

HOW

Volume 33, Number 1, pages 23 - 42

<https://doi.org/10.19183/how.33.1.795>



Contra-Hegemonic Language Teaching in Colombia: Embracing Translanguaging and the Ecology of Languages Reflections

Enseñanza de Lenguas Contra-Hegemónica en Colombia: Reflexiones en torno al Translanguaging y la Ecología de las Lenguas

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Received:

July 10th, 2023

Accepted:

November 18th, 2024

Published

April 13th, 2026

REFLECTIVE ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.19183/how.33.1.795>

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.):

López-Urbina, J., & Bonilla-Mora, M., (2026). Contra-hegemonic language teaching in Colombia: Embracing translanguaging and the ecology of languages reflections. *HOW*, 33(1), 23 - 42. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.33.1.795>

Abstract

This reflective article explores the implications of contra-hegemonic practices in language education in Colombia, highlighting some misalignment with the country's multicultural and multilingual realities. Throughout the text, authors advocate for a shift from monolingual and standardized methodologies to alternative and inclusive approaches grounded in the translanguaging and the ecology of languages frameworks. The reflection emphasizes the importance of bottom-up educational strategies that empower teachers and students to confront dominant linguistic forms and advocate for preserving minority and marginalized languages. This is essential in classrooms and multilingual contexts where both foreign and native languages coexist. By embracing the ecology of languages, the authors underscore the interconnectedness of languages, considering social, psychological, political, and environmental factors that translanguaging considers essential for a dynamic pedagogical process. Ultimately, this perspective envisions a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable educational paradigm that connects local and global knowledge.

Keywords: ecology of languages, language teaching, linguistic diversity, multilingualism, translanguaging.

Resumen

Este artículo reflexivo explora las implicaciones de las prácticas contrahegemónicas en la enseñanza de lenguas en Colombia, destacando algunas desarticulaciones que se presentan con relación a las realidades multiculturales y multilingües del país. A lo largo del texto, los autores abogan por un cambio de las metodologías monolingües y estandarizadas a enfoques alternativos e inclusivos basados en los marcos de trabajo del translenguaje y la ecología de las lenguas. La reflexión enfatiza la importancia de las estrategias educativas de abajo hacia arriba que empoderen a los maestros y estudiantes para enfrentar las formas lingüísticas dominantes y abogar por la preservación de las lenguas minoritarias y marginadas. Esto es esencial en las aulas y los contextos multilingües donde coexisten tanto las lenguas extranjeras como las nativas. Al adoptar la ecología de las lenguas, los autores subrayan la interconexión de las lenguas, teniendo en cuenta los factores sociales, psicológicos, políticos y ambientales que el translenguaje considera esenciales para un proceso pedagógico dinámico. En última instancia, esta perspectiva avizora un paradigma educativo más inclusivo, equitativo y sostenible que conecta el conocimiento local y global.

Palabras clave: diversidad lingüística, ecología de las lenguas, enseñanza de lenguas, multilingüismo, translanguaging.

Résumé

Cet article réflexif examine les implications des pratiques contre-hégémoniques dans l'enseignement des langues en Colombie, en mettant en évidence certains décalages par rapport aux réalités multiculturelles et multilingues du pays. Tout au long du texte, les auteurs plaident pour un passage des méthodologies monolingues et standardisées vers des approches alternatives et inclusives, fondées sur les cadres théoriques du translanguaging et de l'écologie des langues.

La réflexion souligne l'importance de stratégies éducatives ascendantes (bottom-up) qui permettent d'autonomiser les enseignants et les apprenants afin qu'ils puissent questionner les formes linguistiques dominantes et défendre la préservation des langues minoritaires et marginalisées. Cette perspective s'avère particulièrement pertinente dans les salles de classe et dans les contextes multilingues où coexistent langues étrangères et langues autochtones.

En adoptant le cadre de l'écologie des langues, les auteurs mettent en lumière l'interdépendance des langues, en tenant compte des facteurs sociaux, psychologiques, politiques et environnementaux que l'approche du translanguaging considère comme essentiels à un processus pédagogique dynamique. En définitive, cette perspective esquisse les contours d'un paradigme éducatif plus inclusif, équitable et durable, capable d'articuler les savoirs locaux et globaux.

