







# Freeing Language Education

Studies on Interculturality, Communication, and Professional Rise

Leidy Viviana Pérez Cárdenas  
Iván Ricardo Miranda Montenegro  
Camilo Andrés Acevedo Gerena  
(Compilers)



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# Resumen

El propósito central de este volumen es replantear el sentido de la educación superior en Lenguas Extranjeras en un mundo globalizado, intercultural y socialmente complejo. El libro busca demostrar que los salones de clase no son espacios neutros, sino escenarios dinámicos donde los estudiantes negocian identidades, establecen relaciones con los demás y proyectan su lugar en la sociedad. Desde esta perspectiva, la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras trasciende la mera transmisión de estructuras gramaticales para convertirse en una práctica crítica, humanizadora y socialmente responsable.

En cuanto a sus contenidos, la obra reúne siete capítulos que ofrecen miradas complementarias y diversas. El primero aborda la interculturalidad como un proceso de transformación interna en el aula de inglés, mientras que el segundo propone criterios para un currículo intercultural que supere visiones superficiales de la diversidad. El tercer capítulo estudia el desarrollo de habilidades de expresión oral en contextos universitarios, enfatizando las dimensiones emocionales del aprendizaje. El cuarto analiza la práctica del co-teaching entre asistentes Fulbright y docentes colombianos, destacando la importancia de la colaboración y la confianza. El quinto examina el inglés como imaginario social en la educación superior, mostrando sus tensiones entre empoderamiento y dominación. El sexto introduce la integración de la salud mental en los cursos de lengua extranjera, innovando al vincular bienestar emocional y aprendizaje. Finalmente, el séptimo expande la mirada a un contexto chino, donde se exploran estrategias de aprendizaje del español y se subraya la relevancia global de la formación intercultural.

Las contribuciones de este libro son múltiples. Ofrece rutas para transformar la enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras en un proceso que



fomente la empatía, la conciencia crítica y la solidaridad intercultural. Además, visibiliza las tensiones entre inclusión y exclusión, poder y equidad, cuidado personal y desarrollo académico. Con ello, invita a docentes, investigadores y responsables de política educativa a concebir la educación en lenguas como una fuerza transformadora, capaz de contribuir a sociedades más justas, inclusivas y humanas.

**Palabras clave:** Interculturalidad, currículo, identidad, equidad, inclusión, co-teaching, imaginarios sociales, bienestar emocional, estrategias de aprendizaje, globalización, cultura, sociedad, políticas públicas.

# Abstract

The central purpose of this volume is to rethink the meaning and role of higher education in Foreign Languages within a globalized, intercultural, and socially complex world. The book seeks to demonstrate that classrooms are not neutral spaces but rather dynamic environments where students negotiate identities, establish relationships with others, and project their place in society. From this perspective, the teaching of foreign languages goes beyond the mere transmission of grammatical structures to become a critical, humanizing, and socially responsible practice.

Regarding its contents, the work brings together seven chapters that offer complementary and diverse perspectives. The first addresses interculturality as a process of internal transformation within the English classroom, while the second proposes criteria for an intercultural curriculum that moves beyond superficial views of diversity. The third chapter examines the development of oral communication skills in university contexts, emphasizing the emotional dimensions of learning. The fourth analyzes the practice of co-teaching between Fulbright teaching assistants and Colombian instructors, highlighting the importance of collaboration and trust. The fifth explores English as a social imaginary in higher education, revealing the tensions between empowerment and domination. The sixth introduces the integration of mental health into foreign language courses, innovatively linking emotional well-being with learning. Finally, the seventh chapter broadens the perspective to a Chinese context, where strategies for learning Spanish are explored and the global relevance of intercultural education is underscored.

The contributions of this book are manifold. It offers pathways to transform the teaching of Foreign Languages into a process that fosters

empathy, critical awareness, and intercultural solidarity. Moreover, it brings visibility to tensions between inclusion and exclusion, power and equity, and personal care and academic development. In doing so, it invites teachers, researchers, and educational policymakers to conceive language education as a transformative force capable of contributing to more just, inclusive, and humane societies.

**Keywords:** Interculturality, curriculum, identity, equity, inclusion, co-teaching, social imaginaries, emotional well-being, learning strategies, globalization, culture, society, public policy.



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# Preface

*Iván Ricardo Miranda Montenegro<sup>1</sup>*

*Camilo Andrés Acevedo Gerena<sup>2</sup>*

*Freeing Language Education: Interculturality, Communication, and Professional Rise* is a book that compiles seven research studies carried out by active English language professors who are members of the Multidisciplinary Research in Foreign Cultures and Languages (MRFCL) research group at the Instituto Internacional de Idiomas, Sogamoso campus of Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC). The selection of the chapters was subject to the rigorous conditions required by MRFCL and the editorial office of the Centro de Gestión de Investigación (CIFAS) in terms of chapter structure, content, wording, plagiarism and IA checking, and a final double-blind review by external scholars.

