatory action research and documentary exploration are moving towards a methodological strategy focused on sociocultural factors and community participation, which can be adapted to action research, and in particular participatory action research, as a legitimate alternative for the incubation and production of knowledge in the development and construction of intercultural curricula (Arroyo et al., 2020, cited by Blanchar & Arbeláez, 2023).

In conclusion, the documentary review proposes to identify and, in some way, limit or minimize the hegemony of pedagogies and

their homogenizing curriculum designers, who ignore the immense sociocultural variety of a territory such as Colombia, thereby seeking to maintain and reproduce the neocolonial curricula proposed by the government elite. It is therefore imperative that an alternative curriculum make visible and empower the 'other' knowledge of minority communities as valid options in the construction of curricula on equal epistemological terms.

Pivotal Guidelines for a Multicultural Design of a Foreign Language (FL) Curriculum

In the context of formal education, for example, learning a foreign language remains a challenge for students, teachers and the administrative staff. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in languages, likely prompted by the phenomenon of globalization, which drives academic reforms, primarily in curriculum and internationalization. Learning a foreign language for social purposes remains a goal to be achieved, and the appropriation and recognition of foreign cultures' characteristics have not been part of the state curricular agenda. Of course, the internalization of Colombian native cultures through the curriculum has been largely ruled out in recent decades.

In an attempt to incorporate some samples and manifestations of Colombian culture into the curriculum of LE, some guidelines are suggested that can enhance cultural inclusion in the syllabi of the different levels envisioned in the curricular organization of educational institutions. Table 1 shows the activities, strategies, content, and methodology that will be determined by the language teachers, policymakers, and administrative staff in accordance with the institution's mission and interests. However, some themes are identified (many of them in the form of questions that can be translated into more precise names) while attempting to implement the proposed guidelines, and in addition, a series of learning strategies is suggested, which are by no means intended as definitive prescriptions.

The primary objective should be to construct a learning environment that stimulates respect, understanding, and diverse cultural awareness; such a curriculum should consider:

Table 1. Some fundamental insights for the FL curriculum design

	Guidelines	Content	Learning activities
1	Promotion of self-reflection that helps students (and teachers) to recognize and understand their own conceptions and limitations (biases) about their own culture and other cultures.	- Society and culture - What is culture? - What is the use of culture? - Who created the culture?	- Roleplay - Debates - Lectures - Analytical readings (mindmaps)
2	Motivation of acceptance, via understanding, which stimulates the development of empathy in order to understand the otherness of others.	- Who am I? - Why am I like this? - What am I here for? - Why are they like that?	- Mini projects - Lectures - Interviews (indigenous communities) - Comparative intercultural analysis
3	Recognition of the real and symbolic systems of current and historical power relations that have generated enormous social and economic differences.	- State, government, and culture - Economic power - Institutional power - Western and ancestral democracy - What is the meaning of spirituality for us?	- Exhibition of posters on symbols and images - Design of conceptual maps and supports - Western and ancestral justice systems - Guided tours of museums
4	Inclusion of non-Western perspectives and promotion of ancestral systems and their relationships with their environment and alien communities.	- Where did we come from? - Where are we going? - We are who we think we are? - Why are we different?	- Activation of exchanges (incoming and outgoing mobility) with people from native cultures and languages. - Conversations with intercultural guests

	Guidelines	Content	Learning activities
5	Fostering the development of critical thinking that drives analysis and questions about cultural representations, prejudices, and stereotypes.	- What does it mean to think critically? - How is thought constructed?	- Development of socio-cultural research practices of education actors in order to establish points of encounter and disagreement that allow the understanding and acceptance of the other for a better coexistence, peace, and democracy. - Surveys and analysis
6	Promotion of the acceptance and understanding of ancestral cultures in respect for and harmony with the environment.	- How do we relate to nature? - How do we relate to each other? - Do we all relate in the same way?	- Guided ancestral practices - Archaeological visits - Visits to mining sites - Discussions and debates
7	Reflection on technologies (internet, social networks, devices) and their impact on native cultures.	- Technology and cultures - Cross-cultural economy - Globalization and multiculturalism	Intercultural research projects
8	Stimulate reflection on the cultural dynamics that may involve some risks in a process of meeting cultures (acculturation, transculturation, deculturalization, cultural alienation)	- What would happen if...? - Forced displacement - Migration, culture, and language - Ethnoeducation	- Analysis of own and foreign experiences (Canada, Spain, Chile, Paraguay, Colombian borders, resguardos, San Andrés, San Basilio de Palenque, Sierra Nevada, etc.)

Conclusion

The aim of presenting these considerations from a conceptual perspective is to raise interest in the ongoing worldwide concern about interculturality awareness and its role in curriculum design while challenging the different possibilities of integrating cultural content into the foreign language curriculum. There will certainly be many other guidelines that will emerge from the discussion raised in this chapter, which somehow complement a more robust proposal adjusted to the particular needs of any academic population.

First, it is convenient to remember that the concepts associated with intercultural education and that of intercultural curriculum, though interwoven, are different. According to Mara (2021), intercultural education refers to "an inclusive teaching-learning process, which involves all students in consolidating a strong sense of self-confidence, strengthening empathic perceptions of people from different cultural backgrounds and promoting equal opportunities to reach their full potential" (p. 1). Clearly, this definition encompasses the broader sense of the educative panorama, which may be the national purpose of a public policy, and that may include a partial or total integrative approach for all-subjects curricula, whereas the intercultural curriculum becomes the instrument through which the state will hopefully put into practice in order for the students to gain intercultural competences.

It is also important to note that a curriculum based on considerations of interculturality must respect the ways of feeling and thinking of the communities that should become the main actors in the design of a curricular proposal of this type. In other words, it is not a question of 'adding' to a traditionally conceived and applied curriculum some particular elements of other cultures which distort the true essence of an intercultural curriculum. In addition, intercultural pedagogy should be crystallized into a curriculum that addresses non-Western

knowledge and promotes its understanding, recognition, revitalization, and propagation in their peoples and communities, while promoting critical thinking as a fundamental element towards a true peaceful coexistence, acceptance of the otherness, respect, integration, equality, and social equity.

On the other hand, a curriculum designed to develop and appropriate the phenomenon of interculturality within communities and wider society must encourage emancipatory and decolonizing approaches, rather than the traditional homogenizing and hegemonic methods that have been used for decades in culturally diverse societies. This is undoubtedly an official contravention of the very existence of minority peoples and a political strategy to minimize, disregard, diminish, and even eliminate entire communities through the education system.

Finally, when rethinking the intercultural curriculum, we must also consider the potential challenges that could influence its conception, design, and implementation. For example, one might ask: to what extent are communities willing to be included in a curriculum beyond their own territories? How to involve the school outsiders (community's families, authorities, etc.) both in the process of construction and in the process of implementation within their territories? Should a curriculum based on the interculturality of minority communities be subject to majority cultures? Should intercultural curriculum design be based on major national regulations? What would the real participation of communities in this endeavor look like? What conditions and parameters will ensure the traceability and effectiveness of implementing an intercultural curriculum? What will the training process for stakeholders in critical and intercultural curriculum design look like? What will be the role of indigenous languages in this process? Who will be in charge of 'teaching'? What would be the criteria to select teachers? Is the state capable of making the necessary and sufficient budgetary investment?

These and other concerns must be addressed by the actors who will make decisions and be part of intercultural curriculum design in order to somehow guarantee factors of inclusion, equity, and democracy in

its construction. Perhaps some of the answers will come from a series of grounded and/or action investigations that must be undertaken before, during, and after the development of the interculturality-based curriculum.

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