Mots-clés : Diversité linguistique, écologie des langues, didactique des langues, multilinguisme, translanguaging.

Resumo

Esse artigo reflexivo explora as implicações das práticas contra-hegemônicas no ensino das línguas estrangeiras na Colômbia, realçando algumas desarticulações que se apresentam com relação às relações multiculturais e multilingues do país. Ao longo do texto, os autores advogam por um câmbio das metodologias monolíngues e estandarizadas pelos enfoques alternativos e inclusivos baseados nos marcos da translinguagem e a ecologia das línguas. A reflexão se acentua com a importância das estratégias educativas do baixo para o alto que empoderem aos professores e aos estudantes para afrontar as formas linguísticas dominantes e advogar pela preservação das línguas minoritárias e marginadas. Aquilo é essencial nas salas de aula e nos contextos multilingues onde coexistem tanto as línguas estrangeiras quanto as nativas. Adotando a ecologia das línguas, os autores sublinham a interconexão das línguas considerando os fatores sociais, psicológicos, políticos e ambientais, que a translíngagem tem na conta como essenciais para um processo pedagógico. Na última instância, essa perspectiva vigia um paradigma mais inclusivo, equitativo, e sustentável, que liga o conhecimento local e global.

Palavras chave: Diversidade linguística, ecologia das línguas, ensino das línguas, multilinguismo, translinguagem.

Introduction

Government guidelines that establish educational policies in Colombia form the basis for understanding how foreign languages are taught and learned in various multilingual contexts and learning environments across the nation. In addition to contributing to the instrumentalization and fossilization of the country's language teaching and learning pedagogies, these policies appear to contradict the principles of multilingualism and multiculturalism views as asserted in ethno-education. Guerrero (2010) and Usma-Wilches (2009) contend that by focusing on Anglo-white methodologies through the medium of English, bilingual policies have embraced a monocultural and homogenous perspective while disregarding diversity and the value of otherness.

This standardization of approaches is associated with implementing the parameters set up by the Common European Framework of Reference to decide distinct levels of ability in English language proficiency through courses and tests that use uniform patterns of mass application. (Fandiño-Parra, 2021; Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero-Polo, 2021).

Students' and teachers' identities, as well as their academic performance, are impacted by a lack of knowledge about Colombians' multilingual and multicultural traits (Cruz-Arcila, 2020; Gutierrez & Aguirre Ortega, 2022; Mosquera Perez, 2022; Zwisler, 2018). For instance, teachers are portrayed in the "Estándares" as clerks who faithfully carry out the orders of a higher authority (Guerrero, 2010), negating the significance of instructors as technologists and ignoring the interactions between languages and their settings. However, contrary to those limited perspectives, the teachers have shown that their work involves much more than teaching. According to Bonilla-Mora and López-Urbina (2021) "teachers confront themselves with their thoughts and beliefs and about their role as teachers and, in general, the construction of their link to the social, political, economic, and cultural world around them" (p. 15), this change is reflected in their desire to be included in research where they express discomfort and offer novel and thought-provoking approaches to language instruction.

One of the most recent iterations of the National Bilingualism Program, published by the Ministry of National Education [Ministerio de Educación Nacional – MEN] (2021), which is based on the National Development Plan 2018–2022, recognizes the nation's linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity by promoting the teaching of second and foreign languages. So, it aims to address the restrictions and intends to respond to the country's needs and attend to the current regulations (MEN, 2021). However, through the Intercultural Bilingual Education Program [PEIB - for its acronym in Spanish] that the Ministry has been developing since 2023, the strategies of the previous program continue to be implemented and the suggested curriculum for teaching the foreign language French is presented (MEN, 2023); although, at the time of writing this article, the authors did not find a document with the program guidelines.

According to the authors of this article, the ecology of language principles should benefit all parties, allowing teachers and students to actively support the voices of those who value their language and identity while simultaneously opposing hegemonic perspectives that have traditionally prioritized the dominant group's language. A more equitable and inclusive learning environment can be achieved by implementing translanguaging and the ecology of languages. This study examines the potential for counter-hegemonic language instruction in Colombia while exploring its implications for

the next generation and its impact on education policy development. The authors take sustainability and linguistic variety into account in this reflection. For the cultural and linguistic environment to be healthy, the language ecosystem—which guarantees linguistic diversity—is essential. This reflection can enhance understanding and engagement, especially for students who are learning in a language that is not their first.

