Resignifying Culture through Theories of Practice: An in-service English Teachers' Narrative Experience

Diana Natalia Segura Linares

School of Sciences and Education, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Master's Program in Applied Linguistics to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

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Diana Natalia Segura Linares

Thesis advisor: Álvaro Hernán Quintero Polo

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Note of acceptance

Thesis Advisor: _____

Álvaro Hernán Quintero Polo Ph.D.

Jury: _____

Astrid Núñez Pardo Ph.D

Jury: _____

Carlo Granados Beltrán Ph.D

"La Universidad no se hace responsable de las ideas, ni del contenido del presente trabajo debido a que éstas hacen parte única y exclusivamente de sus autores".

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Abstract

This study intends to unveil in-service English teachers' theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development. The research initiative emerges from the interest in problematizing top-down teaching methodologies that foster an essentialist vision of culture alienated from people's realities and hinder teachers' possibilities to decide on their pedagogical practices. Therefore, there is a theoretical discussion that banks on the work of Walsh (2009), Candau (2016), Holliday (2010), and Kumaravadivelu (2003) to propose critical interculturality as a concept that questions the Western understanding of culture and its teaching in EFL lessons and advocates for theories of practice as a depiction of teachers' knowledge and expertise due to their subalternation in the ELT field. Following Barkhuizen's ideas (2013) on narrative inquiry, participating teachers go through a process of introspection and reflection to make sense of their lived experiences and create written life stories that constitute the primary data source of this study. Findings indicate that teachers' theories of practice regard teaching culture as an opportunity to challenge the objectives of top-down teaching methodologies and involve students' realities in the language classroom. The theories of practice also account for teachers' complex understanding of culture since it combines an essentialist and socially situated perspective. Finally, participants' theories represent an attempt to demystify and transform the pedagogical practice aligned with the Western paradigm regarding culture and its teaching.

Keywords: Culture, Theories of Practice, Critical Interculturality, English Language Teaching, Teachers' knowledge.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This research initiative intends to unveil and understand English language teachers' theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture. Although culture seems an intrinsic element in foreign language education, practitioners face a challenging scenario when addressing a cultural component in institutes for work and human development. These institutions make teachers comply with top-down teaching methodologies that enact an essentialist view of culture to train students to interact with foreign communities. It implies that educators have little room to explore their understandings of culture and decide on their pedagogical practices. Consequently, I realized there was an opportunity to advocate for teachers' knowledge and experiences and make them visible in academia as a reliable source to comprehend what teaching culture entails in the language classroom.

Accordingly, I assumed a poststructuralist perspective to explore different concepts such as culture, EFL teaching, and interculturality to understand teachers' practices better. The search led me to rely on the propositions and ideas of authors such as Walsh (2009), Candau (2016), Holliday (2010), and Kumaravadivelu (2003) to suggest critical interculturality as a concept to question and resignify culture in the TEFL field. The purpose was to problematize Western epistemology that has presented culture as factual-based information about diverse people and social groups, ignoring the local cultural realities of those individuals involved in language learning and teaching. Besides, critical interculturality supports the knowledge and world visions that are not part of the logic established by the Western culture. In this case, it allowed upholding

teachers' theories of practice to account for their personal knowledge and bottom-up constructions for teaching culture.

In this way, this study followed a narrative inquiry approach to analyze and comprehend English teachers' stories when addressing culture in their lessons. Participating teachers engaged in an introspective and reflective exercise that helped them reconstruct and make sense of meaningful experiences that shaped their conceptualizations of culture and its teaching. Therefore, participants committed to creating their written life stories (WLS) that accounted for people, events, and places that influenced their teaching of culture and the reflections upon their pedagogical practices. This exercise contributed to unveiling and characterizing teachers' theories of practice and making their voices heard in an academic field that undermines the value of the knowledge produced in their everyday activities.

Thus, this thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and its corresponding rationale and explains the statement of the problem, the research question, and the objectives. The second chapter accounts for a theoretical discussion that revolves around the primary construct called *critical interculturality as a concept to question and resignify culture*, which elaborates on the concepts of interculturality as a functional discourse, cultural essentialism, interculturality as a dialogical construction, culture as a socially situated and ideological construction, and theories of practice as alternative knowledge. In the third chapter, I report on the decisions and actions that support the data collection process. Accordingly, there is a detailed explanation of the type of study, setting, participants' profiles, data collection procedures, the researchers' role, and ethical considerations for this research initiative. The fourth chapter informs the data analysis process and the emerging findings represented in three relational categories: *Teaching Culture in the Borderline between the Burden of Universalism*

and Context Responsive Practices, Pedagogical Endeavors to Interconnect Dominant and Local Cultural Realities, and Bursting the Westernized Cultural Bubble through EFL Teaching. The fifth chapter presents the conclusions drawn after conducting this study and the implications for further research.

Justification

This study responded to the need to explore the teaching of the English language and culture beyond a Western perspective. Educational stakeholders seem concerned about developing pedagogical strategies to improve students' intercultural competencies or assessing teachers' performance when integrating culture into their practices. This situation forces English teachers to enact a transmission model in which culture consists of factual-based information for students to acquire in the language classroom.

Therefore, this research initiative showed that studying culture also involves examining teachers' views of this construction. Practitioners' conceptualizations account for their experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and the influence of dominant external narratives that shape their teaching of culture. Besides, it revealed that teaching culture represents an opportunity to integrate students' cultural realities and transform language learning into a meaningful activity that contributes to their personal development.

Likewise, this study supported acknowledging practitioners' theories of practice as valuable sources of knowledge to understand teaching culture. The purpose was to establish an egalitarian dialogue among English teachers' and Western experts' knowledge. The former tend to be treated as subaltern subjects whose ideas are not worth including in the academic discussion. For instance, participating teachers stated that their pedagogical initiatives were not

widely supported in institutes for work and human development. Participants' narratives showed that these institutions seemed to rely extensively on the publishing houses' knowledge and teaching material to orient language learning and teaching processes. Therefore, supporting educators' experiences and reflections helped make them feel heard and empowered to continue developing their self-constructed initiatives regarding teaching culture in their daily practices.

In this fashion, this inquiry impacted participants' understanding of their own pedagogical practices. Participating teachers stated that they regarded teaching culture as any other class activity implemented to comply with the institutional language curriculum. Yet, they learned that teaching culture holds a complex nature since it influences students' cultural realities and diverse social dynamics connected to power and ideology. Thus, they understood the importance of valuing their pedagogical actions and the need to continue making sense of them regardless of their purported simplicity. Besides, they realized that it is necessary to pursue a vision of culture that goes beyond essentialism.

The contribution to English language education was to foster awareness of the effect of top-down methodologies regarding teaching culture. This action will help educational stakeholders comprehend that teachers' labor is not centered on assisting students in mastering grammatical and communicative competencies but on integrating learners' experiences as the axis of the lessons. It implies that there will be an opportunity for teachers' voices to be considered when planning institutional language curricula since their personal knowledge provides a detailed account of the nuances of the educational scenarios.

Finally, this study enriches the work done in the line of research named Processes of Teacher Education and Development, attached to this Master's program in Applied Linguistics

to TEFL. The present initiative accounts for the complexity of practitioners' knowledge, insights, and experiences when deciding on their teaching. Therefore, it sheds light on tensioning situations teachers face when negotiating between their pedagogical beliefs and the dominant discourses that circulate in educational scenarios.

