

The identity of the multilingual teacher in the language classroom. A literature review*

La identidad del profesor multilingüe en el aula de idiomas. Una revisión bibliográfica

Jenny Catalina Loaiza Fuquen †



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Abstract

Although a substantial amount of research has been conducted on teacher identity within the field of bilingual language education, comparatively little attention has been given to the identity of teachers who speak more than two languages. By utilizing research databases and conducting profiling searches, an analysis of prevailing trends in articles addressing the subject of multilingual teacher identity was carried out. The analysis reveals i) multilingual teachers' beliefs about effective teaching methodologies to improve student's proficiency in more than two languages; ii) the intricacies of multilingual linguistic identities, which tend to favor cognitive studies; iii) the presence of multilingual teachers as a source of multilingual motivation for students; and iv) a local understanding of multilingualism as both a defense of Indigenous languages and a form of resistance against English imperialism. The final section draws attention to the discourse surrounding multilingual teacher identity in context where English occupies a central role in language policy. In this regard, contemporary applied linguistics and decolonial perspectives play a pivotal role in comprehending the socio-political implications embedded in the educators' identities, thereby illuminating a gap in the existing literature on the study of multilingual teachers' identity.

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†Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Correo: jcloaizaf@udistrital.edu.co. ORCID: [0000-0002-1560-9324](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1560-9324).

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Resumen

Aunque se han realizado numerosas investigaciones sobre la identidad docente en el ámbito de la educación bilingüe, se ha prestado relativamente poca atención a la identidad de los profesores que hablan más de dos idiomas. Mediante el uso de bases de datos de investigación y la realización de búsquedas de perfiles, se llevó a cabo un análisis de las tendencias predominantes en los artículos que abordan el tema de la identidad de los profesores multilingües. El análisis revela: i) las creencias de los profesores multilingües sobre las metodologías docentes eficaces para mejorar la competencia de los alumnos en más de dos idiomas; ii) las complejidades de las identidades lingüísticas multilingües, que tienden a favorecer los estudios cognitivos; iii) la presencia de profesores multilingües como fuente de motivación multilingüe para los alumnos; y iv) una concepción local del multilingüismo como defensa de las lenguas indígenas y forma de resistencia contra el imperialismo inglés. La última sección llama la atención sobre el discurso que rodea la identidad de los profesores multilingües en un contexto en el que el inglés ocupa un papel central en la política lingüística. En este sentido, la lingüística aplicada contemporánea y las perspectivas descoloniales desempeñan un papel fundamental para comprender las implicaciones sociopolíticas implícitas en las identidades de los educadores, lo que pone de manifiesto una laguna en la bibliografía existente sobre el estudio de la identidad de los profesores multilingües.

Palabras clave:

multilingüismo, pedagogías de los profesores multilingües, epistemologías de los profesores multilingües, identidad del profesor.

Introducción

As a multilingual teacher who speaks English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, my interest in mapping multilingual teacher identities lies in the ways languages are connected to personal realizations of different linguistic repertoires to affirm identities otherwise. To embark on this journey, I began by delving into existing global research to uncover insights into the interconnections between identity and (multi)language, gaining perspective that may enhance or alter teaching practices. As a result, the subject matter of this article examines what, where, when, and by whom studies related to or aligned with this line of inquiry have represented the identities of educators who speak more than two languages. First, I discuss the process of locating relevant articles, including their sources and the challenges encountered during the refinement of relevant keywords. Additionally, I outline the prevalent trends identified within these studies. Second, I provide a comprehensive review of articles closely aligned with the central theme of this research, focusing on contributions from Colombian scholars and highlighting the notable trends exemplified in their work. Finally, I draw preliminary conclusions, contrasting them with the primary suggestions presented throughout this research.

Data search on multilingual teachers' identity

In my endeavor to uncover significant trends, connections, and insights for this study, the selection of keywords held a prominent position. These keywords underwent a meticulous refinement process. Initially, I conducted a comprehensive search, identifying approximately 1560 articles utilizing the keywords

“teachers’ identity” and “multilingualism”. However, as I narrowed the search to focus specifically on educators who speak and teach more than two languages, the number of relevant articles was reduced to 90.