The study of languages in their psychological, social, and environmental contexts is known as the ecology of languages, much like ecology, which studies living things in their natural habitats. Maphosa (2021) affirms that language ecology is also partly sociological because language only functions in relating its users to one another and to nature. This field examines how languages interact with each other and with their speakers, taking into consideration the sociolinguistic environment, the impact of social factors such as identity, power, and community on language use, and the development and multilingualism, including how individuals and communities manage and use their linguistic resources. According to Kamali and Nazari (2023), the ecological framework helps understand how emotion and identity, which are fundamentally ecological constructions, dialectically affect teachers' professionalism.

The way a language's ecosystem works in connection to its users when it comes to language use, translanguaging is a method that enables people to use their whole linguistic repertoire for learning and communication. Translanguaging is a concept in bilingual and multilingual education that refers to the process by which multilingual speakers use their languages as an integrated communication system (García & Li, 2016). Instead of treating languages as separate entities, translanguaging recognizes that multilingual individuals draw on all their linguistic resources to make meaning, communicate, and learn.

Even though plurilingualism identifies languages, including the native language, its goal is to move the students toward full-native proficiency in the national language by changing students' identities, rather than affirming their own (García & Otheguy, 2020). Overall, translanguaging challenges traditional views of language separation and promotes a more holistic understanding of how multilingual people use language in dynamic and adaptive ways by recognizing and valuing the multiple languages that students bring to the classroom. And endorsing a sense of pride and empowerment in their linguistic abilities. Among other proceeds, translanguaging can be used as a pedagogical strategy to support learning by allowing students to use their full linguistic repertoire and promote an inclusive environment where all linguistic backgrounds are respected.

Ecology of Languages: A Holistic Perspective

The ecology of language is a framework for the study of language as conceptualized primarily in Einar Haugen's work (1972), where he defines language ecology as "the study of interactions between any given language and its environment" (p. 57). On his part, after examining education as a nested ecosystem with multiple layers, Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced ecology into the field of education. In 1993, the same author went on to characterize this phenomenon as having four interconnected stages: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. According to Kamali and Nazari (2023), "these phases are essential for identifying the intricate ecosystem in which educators and students live (p. 3).

The term "ecology of language" was coined in the 1990s when international organizations such as the United Nations [UN] realized how crucial language learning was to promote national

integration (Blyth & Thoms, 2021; Eliasson, 2015; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2008). Tactlessly, those organizations just included certain languages in the merger of nations and infringed on the rights to the language of indigenous and minority languages by excluding them.

Kramersch (2002, 2008) defined language ecology as the study and understanding of the interactions between languages and their context, within the social and psychological effects intrinsic to the language. The author affirms that a language should not be treated simply as a structural system (phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.) that exists somehow independently of its speakers, and it is impossible to understand the language without the speakers. This means language ecology considers the social and psychological situation and how learners determine language comprehension (Blyth & Thoms, 2021; Kramersch, 2002, 2008; Vaishali & Rukmini, 2021).

Sharma et al. (2020) elucidated that language ecology is related to variations in language in contact between individuals. In other words, language only works when users interact in social and natural environments; people who learn the language determine the language's ecology and use it to share ideas, culture, and experiences. This indicates that utilizing a language requires sophisticated social knowledge and comprehension rather than just stringing words together to convey our ideas (Fu et al., 2019). According to Gabryś-Barker (2017), multilingualism and what it means to be multilingual are complex phenomena that transcend language alone. This includes a “psychological, social, and educational” approach and an analysis of language, but it also relies on the understanding of the “I” as a language user and evolves in various linguistic communities (p. 91). Consequently, a classroom can be viewed as a microcosm of society and an ecosystem. Every teacher and student contribute their ethnicity, expertise, and life experiences to this ecosystem, which can be used in a variety of ways. The curriculum is then organized, and modalities of engagement are formed by teachers and students (Sharma et al., 2020).