Statement of the Problem

In this section, I will present the problem that works as the departure point of this research initiative. In this study, I pursue an alternative vision of research that does not intend to assess teachers' or institutions' performance concerning teaching culture. Instead, my purpose is to make educational stakeholders' life stories visible to show the existence of a genuine research problem. That is why I decided to document this problem from an empirical and a theoretical perspective. It implies that there is an account of teachers' and students' experiences gathered through semi-structured interviews and my own experiences concerning culture in the language classroom. Besides, I included theoretical support that helped me to make sense of those experiences as follows.

Initially, I have learned that teaching a language is an activity deeply interconnected to a cultural dimension. From my experience within academic and professional scenarios, I have been taught that teaching culture is relevant because it allows students to use language in context rather than memorizing grammatical structures. Likewise, I have seen how culture is associated with learning about global communities where inhabitants speak English so that learners become culturally competent to mingle with foreign people. Besides, I have perceived there is an emphasis on raising students' awareness of proper and external cultures to analyze them critically and negotiate cultural differences. These events led me to conclude that culture is a construction of such complexity that there is no unique interpretation of its teaching and the

impact on each educational context. Yet, I felt puzzled about teachers' experiences when integrating culture into the lessons since we must regularly adopt or adapt pre-designed models to comply with this task. As a result, I decided to review what other scholars have said to make sense of my lived experiences.

In this way, I realized that ELT scholars had not disregarded the constant need for including culture, generating a myriad of perspectives in this area. First, I learned that language teachers are positioned as responsible for making students culturally competent. For instance, Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) affirm that teaching culture does not attempt to engage students in the target language culture but cultivate their skills to communicate in intercultural encounters. According to the authors, it implies that language teachers have to address communicative competencies beyond linguistic purposes by introducing knowledge of how to interact with other individuals to foster intercultural competence in the language classroom. In other words, language teachers are expected to prepare students to analyze their and others' cultures to solve the differences that might disrupt intercultural communication. In contrast, authors such as Göbel & Helmke (2010) emphasize teachers' knowledge of foreign societies when teaching culture. They state that proper intercultural foreign language instruction requires teachers to acquire knowledge of target language communities and be conscious of students' cultural realities. Besides, the authors claim that the previous elements strengthen educators' genuine interest in issues and topics related to culture and intercultural events. Moreover, Ryan and Sercu (2003) assert that language teachers need specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes to help language learners be interculturally competent to be part of globalization's socio-political and economic dynamics.

Although those studies contribute to comprehending the role of culture, I grasped that their underlying principles had implications for practitioners. Firstly, educational institutions expect language teachers to help their students create intercultural relationships by introducing cultural and linguistic elements (Luk, 2012). However, this requirement might become a challenging experience since English teachers face educational environments where culture is treated as a monolithic construction transmitted through factual-based information for students to learn in the language classroom (Barletta, 2009). Besides, this practice requires educators to follow textbooks as a guide to addressing culture although such instructional material does not consider and integrate students' realities and the particularities of each context (Forman, 2014). An illustration of this statement emerged from a semi-structured interview intended to explore a colleague's experience regarding culture. When asking the interviewee about his educational institution's approach to a cultural dimension of -the foreign language, he shared an example of how culture takes place in the regular lessons. He stated that teaching culture is a decontextualized practice since the instructional material revolves around the assumption that students have been in contact with foreign communities; therefore, it overlooks students' lived experiences as observable in the following excerpt.

> Pedro: For instance, there is a lesson called video. The students watch the video. But before doing it, one has to introduce the video, talk about the topic and vocabulary. Later, they watch the video and solve some exercises. In that video, there is always something that says "culture." Then, they approach topics related to American culture. Or sometimes they try to make it global. For instance, they tell you: have you seen these places? have you traveled to San Francisco? have you visited the Egyptian pyramids? So, they make these topics generic as if everyone travels to those countries or one understood. Sometimes it is so decontextualized that they ask questions like, have you ever seen this TV show? I mean, they are so decontextualized. *(Pedro's interview, March 2020; own translation)*

Accordingly, the attempt to integrate culture has led to the implementation of pedagogical models that neither account for contextual needs nor educators' knowledge in the language classroom. According to Cuartas (2020), teachers have dealt with top-down perspectives on intercultural communicative competencies (ICC) to establish specific approaches to culture, reflected in the materials designed by education policy makers and publishing houses. The author also states that those top-down visions of culture have given little room for practitioners to explore bottom-up perspectives that consider students' demands and context. Such hierarchical models envision teachers as passive technicians who "are constrained to operate from handed-down fixed, pedagogic assumptions and to seldom seriously question their validity or relevance to specific learning and teaching contexts" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, pp.8-9). Besides, this practice perpetuates the privileged position of Western epistemology to impose a dominant culture and knowledge at the expense of the world visions of subaltern groups (Walsh, 2009b). In this case, the reliance on the approaches created by Western experts marginalizes the local teachers' knowledge when addressing culture.

In this sense, I understood that the previous dynamics happened in my teaching setting. The phenomenon occurred in an institute for work and human development in Bogotá. The institution aimed at providing a qualified educational service to contribute to the productive development of society and the fulfillment of the Colombian National Bilingual Program. As they had a full partnership with an international publishing house, the language curriculum followed the organization and lesson contents provided by a series of English textbooks. Such a curriculum centered on developing students' communicative and cultural competencies to use the English language to communicate successfully. The purpose was to equip students with linguistic and cultural information to interact with other individuals and communities through the

English language. Yet, this situation did not allow teachers to address teaching the English language and culture as a practice to question the current social order and contribute to social transformation (Siqueira, 2017). Likewise, the institution worked with learners whose ages ranged from 13 and up, and who were involved in different academic and working environments. Regarding teaching staff, practitioners held either a bachelor's degree in Foreign Language Teaching or a certification that validated their pedagogical knowledge. Besides, it was mandatory to have an international exam that proves a B2 or C1 language proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference.

This language academy claimed to have created an eclectic methodology to guide learning and teaching processes. The institution regarded its methodology as eclectic since it included elements from different learning and teaching perspectives such as the communicative, natural, and action-oriented approach as well as blended and cooperative learning. Therefore, teachers must faithfully implement such methodology as it allegedly guarantees students' meaningful learning. As part of the methodology, practitioners had to lead different classes. For instance, the regular lessons centered on developing the textbooks' topics, the immersion lessons taught a cultural dimension of language, and evaluation sessions assessed students' communicative competencies through oral production. When it comes to culture, teachers were limited to promoting the contents included in the instructional materials. This situation implies that educators had to enact the institutional vision of culture explained as follows.

Initially, the English textbooks emphasized *cultural fluency* since their purpose was to train people to interact with other communities and understand diverse variations of the English language. This emphasis portrayed interculturality from a functional perspective (Walsh, 2009a) as it recognizes the existence and interaction among different cultural groups. Still, it did not

analyze conflicting situations in terms of power and domination. It implies that the class material did not support the discussion of social practices that enact discrimination and inequity since it prioritizes the development of linguistic and pragmatic competencies. Thus, teachers faced a learning environment that favored a mainstream communicative perspective rather than problematizing the nature of intercultural encounters (Cuartas, 2020).

Furthermore, several textbook lessons displayed foreign cultural traits such as greetings, table manners, dress codes, literary genres, holidays and commemoration, and informative texts concerning global problems. At first glance, these contents appeared to tackle big culture and small culture (Kramsch, 2013) since they worked on the observable facts such as holidays and the invisible elements such as behaviors and values of everyday life. Yet, they depicted culture from a monolithic or static view that reinforced stereotypes and hierarchies among social groups (Núñez-Pardo, 2018). From this perspective, those topics were not meaningful to students' cultural experiences since the educational context did not create environments for students to validate the reliability of the information taught in the lessons.