During the first phase of our keyword selection process, I explored an extensive pool of 1,310 studies. These studies spanned a compelling spectrum of topics, encompassing *multilingual teachers’ identities* (comprising 610 articles), *multilingual teachers* (with 450 articles), and *teacher identities and personal epistemologies* (totaling 250 articles). This rigorous pursuit of knowledge led me to consult reputable databases such as Google Scholar, EBSCO, Scopus, Science Direct, and Redalyc. This comprehensive search ultimately culminated in the discovery of a substantial body of literature closely aligned with these thematic categories.

Trends in a nutshell

As I delve further into the realm of multilingualism, it is captivating to observe one of the prevailing trends in research —namely, the exploration of students’ identities as multilingual individuals and how they can be motivated and empowered through multilingualism. A significant portion of international studies appears to focus on two primary scenarios: classrooms composed of multilingual students and those with monolingual or bilingual teachers navigating a multitude of languages spoken by their students. In fact, approximately 1,122 articles have delved into the realms of motivation, language use within the home, and the dynamics between students and their teachers in these multilingual classrooms.

Another noteworthy trend identified in a substantial number of articles is the examination of how multilingual teachers’ beliefs about effective teaching methodologies to improve student’s proficiency in more than two languages. This line of inquiry, which has spanned the globe since 2006, has increasingly emphasized multilingual language learning as both an educational endeavor and a critical step toward diversifying curricula by recognizing new languages.

In this evolving educational landscape, it is intriguing to note that, while the focus has expanded to enrich students’ multilingual experiences and language learning opportunities, a noticeable gap remains. This gap relates to the limited emphasis placed on exploring the multilingualism of teachers themselves. Although there is a growing emphasis on students’ needs and learning processes, the intricate identities and multilingual abilities of educators often remain uncharted territory in the academic discourse. This notable oversight invites further exploration and reflection, raising important questions about how teachers’ own multilingualism and identities intersect with the evolving landscape of multilingual education. For instance, in the United States, efforts to promote multilingualism, introducing multilingual language learning as an educational initiative and advocating the integration of new languages into the curriculum (Kramsch & Steffensen 2008). These initiatives aimed to broaden linguistic offerings in language programs, encouraging students to enrich their intercultural experiences and pursue additional languages based on their own interests and schedules. As a result, the focus began to shift from simply learning an additional language or achieving bilingualism to a more holistic approach that centers students’ learning processes, often overlooking teachers’ identities and considerations beyond the students’ needs.

Further exploration reveals additional studies from the same time period, such as those by Csizér and Kormos (2008), Blake (2008), and Ceuleers (2008), which pursue similar objectives but within different contexts shaped by migration issues or high proportions of foreigners students. Notably, sending a gap in the literature emerges between 2009 to 2011, during which the focus on both multilingual teacher and student identities appears to decline, with scholarly attention turning toward teacher identity. However, these investigations tend to steer clear of delving specifically into the realm of multilingualism or focusing on students, instead adopting alternative perspectives and addressing different issues.

It was not until 2012 that a resurgence of interest in multilingualism emerged, particularly in countries such as Indonesia, the United Kingdom (London), Croatia, and New Zealand. These studies approached multilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective. In this wave of research, the primary focus centered on the role of teachers as influential figures in students' learning process, as evidenced by the works of Morita, Bugarski, and Nofal (2012). Although these studies explored interactions involving multilingualism, it is worth noting that their understanding of multilingualism appeared to be shaped by geopolitical context, with a strong emphasis on motivation and effectiveness, while largely overlooking critical discourses such as English as an imperial agenda.

Between 2015 and 2018, a notable increase in articles was observed across various regions, particularly in North America and Europe. Works by authors such as Higgins and Ponte (2017), Renteria (2016), and Solsona-Puig et al. (2018) addressed categories closely aligned with the focus of this research, at least in terms of target population. However, it is also worth noting that during this period, there seemed to be a lack of relevant studies emerging from Latin America. This observation may suggest that alternative research agendas were gaining traction in the region during those years.