The ecology of language analogies holds that, like living things, languages are dynamic, influenced by other languages in their linguistic environment, and at risk of extinction from the influence of more powerful languages (Hornberger, 2002). These power dynamics between languages have an impact on speakers of those languages, particularly linguistic minorities whose native tongue or languages differ from the nation's dominant language or languages. It is in this context that the ecology of learning must consider the learner's social, cultural, linguistic, economic, and political characteristics. This is the environment that forbids individualism; the needs and knowledge of the different groups and places, including the diverse local and global ontological components, must be taught and should be considered while teaching and learning. According to Jordan (2015), Le Gal (2018), Li et al. (2021), and Zaidi and Rowsell (2017), this is a component of the ecological system of the same co-construction that ought to be applied to the educational materials.

When students are learning a foreign language, true language learning expands their linguistic repertoire without limiting their use of native languages or sign languages (Blackledge, 2008; Allard, 2017; García & Lin, 2016; Petrov & Razumovskaya, 2021; Tay & Ng, 2021). This refers to how the student develops autonomous learning skills, self-regulation, and metalinguistic abilities while managing to play a part in their education and becoming a critical and analytical user in transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching (Blyth & Thoms, 2021; Allard, 2017; García & Lin, 2016; Tay & Ng, 2021). Students gain empowerment and an understanding of the social, economic, political, and cultural

aspects of the country where their identity and language originate, as well as those that are present in the language they are learning.

Since foreign language-focused bilingualism impacts our students' learning process not only in terms of language proficiency but also in terms of self-awareness, identity formation, and perception of their place in society, it can endanger so-called minority languages by ignoring their knowledge and reducing opportunities for coexistence with other languages. Fostering domestic and global educational approaches that support individuals' social, psychological, and economic growth is essential (Allard, 2017; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017; Hopkins et al., 2022; Petrov & Razumovskaya, 2021).

Otherwise, rather than addressing the various perspectives, epistemologies, and practices of all the actors embedded in the local and global contexts, we might anticipate an education that imposes an ideology imposed by the dominant groups (Allard, 2017; Bettney, 2022; Blyth & Thoms, 2021; García & Lin, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2016).

Towards an Epistemological Rupture

According to the reasons depicted above, De Sousa Santos (2009) and Jenson and De Sousa Santos (2018) insist on an epistemological rupture in science and learning, returning to the importance of a learning policy that is structured based on the local, bottom-up policies, in a democratic techno culture, where oppressed groups have a voice. This situation appears repeatedly in studies that foreign language teachers performed in Colombia, highlighting the need to consider the local knowledge, the native languages, and the context in the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational policies (Bonilla et al., 2018; Bonilla Carvajal & Tejada Sánchez, 2016; Usma Wilches, 2009, 2015).

Furthermore, language learning processes must benefit all participants so that teachers and students can disrupt some hegemonic perceptions that have always preferred the dominant group's language and begin strengthening the voices of those who value their language and identity. Likewise, national and institutional policies are obliged to address the different realities of the country, not only in urban areas, where, fortunately, geographically, they benefit from greater access to resources, but in rural areas that require greater attention and greater actions to close the educational gap. This fact has revealed that students formed to be foreign language teachers are unaware of their own cultural and linguistic diversity (Arismendi-Gómez, 2016; Bettney, 2022; Usma Wilches, 2009, 2015).

Even though education must respond to global demands, ensuring equality and coverage, it is essential to see students as human beings with requirements, contexts, and linguistic diversity; features that put them apart from the instrumentalization, avoiding the idea of the language as a mere tool, or an instrument of communication (Freire, 2006; Gimeno-Sacristan, 2005; Scott, 2017; Suzina & Tufte, 2020).

Nowadays, regarding foreign language teachers in Colombia, it is evident that they are forced to align curricula with an agenda permeated by aspects of globalization and neoliberalism that increase the demands of what they should achieve in their classroom (Bettney, 2022; Kumaravadivelu, 2016). In addition, most of the B.A. programs do not include the teaching of any native language within their curriculum, but rather as elective and optional subjects (Arismendi-Gómez, 2016; De Mejía, 2012, 2016). However, according to the Douglas Fir Group (2016) and Jin et al. (2021), teachers, from an ecological perspective of learning, must understand their roles within the various ecologies

and systems. Within this framework, three systems should be considered to understand the roles of language teachers: the microsystem, the mesosystem, and the macrosystem.