Moreover, the institutional curriculum required teachers to lead lessons to promote a purported cultural immersion. The institution understood immersion as a learning environment that intended to simulate real-life communicative events for students to participate in them in the language classroom. Therefore, the activities had to foster the use of language in context so that students could learn how to behave and communicate during certain events within a foreign community. For instance, teachers recreated everyday situations such as asking for directions, ordering food in a restaurant, and recognizing foreign currency. These practices transformed teaching into a process that tried to transfer real-life events to the classroom and did not acknowledge culture as a socially situated practice (Jiménez & Peña, 2009). Thus, language

teaching did not respond to the cultural discontinuities between students' homes and schools to create learning environments that promote equity and social justice (Nieto, 2010). That is to say that the lessons centered on cultural immersion neither attended to local cultural realities nor invited learners to exercise their social agency to question and solve social issues embedded in their communities.

Additionally, it is essential to mention that the institutional discourse regards students as clients; therefore, every employee must ensure students' satisfaction. For teachers, this practice was noticeable when they were required to meet students' expectations regarding culture and language teaching. After implementing a semi-structured interview that aimed at exploring learners' understanding of culture, I realized that they appear to be interested in fitting in other societies and mastering the foreign language to serve that purpose at the expense of their perceptions, observable in the following excerpt.

> Natalia: Based on your idea of culture, do you believe that it is important to teach culture when learning a foreign language, in this case, English?
>
> Cristian: well, in some cases like mine, it is crucial when I was learning English on my own to start reading about the customs, values, traditions that people have in the specific place where you will go and relate. So, it will not generate an emotional shock among people, a shock of values and customs. But it would be a way to introduce new ideas, new ways to see the world differently. *(Cristian's interview, April 2020; own translation)*

In this context, one can infer that teachers' labor should center on equipping learners with linguistic and cultural elements to avoid tensions and interact with other social groups. However, attempting to fit in different cultural groups might be problematic because "the ability to behave like somebody else, even linguistically, is no guarantee that one will be more easily accepted by the group who speaks the language, nor that mutual understanding will emerge" (Kramsch, 1993; as cited in Turizo & Gómez, 2006, p.143-144).

Given these points, I can state that there was an imposition of a top-down approach to culture that hid teachers' knowledge and expertise. Practitioners had to pursue a specific teaching methodology to comply with the requirements of a language curriculum that envisioned culture from a static perspective to help students be part of the target language communities. Besides, the implementation of such methodology left aside teachers' voices and experiences to grasp culture in this setting since they had to rely on the textbooks' cultural contents proposed by a publishing house. Although this phenomenon seems to limit teachers' labor, it also provides the opportunity to investigate the role of culture in this context since it can give an account of "the ways that language teachers understand their role, as well as what, and how, they teach" (Naidu, 2020).

Hence, this inquiry intends to explore teachers' narratives to unveil their *theories of practice* (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) since they account for their knowledge and pedagogical practices when addressing culture in the lessons. As the theories of practice also show educators' conceptualizations of culture, they aid in questioning and resignifying the instrumental definitions of culture given by policymakers and international agencies. Besides, the emerging narratives depict the tensioning situations that practitioners experience when tackling the institutional requirements and personal narratives regarding culture. Accordingly, this research initiative aims to answer the following research question and comply with the research objectives.

Research Question:

What do in-service English teachers' narratives reveal about the construction of their theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development?

Research Sub-question:

What pedagogical tensions do in-service English teachers' narratives experience when teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development?

General research objective:

- To unveil in-service English teachers' theories of practice through written life stories to understand their teaching of the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development.

Specific research objectives:

- To characterize participants' theories of practice through written life stories to position teachers' experiences and reflections as valuable sources of knowledge concerning language and culture education.
- To analyze and interpret participants' written life stories through a narrative approach to comprehend the pedagogical tensions experienced when dealing with top-down approaches to teaching culture.

The present chapter focused on explaining the justification, statement of the problem, and research question and objectives. The following chapter displays the theoretical discussion that supports this study.

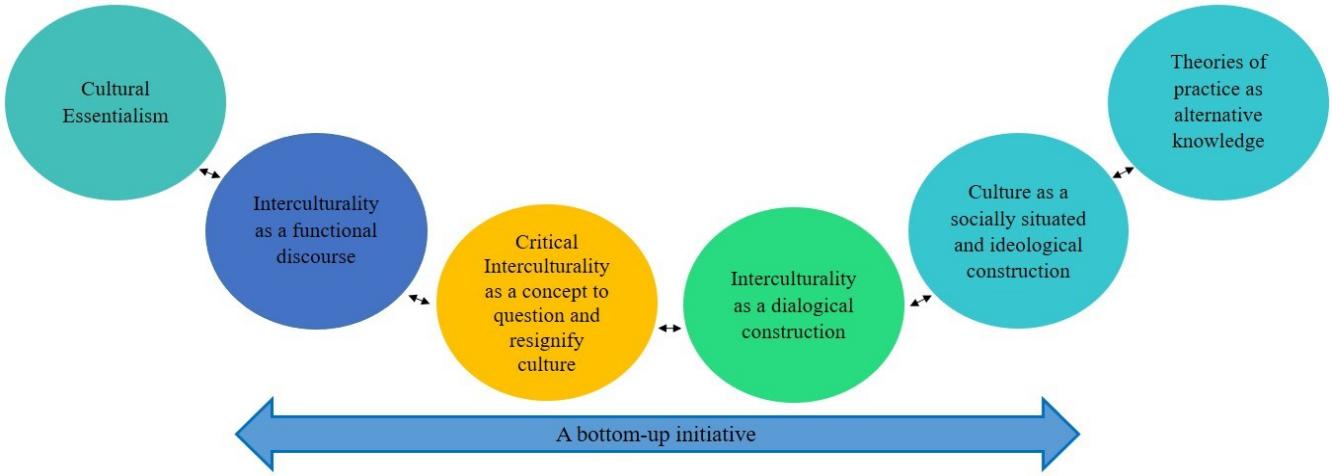
Chapter II

Literature Review

This narrative study aims at unveiling teachers' theories of practice when addressing culture in an institute for work and human development. Therefore, this chapter intends to develop a theoretical discussion from a poststructuralist perspective to make visible and comprehend practitioners' experiences concerning culture and its teaching. To do so, I propose *critical interculturality as a concept to question and resignify culture* as the central construct related to other notions inherent to the studied phenomenon, visible in the following figure.

Figure 1

Critical Interculturality as a Concept to Question and Resignify Culture



Source: Own creation

The academic discussion elaborates on the proposal of critical interculturality as a concept to problematize taken-for-granted definitions of culture and look for alternative

interpretations that embrace teachers' voices (Figure 1). I assumed this poststructural line of thought[1] in agreement with a common concern of authors such as Candau (2010), Holliday, (2010), and Walsh (2009), regarding the Western vision of culture and diversity. Such a situation provides an opportunity to engage in an egalitarian discussion that considers other epistemological perspectives to question dominant visions of culture stated by the West.