In the countries where these studies were conducted, the overarching focus was on multilingual linguistic identities. These investigations placed particular emphasis on how teachers fostered environment in which students were encouraged to use their additional languages within the classroom, as well as how they addressed challenges arising in multilingual contexts. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the research examined thus far predominantly centers on students' linguistic repertoires as an essential aspect, often neglecting critical reflection on the intricate interplay and contact between languages. As this profiling exercise holds relevance for my own research, it inevitably invites scrutiny and critique regarding the dynamics of language contact.

The trends we have observed span a significant timeframe and diverse geographical contexts, offering a comprehensive overview of how the study of multilingual teacher identity has evolved. Furthermore, this exploration provides valuable insight into the nuanced interplay between teacher identity and the ever-changing educational landscape, particularly with respect to linguistic dynamics and language contact. In the following section, we will dissect and engage in a more in-depth discussion of the trends we have identified in this research.

Multilingualism as a motivation strategy

Multilingualism has become a focal point in the field of applied linguistics (Cenoz, 2013), capturing the attention of scholars eager to explore its potential as a catalyst for pedagogical innovation. These investigations delve into the intricate ways in which multilingualism can reshape educational paradigms, enabling teachers to refine their instructional strategies and enhance student learning outcomes. As the collective findings from this trend suggests, adopting a multilingual approach can be instrumental in fostering inclusive classroom environments that not only celebrate linguistic diversity but also promote cross-cultural communication (Herzog et al., 2017). The overarching objective is to deepen students' understanding of diverse cultures and ways of thinking, with the aim of identifying effective strategies for seamlessly integrating multilingualism into educational settings. In this context, the works of Dressler (2014), Zheng (2017), French (2019), Portolés and Martí (2018), Zdybel (2020), and Forbes et al. (2021) exemplify the essence of this trend, with two representative articles offering valuable insights.

The first article, *Exploring Linguistic Identity in Young Multilingual Learners* by Dressler (2014), provides practical examples that educators can use to incorporate discussions on linguistic identity into their teaching, thereby forging stronger connections between home and school learning for multilingual students. The second article, *Challenges to Multilingual Language Teaching: Towards a Transnational*

Approach by Kelly (2015), explores the challenges involving in implementing a multilingual approach to language instruction in higher education. It engages with the concepts of multilingualism and plurilingualism, elucidating how they manifest in language classroom practices. Both articles exemplify an approach rooted in multilingualism, where educators nurture inclusive and culturally sensitive classroom environments. They serve as powerful examples of the celebration of linguistic diversity and the promotion of cross-cultural communication. Nonetheless, the challenges lying on the path to seamless multilingual integration, including the development of teachers' linguistic identities and the fostering of collaboration among educators, associations, and governmental bodies, remain central themes within their discourse.

While articles like Dressler's and Kelly's offer invaluable insights and pragmatic strategies for addressing challenges and promoting multilingualism within the classroom, a conspicuous trend emerges in these investigations: the primary focus centers on students. The discussions center on student performance, learning processes, and motivation, among other related aspects. Regrettably, there is a notable lack of emphasis on the role of teachers in the promotion of multilingualism. Although articles by Haukås (2015) and Calafato (2022) briefly acknowledge the importance of teacher identities in facilitating student development within a multilingual framework, they fall short of positioning teachers as central agents in this process. This omission is particularly striking in the case of multilingual educators working in educational context where multilingualism is not the norm. In countries where foreign languages other than English are scarce, these educators, due to their personal affinity with other languages, often strive to promote linguistic diversity in classrooms and across institutions. However, their efforts become evident when English dominance prevails in the broader educational context.

In conclusion, while multilingualism in education is predominantly explored from the perspective of student dynamics and learning processes, the identities and roles of multilingual teachers remain underexamined in academic discourse. These educators, often operating in regions where English predominates, face the challenge of preserving the presence of multiple languages within their classrooms. Their experiences and efforts, though crucial to the promotion of multilingualism, deserve further attention and consideration within the broader research landscape.