At the microsystem or personal level, teachers are immersed in institutional actions and practices that modify their identity. The teachers' identity idea is given from the different social and cultural realities, contexts, and situations of learning and teaching, and their own emotions and moral values (Blyth & Thoms, 2021; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Hilchey, 2021). In the process of developing their professional identity, teachers could have the opportunity to integrate theoretical knowledge and practical actions. This integration enables them to assert their roles as educators and contribute to societal development while simultaneously validating their language proficiency according to international standards. However, they may occasionally overlook the ecological aspects of language and learning.

The above may be related to the construction of new concepts of interculturality, which has a direct relationship with decoloniality in the sense that it is configured from an emancipatory sense of identity, deconstruction, continuous resistance, and constant construction (Álvarez Valencia & Valencia, 2023; Walsh, 2018)

Power groups have perpetuated traditions, knowledge, and the reason for being from a hierarchy that makes invisible the cultural differences influenced by the political, social, gender, and economic factors, especially when these correspond to a minority whose knowledge construction processes can be considered inferior for not aligning with the factor or scheme commonly known by the group or members of the elite group.

Unfortunately, on several occasions, teachers of foreign languages are measured by the level of linguistic skills given by native experts in the target language, leaving aside the struggles that they face day by day within their academic context. Here, the phenomenon of valuing the native teacher of a foreign language more than the non-native teacher of a foreign language is again seen, and where the identity of the non-native teacher of a foreign language seems to be subject to the perception that the native expert may have of him, who can sometimes denigrate his knowledge and identity (Bettney, 2022; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2016).

The mesosystem or interpersonal level is associated with the relationship between school and home, in which each school forms an institutional policy through national policies (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Jin et al., 2021). In our case, students in primary, secondary, and higher education must develop communicative skills in English according to the national curriculum. Still, a problem emerges in most of the public schools in urban and rural areas where there is a lack of teachers of foreign languages or a lack of preparation. Ortiz García and Contreras Pinilla (2023) "The main challenge that teachers have encountered is teaching the language in an improvised way because they report not having enough preparation to teach English as it might be done in urban areas" (p. 20). This reality does not guarantee that students reach an appropriate level of learning a foreign language.

At the macrosystem level, we find the policies, socio-political contexts, and cultural backgrounds that inspire the different policies for language teaching as the bilingualism plans and national curriculum that establish the parameters that teachers must achieve effectively (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Jin et al., 2021). At the macro level, and according to students' multilingual characteristics, education

policymakers must re-examine language education policies and restructure the curriculum (Bui & Tai, 2022). In addition, it is essential to decrease the consumption of materials that do not adapt to students' needs. It would be worth looking for alliances between local educational institutions and experts in language to promote the creation of high-quality materials that advocate constant reflection, curricular reorientation, and non-self-marginalization (Jordan, 2015; Li et al., 2021; Zaidi & Rowsell, 2017). In this context, educators can actively engage in classroom dynamics and emerge as pivotal contributors to the collaborative development of pedagogical resources that genuinely reflect linguistic and sociocultural diversity. This underscores the necessity for both teachers and students to acknowledge and value their native languages and cultural backgrounds through the integration of authentic instructional materials.

Education in second and foreign languages should strive for social justice, addressing contextual needs, promoting learning equity, and ensuring success in bilingual education. Language should be understood as a vital means of expressing thought and facilitating communication across various contexts (Allard, 2017; García & Lin, 2016). It is essential to cultivate a conscious multilingual perspective that does not prioritize dominant languages but instead recognizes and values native languages (García & Lin, 2016; Ortega, 2019).

Translanguaging as an Option

Translanguaging is a social practice, and the learner makes a transition from one linguistic culture to another within the communication process (Baranova et al., 2021). First, this transition as a social practice challenges the stability and immutability of culture by adapting its meanings in a dynamic dialogue between diverse cultures in a constantly changing world. Authors such as Kohl et al. (2020) argue that linguistic diversity nurtures the diversity of identity, thereby protecting biodiversity and fostering a deeper understanding of multiculturalism. Translanguaging helps people learn by using multiple languages together. It looks at how different languages connect and with the situations they are used in, which is the basis of language ecology. It also thinks about how language affects people socially and emotionally.