The book presents a series of experiences in language learning and teaching, as well as reflections and recommendations. It addresses not only pedagogical and didactic practices but also the role of languages in societal construction. Firstly, the didactic approach to integrating foreign language learning, — the understanding of linguistic elements and the use of meaningful content for teachers and students — is undoubtedly necessary in today's globalized world, where multilingualism is essential. However, beyond the strictly educational, the conceptual scope of various chapters of the book invites reflection on the impact of languages on the construction, deconstruction, and

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1 Doctor in Language and Culture from Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia.

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reconstruction of the social and cultural as a task of understanding, purpose, and resistance to the establishment of hegemonic powers.

*Exploring Interculturality as a Process of Inner Transformation in the EFL Classroom.* Within the conceptual framework of interculturality, the author critically examines the possibilities of interrelation between the construction of diverse identities based on students' own experiences and reflections. This study integrates foreign language learning with the current global promotion of intercultural dialogue. Self-recognition and the recognition and acceptance of others as equals will surely lay the fundamental principles for alternative, critical, and proactive academic communities to establish an inclusive and equitable education agenda.

*Towards an Intercultural Foreign Language Curriculum: Fundamental Considerations.* Keeping in mind that the conception, design and implementation of an interculturality-based curriculum within a formal education context has long been a complex and challenging task, the author conducts a conceptual review of the main aspects related to interculturality, which enables its integration with the development of comprehensive communication skills in a foreign language. In today's globalized world, the design of a curriculum that highlights diverse cultural manifestations as a possibility for visibility and, above all, as a practical manifestation of intercultural recognition and acceptance, would undoubtedly be a significant step forward in promoting inclusive academic development. It would also lay the groundwork for a more equitable, inclusive, and peaceful society.

*Developing Public Speaking Skills in English as a Foreign Language Contexts: University Students' Needs and Preferences.* Through an exploratory research exercise, the authors conducted a survey of perceptions with a group of university students regarding their preferences in the development of public speaking skills. Although these skills are fundamental and necessary for professional development, they do not appear in curricular practices. Therefore, this study draws on the voices of the students themselves to identify and propose curricular activities that promote the application of these skills as an effective tool



for reducing psychological and emotional factors that usually hinder the development of these academic and professional competencies.

*Systematizing a Co-Teaching Experience between Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) and Colombian English Educators: Through the Lens of the ETAs.* After a year of co-teaching between native English-speaking teachers and Colombian English teachers in a higher education context, the authors of this chapter successfully systematized the concerns and lessons learned, mainly by the foreign teachers. The experience highlights the validity of this type of pedagogical-didactic practice as a valuable alternative that transcends technical thresholds and addresses elements of interculturality that enrich teaching and result in more effective teaching activities. This study enables institutional and teaching reflection, which clarifies the current proposals for internationalization and interculturality being promoted by national education systems.

*The Social Imaginaries of the English Language and its Academic-Professional Component.* Adopting a theoretical-practical approach, the author uses Cornelius Castoriadis's work to explain the established power relations that manifest themselves in the process of teaching and learning English at a public university. The study problematizes the social imaginary construct and its critical analysis, which extend beyond the academic criteria of the foreign language curriculum and policies to encompass elements of geopolitical power. This approach encourages ongoing reflection and analysis of the educational program proposed and implemented by the State, as well as its implementation in the local contexts of academic institutions, where the effects of supranational policies are truly felt.

*Supporting Mental Health in the University: A Shared Commitment Through Foreign Language Learning.* In a novel proposal for integrating learning and content, the author highlights the value of recognizing mental health as an essential component of students' academic development. The different connotations associated with the human emotional environment are part of the content that directly involves students

in a better understanding of themselves from their subjectivity, while promoting the learning and use of the foreign language.

*Learning Strategies for the Strengthening of Communication skills in Spanish Learners.* Finally, in a case study conducted by the author in a foreign context, the teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language shows the effectiveness of learning strategies for students with cultural and linguistic backgrounds that differ from the teacher's socio-cultural background. The experience presents the future challenge of intercultural training for language teachers in training, in addition to didactic preparation in the management of bilingual learning environments.

In short, the collection of chapters documented in this book allows the reader to delve into areas of understanding and analysis beyond the traditional approaches to language teaching and learning in the Colombian educational space. As the university is considered a microcosm that reflects society and its social relationships, the language classroom should become a meeting place for the participants' subjectivities—both teachers and students. In this new conception of the classroom, the participants (who are in fact social actors) in the academic training process become individual actors in search of agreements and negotiations regarding being, knowing, existing, and above all, being able to exist in different communities without feeling subordination, discrimination, segregation, rejection, and invisibility. The hope is for a new education system based on the recognition of otherness in public policies and, mainly, by the educational actors themselves, with equal learning opportunities guided by a flexible, participatory, inclusive curriculum that focuses on the essence of all social relationships: the human being.

## About the authors

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### Camilo Andrés Acevedo Gerena

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