Beliefs on pedagogy from multilingualism

Multilingualism has become a focal point in the academic field of applied linguistics, garnering attention for its potential to ignite creativity, problem-solving skills, and effective communication (Saltanat & Kellen, 2019, p.1). In reviewing the research conducted between 2019 and 2021, we identified articles that converge around two significant aspects, which can be grouped into a distinct trend: "Teachers' Beliefs about Multilingual Pedagogies and the Role of Initial Training" (Portolés & Martí 2020) and "Developing a Multilingual Identity in the Language Classroom: The Influence of an Identity-Based Pedagogical Intervention." (Forbes, et, al 2021) These articles explore the impact of multilingualism on the identities of secondary school and higher education teachers, particularly in context involving multilingual student populations. A shared focus across these works is how multilingual teaching dynamics can potentially affect students' learning outcomes. However, it is evident that these studies predominantly emphasize the benefits for students, often overlooking the challenges faced by teachers and limiting their applicability to local educational context.

The first article, "Teachers' Beliefs about Multilingual Pedagogies and the Role of Initial Training" (Portolés, 2018), examines how teacher training programs in Spain often neglect the growing relevance multilingualism, resulting in misconceptions among educators regarding how to teach additional languages in multilingual contexts. This paper reviews a series of recent studies probing language teachers' beliefs concerning multilingual education and seeks to unravel the beliefs of prospective preschool and primary teachers in the Valencian Community regarding the learning and teaching of English as a third language.

Similarly, Forbes et. al. (2021), in their article, “Developing a Multilingual Identity in the Language Classroom: The Influence of an Identity-Based Pedagogical Intervention”, advocate for a new dimension in language pedagogy. They argue that this new dimension is essential to help learners comprehend their own linguistic repertoires and develop a multilingual identity. The article examines the impact of an innovative program promoting participatory multilingual identity education, implemented across four secondary schools in England. Although originating from distinct geographical contexts within Europe, both this article and others addressing similar themes are interconnected in their focus on multilingual pedagogies and the role of teacher training in replying to the evolving multilingual paradigm. Each underscore the importance of acknowledging and promoting multilingualism in education, while also highlighting the urgent need for effective pedagogical strategies that support learners in multilingual settings.

Despite their contributions, a noteworthy trend emerges from these investigations. The predominant focus remains centered on students, exploring how learners are influenced by teachers’ perceptions of multilingualism and how teachers navigate multilingualism within their classrooms. This recurring theme reflects a broader tendency to prioritize student benefits while overlooking the challenges faced by teachers. Furthermore, teacher training programs often fall short of addressing the demands of the shifting multilingual paradigm, leaving educators underprepared to teach additional languages effectively within multilingual contexts.

To foster a deeper understanding of learners’ linguistic repertoires and their agency in embracing a multilingual identity, there is a growing consensus around the need for a new dimension of language pedagogy, one that actively promotes reflexivity. This dimension extends beyond students and begins to consider the identities of teachers themselves. For instance, Bonar et al., (2022) explores the evolving identities of pre-service language teachers, acknowledging the limited understanding of how intercultural understanding, identity, and multilingualism impact their journey. This study traces the experiences of three aspiring language teachers through their pre-service education phase, shedding light on their evolving identities and their growing knowledge of initial teacher education and support practices within schools.

This research creates opportunities for pre-service teachers to grapple with the complexities of intercultural understanding, identity, and multilingualism. Their engagement equips them to support future language learners, fostering a participatory approach to embracing their own multilingual identities. Additionally, Fielding (2021) expands upon these themes by introducing a multilingual identity approach to intercultural understanding. This approach encourages students, including pre-service teachers, to perceive themselves as individuals continually developing proficiency in multiple languages. By adopting this perspective, students can cultivate a more inclusive and open-minded approach to intercultural interactions, acknowledging the dynamic nature of language acquisition and the diverse linguistic backgrounds of others.

While this study enables a deeper exploration of teacher identity and their multilingual knowledge, it ultimately emphasizes the benefits these elements offer to future learners. It closely connects to the subsequent trend, which centers attention on interaction and intercultural engagement.