Stornaiuolo et al. (2017) define translanguaging from a more ecological point of view, including all literacies, both for oral and written comprehension and production, as well as for interaction and culture. Although several facets within the classroom can vary depending on the context, some characteristics remain as ideological, social, economic, and cultural aspects. This generates the need to consider their different and multilingual linguistic repertoires within student learning, through translingual teaching and practice (Le Gal, 2018; Ortega, 2019; Pacheco et al., 2019; Pino-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Thus, through a translanguaging perspective, the students and teachers of the courses will be continuous learners, and through the interaction between people, texts, and different elements that are developed in class, they will create meanings. As these meanings emerge from a constant interaction without making the other invisible, more significant connections and alignments are created between the context, the learning resources, and the learning itself (Pacheco et al., 2019; Stornaiuolo et al., 2017).

Pacheco et al. (2019) and Pino-Rodríguez et al. (2019) advocate for a shift in perspective, where the speaker is understood and perceived as someone who collaboratively constructs meaning through the use of all available linguistic resources. They also propose a holistic approach to teaching and learning that incorporates all relevant pedagogical concepts within a continuous communication

process. In this view, learning a foreign language is seen as a complex process involving various dialects, languages, and linguistic varieties. As noted by Esquicha (2022), translanguaging acknowledges the diverse contexts within the educational landscape. It embraces the ecosystem of learning, facilitating an exchange of languages without elevating one language above another. Within this ecosystem, students can share their unique contexts and realities, fostering authentic communication.

Furthermore, translanguaging is a strategy that works to empower non-native speakers and undermines the stand-up philosophy. Students may employ a more diverse and multicultural linguistic repertoire because of this kind of two-language learning integration.

Cox and Phipps (2022) claim that translanguaging opens a way to combine a multilingual approach with decolonizing pedagogy, where learners use all their linguistic resources to support their new learning and make connections with the new language. Translanguaging is compatible with the objectives of decolonization since it places learners at the center of their speaker-oriented learning and does not impose linguistic codes. On the contrary “when students translate or codeswitch, they develop metalinguistic awareness” (Canagarajah, 2023, p. 8), it promotes a sense of dignity and respect for their identity and not just the ability to speak a language and enables learners to know that their language has value and meaning and that this knowledge is comprehensive and will allow them to expand their repertoire and add knowledge to the new language (Canagarajah, 2013, 2023).

Regarding the difference between translanguaging and plurilingualism, García and Otheguy (2020) affirm that the objective of multilingual education is for speakers to develop a repertoire of languages, “but translanguaging is focused on working with bilingual students and ensuring that bilingualism is reflected as a bilingual being” (p. 8). As a result, Colombian academics may continue to develop various approaches to language learning that involve the interaction of students’ social and historical factors (Alberto Mora et al., 2022; Álvarez Valencia & Valencia, 2023; Clavijo-Olarte, 2021; Cruz-Arcila, 2020; Fandiño-Parra, 2021). This type of learning goes beyond simply exchanging linguistic codes without meaning; it also involves developing intercultural communication skills that highlight multiculturalism and multilingualism.

We found that translanguaging is a means of integrating social spaces and linguistic codes that were previously separated due to monolingual practices, because our goal is to organize and support student learning through the analysis of numerous power, cultural, material, and social relations that go beyond the communicative, linguistic, and rational. As agents in the building of the ecology of languages in a diverse world, teachers can now create more inclusive learning materials and raise awareness of others and themselves (Fandiño-Parra, 2021; Pino-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Tay & Ng, 2021).

Significance of the Reflections in Colombia

For our context, statistics from the Instituto Caro y Cuervo (2024) and the United Nations Organization Colombia [UN] (2023) suggest that, in addition to Spanish, there are 65 Indigenous languages, two creoles, one Romani language, and a sign language in Colombia. Experts estimate that thirteen languages are in danger of going extinct based on this data, and the chances of the remaining languages surviving are not better (UN, 2023).

The current situation in Colombia is strikingly like the same technical approach: “Multilingualism

has not been developed as a holistic perspective that considers an ecological understanding of the country's social organization instead of a view of language policies that recognize diversity and different linguistic resources as equally important.” (Miranda et al., 2024, p. 7). The multilingual repertoire emphasizes utilizing one or two standardized preferred languages, reducing the scope of language education and learning, even if data demonstrates Colombia's linguistic and multicultural diversity.

Accordingly, the Ministry of National Education [MEN] declared the National Bilingualism Program 2018–2022, which acknowledges Colombia's native and Creole languages as well as its linguistic and cultural diversity. They introduced the functional plurilingual approach in the same program, which described foreign languages as vehicles of communication, which, in the authors' opinion, is an instrumental view of the languages.