The discussion follows a poststructural thread when examining the conceptualization of culture proposed by Western epistemology in the ELT field. According to Morgan (2007), such an epistemological stance criticizes the pillars of scientific thought that seem to provide an objective and universal truth to interpret social reality. It means that I intend to problematize the instrumentalist definitions and top-down approaches to culture presented by Western experts and policymakers for teachers to implement in their lessons. My problematization includes comprehending that culture is more than a monolithic construction that portrays an individual or community's traditions and behavioral traits to language learners. Instead, culture holds a dynamic and evolving nature that changes through social interaction. That is why the idea is to understand culture from the bottom-up, that is, from teachers' experiences rather than focusing

[1] Although the present study relies on critical interculturality, I consider that it is necessary to clarify its relation with a decolonial perspective. According to Mignolo (2011), decolonial thinking attempts to question and deconstruct the logic of modernity/coloniality and its manifestations achieved through epistemic disobedience. It implies to de-link or detach from all possible relationships with modernity and every source of power that does not account for decisions made by free people. On the contrary, this inquiry does not intend to promote an epistemological proposal to change educational actors' mindsets to address culture in the language classroom. It only means to problematize and resist the Western vision of culture imposed in the ELT field.
Furthermore, decoloniality entails subjects' agency to carry out specific activities or strategies to subvert the colonial order and create an Other paradigm (Walsh, 2009c). Yet this research project only counters the dominant culture by making visible alternative understandings of culture from teachers' voices rather than supporting them to transform their pedagogical practices.
Nevertheless, this inquiry has counted on the essence of critical border thinking as one prominent element of decoloniality (Grosfoguel, 2011; Mignolo, 2011; Walsh, 2006). Therefore, the idea is not to discard the Western vision of culture but to hold a dialogue between dominant and subaltern comprehensions. That is, to acknowledge visions of culture created by policymakers, publishing houses, and educators to disrupt the taken-for-granted definitions and rely on non-conventional interpretations that emerge from local practices.

on definitions given by Euro-North American scholars. Making visible their voices is what constitutes my bottom-up initiative since culture emerges from the practitioners' realities (Figure 1).

Given these points, this theoretical discussion develops the construct of *critical interculturality as a concept to question and resignify culture* through the following organization. Initially, I examine interculturality as an official discourse that uses diversity to impose a common culture in the EFL classroom. Later, there will be an emphasis on cultural essentialism, which homogenizes the cultural realities of educational actors. Afterward, interculturality is seen as a dialogical construction of knowledge to value the difference regarding teaching dynamics. Subsequently, the discussion analyzes culture as a socially situated and ideological construction that reflects the influence of global ideologies on personal narratives. Finally, I explore acknowledging theories of practice to make teachers' knowledge of culture visible.

Interculturality as a Functional Discourse

Interculturality has emerged as a concept and proposal from indigenous education to address cultural differences (Candau, 2010; Walsh, 2009a). This initiative fosters the development of dialogical relationships among varied social groups so everyone can work together to strive for an equitable society built from the particularities of each human being. According to Walsh (2009b), acknowledging cultural differences leads to deconstructing the hegemonic perspective that has defined which culture is valid and worth adopting. Thus, subaltern individuals and communities reclaim their right to be heard and actively participate in social dynamics.

The Colombian government has enacted public policies that allegedly incorporate such a vision of interculturality in the educational field; however, it has brought implications in terms of power and domination. For instance, the Colombian National Bilingual Program (NBP) intends to include indigenous and foreign languages in the curriculum to uphold the development of global citizenship (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, n.d). Although this policy represents an attempt to value the country's cultural richness, it aligns with neoliberal practices[2] in globalization processes (Walsh, 2009b). Therefore, recognizing and interacting among different cultural groups becomes a vehicle to promote social cohesion without examining other social problems (Candau, 2010). In other words, interculturality becomes a functional element to foster official discourses of diversity accommodated to a common culture.

Hence, interculturality acts as an instrument to control cultural differences in favor of dominant structures. Exploring the differences implies interacting with realities that might conflict with one's world visions. That is why the concept of difference has acquired a negative connotation that leads individuals to treat it as a problem to solve and make it suitable for common understanding (Shoshana, 2017). This concern is noticeable when policymakers and language institutes design a language curriculum that transmits information about English-speaking countries. Then, students can avoid situations in which their cultures clash with the realities of foreign groups when interacting with them. Consequently, dominant groups use interculturality to manipulate subaltern groups by making them feel recognized and part of the

[2] Although the critique of functional interculturality relies on decolonial studies that relate cultural richness to modernity/coloniality, I decided to ascribe such richness to neoliberal practices following Walsh's ideas (2009b) of the cultural logic of the neoliberal State. The author states that this logic attempts to boost the model of accumulation and the Eurocentric domination to maintain the given social order. Besides, it aims neither to create more egalitarian societies nor to fight against racism. Consequently, these ideas support the NBP because it does not value the linguistic and cultural variety to have a more equitable society. Instead, it uses the discourse of diversity to strengthen the idea of speaking other languages to be part of the global market.

society although their cultural differences are hidden to reduce ethnic conflict and preserve the given social order (Walsh, 2009a). Functional interculturality prioritizes the exhibition of social diversity and seeks solutions to identity issues due to lack of recognition.

The ELT field has succumbed to the control of cultural differences through a Eurocentric intercultural competence (IC) to approach a cultural dimension in the language classroom. Scholars such as Fungchomchoei and Kardkarnklai (2016), Ho (2011), and Ryan and Sercu (2003) developed their inquiry projects, banking on the understanding of IC proposed by Byram (1997) and Liddicoat et al. (2003). These studies request educators to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to interact with diverse people and bridge cultural differences. The idea is that individuals learn to express their own identities without transgressing others' cultural realities. Although this exercise seems to strengthen cultural coexistence, it overshadows the impossibility of seeing the society from other perspectives that might destabilize the social order (Walsh, 2006). In this way, interculturality is reduced to developing skills and knowledge rather than being a space to imagine other realities based on social justice (Lanas, 2017).

Likewise, not questioning asymmetrical power structures favors the adoption of interculturality as a functional discourse. Positioning cultural diversity becomes an ideological strategy to divert attention away from other social issues perpetuating inequity and marginalization. For instance, communicative English textbooks present a celebratory view of culture that favors stereotypical activities of global communities, but they neither study issues related to discrimination and oppression nor include cultural traits of local groups (Gómez, 2015a). This practice involves accepting the Western paradigm that divides the world into hegemonic and subaltern cultural groups depending on their relationships with politics and economics (Ramos et al., 2020). From a critical perspective, one can say that Western

epistemology starts controlling subaltern subjects to embrace their differences within an imposed order that delimits an accepted cultural reality.

As a result, such interculturality envisions culture as a homogenizing construction[3] that pursues social cohesion through the acceptance of diversity. Candau (2016a) affirms that having a dominant culture allows establishing values and principles to prescribe how the population interprets and interacts with society. A dominant culture also focuses on creating safe environments in which those other communities can exercise the right to express their cultural identities without disturbing the *status quo*. To illustrate such a dominant culture, international educational agencies, such as the British Council, seem to have installed the idea of learning English as a current priority in a globalized world. Those agencies affirm that English helps people contact foreign people and provides academic or professional opportunities for a better lifestyle. At first sight, it supports a positive appreciation of diversity as people are willing to comprehend others' world visions and learn from the differences, contributing to coexistence (Siqueira, 2017). Nonetheless, I believe that the readiness to tolerate different cultural realities might obscure a process of domination since individuals have to adjust their perceptions to fit Western logic (Walsh, 2009b). In Kramsch's words (2009), interculturality might become an excuse to escape the conflict and power issues present in the exchange with the Other.