Multilingual users and interaction

As we delve deeper into this exploration, it becomes clear that numerous international contexts, many of which reside in countries with explicit multilingualism policies, as mentioned earlier in our studies of Australia, Spain, and London, are navigating new challenges, questions, and resources regarding the roles, tasks, and contributions of language teachers (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016, p. 2). These examinations are informed by research on language teacher identity, multilingual language teaching, second language acquisition, and perspectives from applied linguistics. However, it is increasingly clear that there is a pressing need to transcend conventional notions of teachers and language acquisition. Attention is now

focused on re-evaluating effective pedagogies and reflective practices as they relate to language interactions and learner outcomes.

For example, in the article “La Inclusividad Lingüística en la Educación Multilingüe de California” (Solsona-Puig et al., 2018), posit that California’s dual immersion classrooms provide a vivid example of linguistic inclusivity. In such classrooms, students and teachers with diverse linguistic backgrounds bring diverse language varieties, levels, and registers to the learning environment. This dynamic fosters a linguistically inclusive classroom that recognizes and respects the identities of its speakers. Such environments are especially important in multilingual societies where language is constantly revolving Wu Z. (2020). The article offers practical ideals that facilitate interaction during language teaching and provides guidance for bilingual teacher training, all with the aim of promoting linguistic inclusion and the use of multilingual interactions within the classroom.

In a historical context, Einar Haugen introduced the concept of linguistic ecology in 1972, emphasizing the interaction between a language and its environment. Although the term has been used to some extent in literature, sociolinguistics has not yet to fully embraced the potential of an ecological approach. Recent advances in ecological theory, especially when applied to language, raise fundamental questions about traditional linguistics. From an ecological perspective, language is not merely a rule-based system, but a form of patterned behavior arising from the needs of human sociality, such as communication, culture, and community. Haugen’s original view the ecology of language presents an alternative approach to linguistic theory that accommodates the dynamic nature of language acquisition and the diverse linguistic backgrounds of individuals.

Grenoble (2012) extends this perspective in her theory of Language Ecology and Endangerment. She highlights that the field of linguistic ecology examines the connections between speakers and their languages within both historical and contemporary contexts. In a broader sense, this theory compares linguistic competence to interspecies competition and elucidates the mechanisms that explain the survival of the most successful languages. In language policy planning, it is essential to consider the overall linguistic ecology of a particular group. This perspective serves as a framework for analyzing the relationship between linguistic practices and the specific context, or environment, in which they exist, often referred to as their *ecolinguistic niche*. This approach allows linguists to assess the vitality of a language on a continuum, ranging from thriving languages to extinct ones, of which no speakers or descendant languages remain.

So far, our exploration reveals a common theme: interaction focuses primarily on communication between individuals, and the terms *multilingualism* and *identity* tend to be isolated from each other. When a connection is made, it usually revolves around the benefits to learners. Most of the research explored so far has focused on the multilingual learner as an agent or the teacher as a supporter of multilingualism, with an emphasis on learner performance. However, there remains a glaring absence in the debate: the identity of multilingual teachers in a context where multilingualism may not be prevalent in the classroom, but is an inherent aspect of the teacher’s life, fraught with challenges beyond learner performance.

Our journey takes us to Latin American studies, where articles such as “Identidade e Aprendizagem de Línguas” (Leffa, 2012) shed light on a different aspect of this discourse. In this work, Leffa (2012) delves into the complex web of identities that individuals must assume to navigate social relationships. Leffa posits that these identities fluctuate along two fundamental axes: a horizontal axis, which primarily involves a process of expansion from individual to collective identity, ultimately reaching globality; and a vertical axis, which pertains to a process of historical evolution, beginning with solid identity, moving to liquid identity and culminating in what is called vaporized identity. These changes in identity, from solid to vaporized, are catalyzed by the energy generated through social interaction.

Leffa's work reveals an understanding of identities that manifest themselves along two fundamental dimensions: the horizontal and the vertical. These identities undergo a historical evolution, beginning with a solid identity, moving to a liquid one, and finally evolving towards a vaporized identity concept. These transitions, triggered by the energy of social interaction, show intricate connections with the phenomenon of multilingualism. However, it is intriguing to note that although multilingualism is considered an additional tool or feature for analysis within this framework, it is not integrated or discussed as a predominant element in the theory.

What has been discussed at the local level regarding this topic?