Regretfully, the National Bilingualism Program 2018–2022's functional plurilingual approach does not yet address the linguistic and multicultural objectives, nor is it the solution that educators and learners seek to become more decolonial. According to García and Otheguy (2020), “plurilingual and intercultural education should protect the right to learn additional languages, as well as the right to speak a first language and the right to quality education in the language of instruction” (p. 6). This implies that tolerance for both the first language and other languages is necessary during the teaching and learning process.

An ecological perspective emphasizes the interdependence of languages and the importance of maintaining linguistic diversity for the health of the cultural environment. It encourages educational practices that support the coexistence and mutual enrichment of multiple languages. This entails developing laws and initiatives in Colombia that preserve and restore native tongues, guaranteeing their survival for upcoming generations.

Under a nation with a high level of linguistic diversity that is frequently in danger, this viewpoint is especially pertinent. Teachers may help ensure that all the nation's languages remain resilient and survive by implementing an ecological approach to language instruction. A revolutionary strategy that upends traditional power structures and promotes a more inclusive society, contra-hegemonic language training is helpful as Colombia continues to negotiate its linguistic and cultural diversity.

Significant challenges include the need for comprehensive policy support, a shortage of financing, and resistance from those who favor the status quo. However, there are plenty of chances as well. Kohl et al. (2020) concur that linguistic diversity promotes multiculturalism and that acknowledging the value of linguistic diversity in support of indigenous rights creates an environment that is favorable to change.

Involving the community is essential to this process. Involving Indigenous people in the creation and execution of language education initiatives guarantees their effectiveness and cultural relevance. Furthermore, the effectiveness of contra-hegemonic language instruction depends on teacher preparation programs that emphasize bilingual education and culturally sensitive teaching techniques (Álvarez Valencia & Valencia, 2023; Clavijo-Olarte, 2021; Fandiño-Parra, 2021).

Considering the scenario outlined in this document, the reflection highlights the importance of understanding the interactions between languages, as well as their social and psychological impacts within their respective contexts. Such comprehension is essential for preserving the intrinsic value of

languages and safeguarding the linguistic rights of speakers, thereby preventing the erosion of native languages.

The importance of creating our learning processes is perhaps the most important capacity that individuals in a community need to participate in a complex and disruptive world, but at the same time to preserve our identity and maintain a sense of belonging and well-being (Alberto-Mora, 2023; García & Otheguy, 2020). To do this, the ecology of learning requires a review of the macro system where different teaching policies underline that establish the parameters to achieve inclusive learning from dynamic scenarios that adjust to multimodal and multilingual communication situations, and where students use languages for specific purposes.

Because translanguaging is based on the pedagogy of the linguistic repertoire concept in which learners use all their linguistic resources to support their new learning and equally make connections to the new language, translanguaging opens a way to combine a multilingual approach under a decolonizing pedagogy (Alberto-Mora, 2023; García & Otheguy, 2020). Thus, the results showed translanguaging as a social practice and that the learner makes a transition from one linguistic culture to another within the significant communication process.

Teachers are aware that policies, teaching curricula, and language learning need to be reviewed so that there is diversification, interculturality, and multilanguage. Scholars such as De Mejía (2012, 2016), Mora et al. (2019), Mejía Mejía, (2016), Guerrero-Nieto and Quintero-Polo (2021), and Sánchez Moreano et al. (2023) have criticized the deficient concept of multilingualism in which a priority is given to learning English, minimizing the learning of native or other languages.

The authors of this thoughtful paper acknowledge that translanguaging is one way to challenge counter-hegemonic pedagogies, along with strategies like hybrid language production and linguistic social position negotiation. However, we truly believe that ecological education ideas like translanguaging are the best way to begin changing legislation. Translanguaging not only involves aspects related to written languages, but also bets on the multimodality of expressions and manifestations of language, so in a country like most Latin American countries, translanguaging makes sense by giving value, voice, and position to languages that do not have a written system, but rather an oral tradition such as some indigenous languages or other languages whose records are carried out within a symbolic system (Alberto Mora et al., 2022; Álvarez Valencia & Valencia, 2023; García & Li, 2016; Li et al., 2020).