The implementation of IC models represents the before-mentioned traits within the ELT field. Some scholars have conducted research under the assumption that there is a need for integrating a cultural component to help learners develop competencies when interacting with other people through the English language (Bernal, 2020; Cárdenas, 2018). That is why they

[3] There is a further examination of this concept when discussing cultural essentialism.

have relied on the principles of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) proposed by Byram (1997) to develop pedagogical strategies and instructional material that contributes to educating students as intercultural English speakers. The ICC model means to develop attitudes, knowledge, interpreting and interactional skills, and critical cultural awareness so that language learners can successfully communicate with the target culture. Agreeing with Hoff (2014), Byram's model has become a prominent reference that influences curriculum development in foreign language education; and yet the model has not largely received criticism in the field (Matsuo, 2015). I deem that adopting Byram's proposal from a non-critical position reflects Eurocentrism's aftermath because Europe's hegemonic position naturalizes producing objective and well-grounded knowledge despite the existence of other interpretations (Oliveira & Candau, 2010). Hence, educational actors legitimize such a cultural homogenization of knowledge by not questioning its alleged authority. This instance leads to integrating Byram's model without problematizing whether it responds to their contextual realities and its implications due to the reliance on Western experts.

Additionally, dominant structures have used the discourse of functional interculturality to tackle the difference from an additive and universal perspective. Candau (2010) asserts that the educational field appears to regard interculturality as an additional element to foster the inclusion of different cultures, yet it does not transform the curriculum. Educational policies have concentrated on including academic subjects related to cultural and linguistic diversity on the presumption that it contributes to establishing education as a universal process to guarantee equality (Walsh, 2009a). Following the author's idea, this action does not support education by dialoguing with and integrating Other pieces of knowledge, but it adjusts them for the current system. To put it another way, the attempt to embrace diversity has influenced the

universalization of cultural education, whose logic marginalizes knowledge that diverges from the common patterns.

Indeed, the ELT field has joined such universal and marginalizing practices when dealing with intercultural competencies. Afshar and Yousefi (2019) and Gu (2018) conducted inquiries to assess teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC or critical cultural awareness. To do so, both authors counted on IC models (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Liddicoat et al., 2003) to examine educators' experiences and propose solutions to seeming deficiencies. Nonetheless, I agree with Carreño- Bolivar's position (2018), who states that "such models have numerous limitations that would hinder their use depending on the context, participants, and content to be studied, among other factors." (p.133). These models standardize the dominant integration of interculturality without attending to the particularities of the EFL classroom. Besides, they reproduce an instrumentalist ethos that views teachers as implementers of others' theories rather than acknowledging their power of creation (Lanas, 2017).

To sum up, interculturality has become a functional discourse for dominant groups that pursue social cohesion through diversity at the expense of not questioning asymmetrical power relationships. This application symbolizes the imposition of a Western epistemology to foster a cultural dimension in the ELT field. Accordingly, the discussion needs to problematize the essentialization of culture when tackling intercultural processes within the language classroom.

Cultural Essentialism

As functional interculturality supports the development of a common culture, Western epistemology has essentialized the nature of culture to make it a static and monolithic construction. According to Subedi (2013), essentialism characterizes cultures as fixed entities

that contain a set of attributes that bond the members of a social group; nevertheless, such cultures do not have contact with other groups. Cultures are delimited by immutable borders (geographical, behavioral, epistemological, etc.) that help establish the difference between the self and the others under the Euro-North American paradigm (Jiménez & Peña, 2009). Although this perspective seems to make culture accountable, it prompts a superficial concept analysis. Thus, an uncritical study of culture might lead educational practices to reproduce the given social order without revising power asymmetries (Nieto, 2010).

Cultural essentialism has boosted the description of cultures to predict and explain people's realities at the expense of their particularities. Holliday (2012) affirms that detailed descriptions of cultures satisfy the need for presenting society as a solid object whose different institutions and actors work together for the same purpose. It is visible in language programs that claim to teach "British" or "American" culture as they seem to be inherent to the English language. In contrast, conceding the author's proposal, the use of such descriptions is problematic to the extent that endeavoring to foresee someone's behaviors and values delegitimizes their autonomy. This practice gives the impression that cultural practices can be transported and replicated so that people learn them in educational contexts (Jiménez & Peña, 2009). Then, delineating culture as a whole characterizes community members as the vivid representation of their cultural groups, even when individual realities disrupt the given descriptions.

In the ELT field, such descriptions are used to address the cultural dimension of language by teaching visible and invisible elements of culture. Gómez (2015b), and Olaya and Gómez (2013) conducted two research projects whose common concern was that EFL teaching centered on surface cultural elements such as food, sports, and holidays, seeing that they promote a

congratulatory view of culture. For that reason, the authors proposed integrating *deep culture* since it encourages learners to understand cultural complexity by analyzing customs, lifestyles, and beliefs during intercultural exchanges with foreign communities. Although the proposals assume a critical stance towards culture, they keep presenting it as a set of exotic elements for students to explore and adopt when interacting with target language communities (Kramsch, 2013). I believe that culture needs to be regarded as an evolving construction whose complexity cannot be reduced to national labels. The *surface* and *deep culture* analysis also replicates the tendency to explore the national characteristics of dominant groups in foreign language education, which does not provide a contextual basis for non-native learners to enrich their cultural experiences (Núñez-Pardo, 2018).

In this way, essentialism is entangled with the concept of national culture to enforce world visions validated by hegemonic groups. As stated in Holliday (2010), "a national culture is therefore treated as a system which contains the complementary elements of every aspect of social life, social structure, behaviour, values and ideology, each telling us something about the other" (p.260). National cultures are used to set the standard that defines the appropriate ways of living for everyone, which award a sense of pride and privilege to a social group (Kramsch, 2013). This perspective is noticeable when a language program favors the role of native teachers to teach culture as there is an oversimplification of the relationship between nationality and culture (Turizo & Gómez, 2006). Subaltern communities and individuals have to adapt their cultural realities to comply with the norms given by hegemonic groups. Notwithstanding, the concept has been used ideologically to foster the Western diversity perspective. Different cultural groups are presented as stable and defined entities worth recognizing to avoid discussions of social inequality (Holliday, 2009). Thus, national culture appeals to stereotypes

that display overgeneralized approaches to different realities and limit exploring the complexity of culture (Holliday, 2012).

Subsequently, culture has been characterized as a neutral construction to hide practices of subalternation[4]. A neutral description of culture aims at depicting simplistic attributes of a community to determine and foster the social organization (Holliday, 2009). The conflicting situation is that the description is created from the power to either reject or distort diversity through stereotypes that validate and deny specific ways of being different (Walsh, 2009a). The Western paradigm takes advantage of its power to represent the Other's identity, following the values of the hegemonic groups (Holliday, 2012). This practice leads to obliterating social groups that do not meet the criteria of Western cultures to be accepted within the current world order.

As an illustration, Forman (2014) conducted a case study to analyze the English textbook contents and Thai teachers' pedagogical practices when dealing with this type of material. The author's interest emerged from the critiques of the Western ideologies and discourses in the textbooks as they leave aside the cultures of non-native learners and practitioners. Findings showed that educators relied on the authority of the publication since native speakers designed it. On the other hand, the participants faced pedagogical tensions, seeing that the textbook's Western values did not connect with learners' local realities. This situation portrays the hierarchy of culture present in textbooks which places Western communities in a privileged position since

[4] Following Walsh's ideas (2006), I understand subalternation as the process of exclusion and marginalization faced by individuals and communities that are not included in the logic of the common culture established by Western hegemonic groups. In this study, subalternation has to do with exclusion experienced by non-native language learners and teachers when they have to grasp a cultural dimension of language through neutral descriptions of Western global communities that ignore the local realities.

they legitimize the natural use of English (Núñez-Pardo, 2018). For this reason, Forman calls for counting on the knowledge and expertise of both local and foreign educators to create materials that respond to particular contexts.