The Colombian school landscape presents a distinct contrast to the international norm. In most of the country's large cities, classrooms are dominated by native Spanish-speaking teachers who, in most cases, speak English as a second language. However, there are exceptions in institutions that continue to offer students the opportunity to learn languages beyond English, resulting in teachers who are fluent in languages such as French, Portuguese, German, among others. In this section, we delve into the identities of these multilingual teachers within the national context.

Although Colombia formally recognizes its ethnic and cultural diversity, the country has not effectively implemented an inclusive educational approach that embraces this diversity and aligns with global integration (De Mejía, 2016). Beyond market pressures and the prevalence of English, there is resistance among teachers who refuse to limit themselves to using only opt for English as the sole source or exclusive subject of teaching. Instead, they continue to cultivate and, in some cases, teach other languages. The exploration of these multilingual teacher identities leads us to articles like "Professional Identity and Education of Teachers of Portuguese as an Additional Language in Colombia" (Andrade, 2021) and "Identité linguistique et culturelle: une analyse des conceptions des enseignants et leur construction identitaire à partir du discours"¹ (Murillo, 2018).

These studies focus on language learning and its impact on identity construction within the Colombian context. Both articles place special emphasis on the perceptions and experiences of language teachers in relation to their language learning trajectory and professional practice. In the first article, the research analyzes the process of identity construction through foreign language learning in Colombia based on the perceptions of three teachers. These perceptions are collected through a questionnaire on language teaching and autobiographical narratives, shedding light on the teachers' personal itineraries from the decision to study a foreign language to their professional development.

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The second article highlights an important aspect of language teaching in Colombia: the teaching of Portuguese as an additional language (PLA). It reveals that most PLA teachers in Colombia are native speakers who lack specific language training. The research explores the professional trajectories of these native-speaking teachers and seeks to understand their training processes. Through interviews with

¹Cultural and Linguistics Identity: An analysis of the conceptions from teachers and their identity construction from their discourse.

twenty-five PLA teachers in six Colombian cities, the study uncovers the category of professional and formative debut, which explains how this group identifies with teaching. It becomes evident that PLA teachers in Colombia see their roles as an opportunity to reconnect with Brazilian language and culture. However, these teachers express specific needs for teacher training, highlighting the urgent need for undergraduate or graduate programs in pedagogy adapted to their professional development in Colombia.

It is intriguing to note that while these articles offer a view of the Colombian context, they also delve into the construction of identity through the experiences and discourse of teachers to explore their beliefs. In Colombia, multilingualism is perceived as the mastery of languages other than English and encompasses diverse linguistic repertoires that can be analyzed through their recognition. However, studies, despite their merit, tend to adopt a somewhat positivist and market-oriented perspective, encouraging language learning and teaching to meet market demands. A critical examination of multilingualism and identity beyond discursivity seems to be lacking, as well as any exploration of possible tensions with English proficiency in the Colombian context.

Ethnoeducation and multilingualism

Ethnographic studies have long been a vital lens through which researchers explore the complex tapestry of human societies and cultures (Granados, 2017). In the field of linguistics and sociocultural studies, ethnography offers a particularly illuminating perspective when investigating the intricate dynamics of multilingualism. Multilingualism, the coexistence and interaction of multiple languages within a given social context (García, 2007) is a phenomenon that transcends mere linguistic competence; it is an embodiment of culture, identity, and power relations. Ethnographic approaches provide a holistic framework for unraveling the rich nuances of multilingual environments, revealing not only how individuals navigate linguistic diversity, but also how these encounters shape their identities, communities, and broader social structures. In this exploration of ethnography and multilingualism, we embark on a journey to uncover the multifaceted dimensions of language use and its profound impact on the fabric of society.