In this sense, an intrinsic nature is observed in the interaction of languages and their continuous coexistence and co-construction of knowledge that their speakers make at a glocal level, considering all the complexities that frame it. Teachers around the country have highlighted the complexities of teaching foreign languages in monolingual and even multilingual contexts, but with the obligation to comply with a pre-established curriculum that does not meet the needs of students and that is sometimes disjointed from their social, cultural, and political realities (see Araque Jaimes et al., 2023; Andrade et al., 2024; Carrero Corzo et al., 2023; Guerrero Parra et al., 2024; Narváez Vásquez, 2023). This fact has also been documented by experts in other contexts where a call has been made to decolonize didactics and how research is approached, since from there, thousands of teachers create their initiatives to be applied in the classroom.

Several teachers who have completed master's degrees have encouraged our reflection by highlighting the paradoxes they claim they encounter daily when implementing standards or rules that are based on various social, cultural, political, linguistic, and economic circumstances (Araque Jaimes et al., 2023; Andrade et al., 2024; Carrero Corzo et al., 2023; Guerrero Parra et al., 2024; Narváz Vázquez, 2023). These contradictions are not only apparent in curriculum design, but also in the conventions around proper language usage, literature, grammar, and all other principles derived from literature and practice in language instruction. The issue is not in acknowledging and using existing linguistic information, but rather in using it to undermine the credibility of its speaker community or, on a smaller scale, to influence a learner's or immigrant's identity during the learning process.

In this regard, García et al. (2021) invite us to look for more possibilities that go beyond vocabulary assessments that can limit students further by presenting creative and real challenges regarding the use of the language and managing to motivate students in their classrooms, in their constant learning of languages again, not limiting them to a target language or because they are national curriculum. The authors critically examine the concept of linguistic competence, highlighting its potential role in sustaining colonial dynamics and subsequently the dehumanization of speakers (García et al., 2021). They question the implications of this understanding and its contribution to ongoing processes of marginalization within language practices. The fact that multilingualism reacts to global markets and that translanguaging might provide a means of distancing oneself from the logic developed throughout time under imperialist ideologies that address the production demands of nations must be considered.

Conclusions

The implications of contra-hegemonic language teaching for future generations embracing the ecology of languages and translanguaging in Colombia are profound and multifaceted. By preserving and revitalizing indigenous languages, Colombia can maintain its rich cultural diversity, which is a source of national pride and global interest. As languages are a vital part of cultural identity, future generations will have a strong connection to their indigenous heritage; these generations will lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their history and traditions. A contra-hegemonic language teaching empowers marginalized communities by validating their languages and cultures. This empowerment can lead to greater social inclusion and reduced discrimination. Students from indigenous and minority language backgrounds will have better access to education that respects and incorporates their linguistic and cultural identities, leading to improved educational outcomes.

With reference to the theoretical framework's components, the authors of this paper stress that educational policies for foreign language instruction and acquisition should be grounded on local knowledge, which will then be reinforced by external and international references. The authors discuss the cognitive advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism that will be inherited by future generations, including enhanced creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. As a result, education will not be viewed as an endogenous process; rather, it will follow the ecological principles of learning in a world where people live and interact continuously. This is made even more significant by the increasing usage of ICTs in many facets of human existence.

The health of the cultural and linguistic ecosystem depends on maintaining linguistic diversity, which can be accomplished by accepting the ecology of languages. Linguistic diversity supports

sustainable development by fostering inclusive communities where everyone's viewpoints are valued and heard. As future generations grow more conscious of linguistic diversity, they are more inclined to favor policies that foster cultural integration and language preservation.

In conclusion, teaching languages in a manner that challenges hegemony can help Colombians build a society that is more equitable, diverse, and culturally rich for future generations. By embracing translanguaging and the ecosystem of languages, Colombia can safeguard its linguistic heritage and promote the well-being of all its citizens.

Statement of originality

We declare that this manuscript is the result of original research and that it has not been published before and is not currently under evaluation in another journal.

Conflicts of interest

We do not have any potential conflict of interest to declare.

Author Contributions

Johanna Patricia López Urbina: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Project Administration, Resources, Software, Writing – original draft, and Writing – review & editing.

Martha Isabel Bonilla Mora: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, and Writing – review & editing.

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