In brief, this section intended to problematize interculturality as a functional discourse and cultural essentialism, following the essence of critical interculturality. Henceforth, the discussion will draw on interculturality as a concept to foster dialogue among different pieces of knowledge and understand the pedagogical tensions when teaching culture in the EFL classroom.

Interculturality as a Dialogical Construction

In this section, the discussion centers on the principles of critical interculturality from a dialogical perspective. I assumed this position following Candau's ideas (2010), seeing that authentic interculturality is constructed from the egalitarian dialogue that values and responds to people's realities. The dialogical construction accounts for emerging experiences of individuals, communities, and institutions from hegemony and resistance because they support the development of strategies or proposals that defy the Western paradigm, ergo, the dominant common culture (Walsh, 2009b). Interculturality upholds this study to establish a dialogue between teachers, institutions, and policymakers since their interpretations allow making visible alternative understandings that disrupt the Western models of culture.

Interculturality as a dialogical construction is possible as long as there is criticism of social elements that do not allow individuals to engage in such dialogue within a framework of equality. For instance, it is necessary to question sociopolitical and economic conditions that reproduce social asymmetries and cultural discrimination to spread the dominant culture's interests (Tubino, 2005; as cited in Candau, 2010). In this case, the before-mentioned

problematization of interculturality as a functional discourse and cultural essentialism contributes to unveiling the official discourses of policymakers and publishing houses to control teaching culture in the ELT field.

In this fashion, critical interculturality pursues a dialogue that allows people to discuss their cultural realities symmetrically. Placing the perspectives of both subaltern and dominant groups on the same level facilitates criticizing different social structures and conditions that use power to perpetuate inequality and marginalization (Walsh, 2009a). In this case, it means to open a dialogue among educators' experiences and Western discourses. It might reveal tensioning situations when educational institutions require teachers to follow top-down approaches to culture despite the disconnection with local realities. Then, critical interculturality supports this process of examining social issues from an egalitarian dialogue that recognizes perspectives of the Other to transform power asymmetries rather than subordinating them to the given social order (Walsh, 2009b).

Moreover, recognizing different cultural realities holds the dialogical construction from critical interculturality. Therefore, I would support the idea of moving from cultural essentialism to a perspective that regards culture as a complex and dynamic construction subject to change through social interaction (Candau, 2016b). It means not limiting culture to a set of behaviors, traditions, and beliefs that characterize a geographical space but appreciating the cultural complexity[5] that characterizes each human being. Positioning cultural differences helps destabilize and reconstruct hegemonic practices that have taken advantage of the dominant culture to control individuals' world visions and define which cultural identities are worth

[5] This discussion explores the cultural complexity when explaining the notion of culture as a socially-situated and ideological construction.

including (Walsh, 2009b). In this way, this study understands that culture is not only about learning how to interact with English-speaking or global communities. Instead, the purpose is to acknowledge the influence of educators' and students' cultural identities on language teaching and learning. Therefore, acknowledging different cultural realities leads to questioning taken-for-granted educational practices and empowering practitioners to intervene in their contexts (Candau, 2016a).

To illustrate, Álvarez and Bonilla (2009) report a collaborative and dialogical initiative in which both educators intended to address a cultural dimension of language through critical intercultural competence in an undergraduate program. The experience portrays practitioners' agency to subvert learning about foreign communities when teaching culture in language programs. That is why the authors proposed activities that allowed learners to problematize their stereotypes of other cultures and how their own cultures had influenced their comprehension of the Others. Agreeing with Granados-Beltrán (2016), I believe that this experience represents an intercultural dialogue that recognizes teachers' and students' different voices and knowledge and mediates between official and alienated educational discourses[6] to promote meaningful experiences at school. Besides, it reflects a critical intercultural pedagogy that guides learners and educators to question and be aware of emerging social issues through a power-based perspective to utilize alternative approaches to these concerns (Shoshana, 2017).

[6] I understand official discourses as the ones enacted in the official language curriculum of schools, universities, and other institutions to comply with government policies. Such discourses promote the requirements issued by dominant entities such as the Ministry of Education and policymakers. Likewise, I comprehend alienated discourses as the ones constructed by teachers and students daily and account for the contextual realities of each educational scenario. Yet these discourses are overlooked when defining the curriculum for the language classroom.

Likewise, highlighting the subalterns' knowledge identifies a dialogical practice from critical interculturality. According to Walsh (2009c), the purpose is to make visible those Other ways of knowing and living to develop non-conventional understandings that reflect the differences within a framework of tolerance, equity, equality, and respect. It confronts discrimination and exclusion as social constructs that have historically defined which individuals and groups are inferior or inappropriate (Candau, 2010). From this perspective, the present inquiry advocates for language teachers, their voices, and their experiences. They have been treated as subalterns in the exercise of teaching culture by policymakers and foreign institutions, seeing that "in most educational planning, teachers are expected to just follow instructions and successfully achieve the goals set by others" (Guerrero, 2010, p. 36). For this reason, I decided to rely on Boaventura de Sousa's ecology of knowledge (Candau, 2016a) and Kumaravadivelu's theories of practice (2003) because those theoretical elements[7] help make visible practitioners' knowledge and expertise when addressing culture in their educational contexts.

Following that viewpoint, Cuartas (2020) undertook a collective case study that guided a group of teachers to build their understanding of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in a study group. The author acknowledged the need for constructing bottom-up perspectives that exemplify in-service English teachers' conceptualizations and experiences to foster ICC because this implementation supported their professional development. Findings showed that educators went through an analytical and reflexive process that allowed them to transform their prior knowledge of teaching culture and ICC, assuming more informed positions to explain their pedagogical practices. Although this study seems to align with the tensioning discourse of

[7] The relationship between the ecology of knowledge and theories practice is further explained in the section called *theories of practice as alternative knowledge.*

interculturality as a competence, I deem that it values practitioners' knowledge to develop a cultural dimension of language learning and teaching despite the imposition of top-down teaching approaches. Hence, this research exercise raises awareness of the necessary deconstruction of traditional pedagogies to develop a critical stance toward the current teaching dynamics in the ELT field (Siqueira, 2017).

In short, critical interculturality aims at engaging subaltern and dominant groups in dialogue. The purpose is to problematize social issues related to power asymmetry and cultural exclusion to deconstruct the Western paradigm and the tenets of the dominant culture. In this way, this discussion will expand the notions of culture as a socially situated and ideological construction and theories of practice as alternative knowledge because they contribute to comprehending the dialogical dimension of critical interculturality.

Culture as a Socially Situated and Ideological Construction

As critical interculturality appeals to different cultural realities, it leads to exploring the complexity that characterizes culture. Agreeing with Holliday (2010), seeing culture as a dynamic and complex construction implies comprehending that culture is related to social, political, and economic practices, but it is not limited to them. That is why culture is not only about representing the world through national categories but examining the blurred and versatile nature of those boundaries (Holliday, 2009). For example, someone's cultural identity is not strictly tied to the traditions, beliefs, and stereotypical lifestyles of his/her home country. Instead, such cultural identity emerges from constant interaction and negotiation with other local and global realities. Consequently, culture acts both as a means and a result of trying to make sense

of the world through several modes of expression, such as language, symbols, and images, that dialogically characterize individual and collective experiences (Morgan, 2007).