One of the most interesting works in tracing the path of multilingualism an ethnography is the one of Lopez Gopar entitled “in Pursuit of Multilingual Practices: Ethnographic Accounts of Teaching ‘English’ to Mexican children”. This paper offers a fascinating insight into the critical-ethnographic-action-research project being conducted in two distinct sites: one located in a semi-urban environment and the other nestled in a rural community. In the vibrant context of Oaxaca, Mexico, where 16 officially recognized indigenous languages, Spanish, and even English coexists, this research endeavors to craft vivid ethnographic portraits of indigenous and mestizo Mexican children from Oaxaca, employing a rich array of multimodal texts, including photos and videos, as well as compelling narratives. Within the confines of this study, three overarching themes emerge: (1) the pervasive presence of translanguaging practices as the prevailing norm; (2) the intricate process of children’s identity (re)negotiation, skillfully crafted through the creation and enactment of identity texts; and (3) the captivating dynamic of teachers taking on the role of learners and children, in turn, assuming the role of teachers, thus forging a unique educational landscape.

Although this work and the ones I will mention below are not directly related to the purpose of my research, it is important to recognize how multilingualism has also been analyzed and studied from other languages, such as indigenous languages, and shed light on how these languages have been stripped of their meaning, used, and, in the worst cases, subjected to epistemicide.

In Colombia, the topic of multilingualism and ethnoeducation has been the subject of numerous studies and research that have yielded significant conclusions on the importance of preserving and promoting the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country’s indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. One of these relevant studies is the one entitled “Multilingualism and Ethnoeducation in Colombia: Challenges and

Perspectives,” conducted by García-Martínez and Pérez-González (2018). This study emphasized the need to recognize and value indigenous and Afro-descendant languages as a fundamental component of the cultural identity and education of these communities, advocating for educational policies and practices that promote bilingualism and respect for linguistic diversity.

Furthermore, the study titled “Ethnoeducation and Multilingualism in the Construction of Intercultural Citizenship in Colombia” by Rodríguez-Becerra & López-Ortega (2019) has highlighted the importance of ethnoeducation to empower indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in decision-making and the construction of intercultural citizenship. This study highlights the need to integrate the languages and worldviews of these communities into the national education system, thus promoting a more inclusive and culturally diverse society.

Taken together, these studies highlight the relevance of multilingualism and ethnoeducation as key instruments for the recognition of the cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic communities in Colombia. A key trend emerging from the studies is the growing awareness of the importance of multilingualism and ethnoeducation in Colombia as essential tools for preserving cultural and linguistic diversity.

These studies have shed light on the need for public policies and educational strategies that actively promote respect for the languages and cultures of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, not only to ensure inclusive and quality education, but also as a pillar for building a more equitable and pluralistic society. Additionally, it is important to note that while these studies have focused on the perspective of students and their access to bilingual and culturally relevant education, there is an equally pressing need to research and support multilingual educators.

Educators play a crucial role in the effective implementation of ethnoeducation and multilingualism programs, and their training and professional development are essential to the success of these efforts. Researching the specific needs and challenges of multilingual teachers, as well as providing them with resources and professional development opportunities, is essential to ensure that they can effectively fulfill their role effectively and enrich the educational experience of students from ethnic communities in Colombia.

Conclusion

What remains to be addressed?

Upon close examination of various research categories, including multilingualism and identity, it becomes evident that the multifaceted identities of multilingual teachers remain insufficiently examined and problematized. Their arduous journeys toward acquiring language proficiency and securing teaching positions, particularly in their preferred languages, often compel them to teach English to maintain job security or ensure a stable income. This dynamic raises important questions about the possible persistence of linguistic colonialism that limits exploration and in-depth problematization of languages beyond English or bilingualism. Notably, in countries such as Brazil, Indonesia, Australia, and Colombia —regions shaped by historical colonial legacies— there is a notable absence of exploratory research in this area. While there is a wealth of studies centered on students in the process of achieving multilingualism, the experiences of teachers who have already attained multilingualism and encounter power imbalances when selecting which language to teach have been largely underexplored.

This oversight highlights a significant gap in the scholarly discourse surrounding multilingualism and identity. As we continue to explore the intricate relationship between language and identity, it is crucial to move beyond predominantly English or bilingual-centric frameworks. Acknowledging the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of multilingual educators -especially in contexts where language choices are constrained by historical legacies and economic constraints, can provide a more holistic understanding of

how language shapes identity. By acknowledging and addressing this gap can enable future research to offer a more comprehensive and equitable exploration of multilingualism's impact on teacher identity, paving the way for a richer discourse on language, culture, and education.

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