In this regard, culture holds a socially situated nature since its dynamism comes from the interaction among individuals within a context. Nieto (2010) affirms that culture is a non-definite construction subject to change depending on the decisions made by everyday people. Those decisions display the influence of social elements such as history, race, language, and social class, which are embedded in context and create a bond within a group of people without denying their particularities. Thinking of culture in a normative sense disrupts the ability to constantly move through personal and external cultural experiences to make sense of the world (Holliday, 2012). For this reason, I believe that addressing culture is not about promoting an instrumentalist perspective dictated by policymakers or publishing houses in the language classroom. In contrast, this concept has to do with acknowledging students' and teachers' realities, which embody personal stories and sociopolitical discourses present in their communities.

Following this thinking, Naidu (2020) conducted a research initiative that analyzed the complexity of culture through the perceptions of teachers of Indonesian in Australian schools when supporting intercultural language education. Initially, the study questions the lack of conceptualization regarding interculturality and culture although Australian language education seems committed to their enactment. This situation leads the author to assume a non-essentialist position that disrupts the tendency of examining culture as a static and prescriptive phenomenon. The conceptualizations of culture were empirically constructed based on teachers' views, seeing that the concept is a dynamic and in-place construction. Consequently, this inquiry experience

constitutes "culture from the bottom up" (Atkinson & Sohn, 2013) because the concept is developed from people's lives and experiences.

Furthermore, culture bears an ideological dimension that shows the discourses that circulate in society despite its seeming neutrality. For Nieto (2010), culture does not act as a passive construction to prescribe social functioning, seeing that it is an active construction that emerges from constant interaction and communication among human beings. Therefore, culture is connected with political and economic phenomena and power relationships that affect the ways of living of different social groups (Holliday, 2009). Even the so-called neutral descriptions of culture are ideologically driven because their attempt to spread "true culture" depicts the exertion of power by dominant groups to define which cultural realities should be recognized and respected (Holliday, 2010; Jiménez & Peña, 2009). This situation is visible in the influence of global politics that gives power to the West to characterize the cultural identity of the Periphery Non-West (Holliday, 2012). The issue is that the West has taken advantage of its power to create an exotic and demonized cultural representation of non-Western individuals and groups, accused of lacking cultural traits to be compatible with the idealized West. Following Núñez-Pardo's ideas (2020), this situation is visible in EFL textbooks since they focus on presenting North American and British cultures as worth knowing due to their alleged connection with progress and success, whereas periphery countries and their cultural traits are related to social issues and underdevelopment. In other words, an unequal power exertion has allowed Western epistemology to present non-Western communities as culturally deficient due to the fear of what is different.

The present ideological dimension transforms culture into a site of struggle. Supporting Holliday's statements (2012), culture accounts for the influence of global discourses and

personal experiences when people try to make sense of the world depending on their needs and beliefs. Then, I think that the idea is not to define whether a culture is appropriate but to understand the tensioning situations that emerge when dealing with those internal and external narratives that shape our world visions. That is why the dialectic side of culture does not mean guiding people to accept contradictory perspectives to be part of a community (Nieto, 2010). Instead, it intends to demonstrate that cultural realities have been permeated by power; therefore, they are entangled with unequal power distribution that reproduces social issues such as discrimination and exclusion (Candau, 2016a). To illustrate, Amadasi and Holliday (2018) developed an inquiry that examined the narratives constructed by a postgraduate student based on her experiences when studying abroad. The participant's stories displayed her regular shifting between personal stories and global discourses framed in essentialist and non-essentialist views of culture to make sense of events that conflicted with her cultural identity. This dynamic depicts individuals' agency to respond to conflicting situations that undermine their cultural realities as foreigners due to the power exerted by local people.

In brief, I have learned that culture is a dynamic construction that accounts for particular and global social practices, which are constantly evolving due to individuals' interactions and the influence of socio-political and economic events within their contexts. Therefore, I have understood that culture has a strong connection with power and ideology since hegemonic groups can use culture to impose monolithic constructions that determine so-called appropriate ways of behaving, thinking, and interacting to be accepted and part of society. The previous practice leads to the subalternation of individuals and communities who seem not to meet the cultural requirements established by the dominant groups. Consequently, culture becomes a site

of struggle since people face different tensions when dealing with their own understanding of reality and the dominant cultural realities circulating in society.

Theories of Practice as Alternative Knowledge

Before discussing theories of practice, I would like to insist on my conviction that interculturality as a dialogical construction defends the integration of different kinds of subaltern knowledge. This initiative emerges as a means to take action against the epistemological privilege enacted by the Western paradigm (Santos et al., 2007). According to the author, the former consists of the authority given to the knowledge produced in the light of rationality and scientific method to define the allegedly proper understanding of the world. Yet, the reliance on scientific knowledge leads to underestimating the value of those forms of knowledge that arise from people's exercise to understand reality based on their common sense. I consider that such epistemic privilege is visible in the existing distinction between the theorist and the teacher in ELT (Kumaravadivelu, 2013). It implies a tacit but uncontested agreement in which the theorist is in charge of producing knowledge of language learning and teaching while the teacher has to focus on teaching only. That is why the author states that the previous scenario leaves little room for teachers to make sense of their practices.

In this fashion, the gap between the roles of the theorist and the teacher is widened due to the influence of universalism in educational contexts. For Santos (2010, as cited in Candau, 2016a), universalism supports hegemonic groups to determine the accuracy of only one vision of knowledge rooted in the scientific tradition and attempts to provide egalitarian conditions for the inclusion of different world visions. The author also affirms that universalism becomes an ideological mechanism to homogenize the difference and undermine the knowledge of subaltern

groups as it seems to be biased. The present phenomenon has permeated the dynamics of knowledge production in ELT since policymakers and scholars have acquired the responsibility of creating and designing methodologies, pedagogical strategies, and materials for assuring proper language teaching and learning. Ergo, EFL teachers are treated as mere implementers of pedagogies and approaches produced by the before-mentioned educational stakeholders. For example, when designing official guidelines for Colombian language education, this process has not taken advantage of teachers' knowledge since it appears not to meet the standards of European educational experts (Guerrero, 2010).

Accordingly, I feel that it is possible to make teachers' voices and experiences visible as they have been silenced by the Western practices embedded in language education. That is to say that educators should have the opportunity to explore their pedagogical actions and generate knowledge from them (Kumaravadivelu, 2013). To do so, I decided to rely on the *ecology of knowledges* proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (as cited in Candau, 2016a, p. 23). For the author, such a concept connects to post-abyssal thinking, which embraces alternative world visions that the dominant culture has denied or excluded. In this sense, the *ecology of knowledges* attempts to open a dialogue among subaltern and dominant ideas to confront and destabilize the pillars of the scientific and objective perspectives created by the West. For this study, it has to do with supporting practitioners' knowledge to understand the teaching of culture in the language class without denying the proposal developed by policymakers and Western experts in the ELT field. The dialogue among those different kinds of knowledge will unveil alternative perspectives of culture and make the tensioning situations experienced by teachers visible when integrating culture in the language classroom. Such dialogism allows building egalitarian practices based on difference, providing the same opportunity for various sources of

knowledge to be acknowledged and discussed in the academic field (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Santos et al., 2007).

In this train of thought, supporting teachers' knowledge can be embodied in constructing their theories of practice. In light of the postmethod condition, Kumaravadivelu (2006) proposes the theories of practice to reclaim teachers' right to make sense of their professional activities because the current pedagogical dynamics prove otherwise. The issue is that educators have been relegated to implementing the knowledge created by international experts, even when it does not respond to local realities. It signifies that the theories symbolize teachers' endeavor to take action against the rigid educational scenarios limiting their freedom to decide on their pedagogical practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2013). This situation leads educators to rely on their personal knowledge, which results from their experiences and the constant observation and interpretation of the events in the classroom and their institutions. In other words, personal knowledge accounts for teachers' reflexivity and agency to make sense of their own practices and their contexts to create a unique understanding of good teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

In this way, teachers' daily practices give origin to their self-crafted knowledge which is the axis of their theories of practice. Kumaravadivelu (2006) clarifies that pedagogical knowledge should account for practices in context; ergo, teachers need to theorize their pedagogical activities and perform those elements they have theorized. Theories of practice represent the pedagogical principles created by teachers daily, which depict the convergence of theoretical, experiential, and empirical knowledge used to understand learning and teaching in their contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In this case, theories of practice will elucidate in-service English teachers' knowledge regarding culture beyond the expected institutional outcomes. This

exercise contributes to positioning the value of their knowledge to understand the complexity of approaching a cultural dimension in the language classroom.

In short, I understand theories of practice as the result of a constant sense-making process developed by teachers to analyze and respond to the particularities of their educational contexts. Theories of practice not only account for theoretical knowledge but also educators' personal knowledge, which contains their perceptions, beliefs, and ideas of language learning and teaching and emerges from meaningful experiences that have impacted their pedagogical labor. Likewise, I have learned that the theories of practice also represent the tensions experienced by teachers when their personal knowledge does not share the pillars of the educational discourses that circulate in their institutions. Teachers go through a decision-making process either to negotiate between institutional and private teaching agendas or to favor the development of their own ideas. Thus, the theories of practice show that teachers produce knowledge in their regular practices and hold the power of constructing and transforming learning and teaching dynamics.

Consequently, this study proposes the construction of teachers' theories of practice without aiming at evaluating teachers' reflexivity but leading them to understand different factors involved when addressing culture. This exercise encourages educators to realize that their theories of practice reflect their theoretical and experiential knowledge and the influence of the institutional and students' expectations. Besides, making teachers' self-initiated knowledge visible contributes to positioning it as meaningful and valid as the guidelines dictated by international publishing houses in the ELT field concerning teaching the English language and culture. Thus, unveiling those theories of practice commits to the plurality of knowledge and teachers' self-professional development.

Final Thoughts of the Chapter

The present chapter intended to develop critical interculturality as a concept to question and resignify culture by integrating diverse notions related to teaching English and culture. The principles of critical interculturality helped me realize that reducing interculturality to a set of communicative competencies represents the influence of Western epistemology to control cultural differences in the classroom. Language teachers have become an instrument of dominant groups (policymakers and publishing houses) to perpetuate practices of subalternation and exclusion while being victims of them simultaneously. Educators have to spread a monolithic cultural reality of global English-speaking communities in this system, leaving aside the local cultural realities. Besides, these practices disregard teachers' knowledge when approaching culture to respond to their educational contexts.

Accordingly, I found critical interculturality suitable for resignifying the above panorama. The purpose is to understand the complexity of culture through the teachers' experiences since the latter account for socially situated and ideological dynamics that occur when developing a cultural dimension in a language course. I also learned that teaching culture is not about using a top-down model to promote a congratulatory vision of foreign people but about understanding educators' struggles to comply with such labor. Additionally, this initiative makes the value of teachers' knowledge visible because their theories of practice vividly depict what teaching culture truly entails in a specific context beyond policymakers' and institutional' expectations.

Briefly, this chapter accounted for the theoretical discussion that supports this study. The following chapter reports the different elements that compose the research design.

Chapter III

Research Design

The present chapter accounts for the actions and decisions that supported the data collection process of in-service English teachers' narratives of teaching the English language and culture. I provide a detailed explanation of the type of study, the setting and the participants' profiles, the data collection procedures and strategies, the researcher's role, and ethical considerations. The before-mentioned aspects allowed configuring the research design of this study to unveil and characterize educators' theories of practice when addressing culture in institutes for work and human development and analyze their stories to understand the pedagogical tensions experienced when integrating culture in the language classroom.

This study follows poststructuralism to guide the interpretation of participants' voices in the study. The purpose is not to essentialize people's stories but to understand that their experiences elucidate contextual dynamics and discourses that circulate in specific educational settings (Fawcett, 2008). Analyzing teachers' narratives does not mean presenting their theories of practice as valid procedures to teach culture in institutes for work and human development. Making the theories of practice visible aims at showing alternative conceptualizations and pedagogical practices that emerge from educators' initiatives to teach culture responding to their contextual needs. Consequently, this experience decenters scholars' and experts' knowledge as primary sources to address teaching culture and regards teachers' experiences as equally valuable.

Type of Study

The nature of this study relied on the principles of exploration, interpretation, and situatedness that characterize qualitative research. The exploratory and interpretative dimensions were connected to the opportunity of having a detailed account of teachers' experiences and reflections regarding teaching culture. This research initiative helped me delve into their pedagogical actions and comprehend the value and complexity of educators' knowledge and decisions to reveal their theories of practice. Besides, this study contributed to understanding what teaching culture represents for educators instead of assessing their teaching skills to implement instrumental approaches. Therefore, this type of research was used in a situation "when little is known about a topic or phenomenon and when one wants to discover or learn more about it. It is commonly used to understand people's experiences and to express their perspectives" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 33).

Moreover, this study is related to qualitative research's situatedness since it acknowledged the internal and external realities that informed teachers' actions. The purpose was to highlight that the theories of practice embodied teachers' experiences and knowledge and the influence of institutional requirements and external discourses inherited from policymakers and publishing houses to teach culture. This vision facilitated grasping the particularities of their practices within specific contexts without making generalizations to interpret similar settings (Crocker, 2009).

In this fashion, the narrative inquiry approach also underpinned the design of this study. Following Barkhuizen's ideas (2013), the present research characterized telling stories as an activity that supports people to be conscious of their experiences, reconstruct, and make sense of them. This exercise expected teachers to create written life stories (WLS) to portray their stories as educators and human beings when addressing culture in the language classroom. Creating

narratives is also intended to help teachers go through an introspective process to understand the complexity of their labor and make sense of personal, social, and institutional views on language and culture education that shape their own experiences (Mendieta, 2013). Accordingly, narratives, as an introspective practice, became an instrument to access data, in this case, teachers' WLS, to establish their theories of practice.

Further, the narrative inquiry approach guided this study to advocate for teachers' participation in the ELT field. Making teachers' narratives visible meant to make them feel empowered and heard since these narratives belong to individuals and communities that have been historically marginalized and silenced by hegemonic groups (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Characterizing the theories of practice contributed to positioning educators' conceptual, experiential, and practical knowledge in academic discussions to understand the development of a cultural dimension in EFL teaching and learning. Hence, this narrative experience supported a bottom-up initiative to value educators' pedagogical work rather than assessing a top-down implementation.

Setting

Seeing the nature of this study, I decided to describe the context from two perspectives: one that accounts for the setting that allowed gathering data and the other related to participants' workplaces. On the one hand, this project took place in virtual environments that facilitated communication with the participants and the data collection process in times of pandemic. Initially, I used WhatsApp to contact several in-service English teachers who have worked in institutes for work and human development and invited them to participate in this research initiative. After getting the confirmation of some of them, the participants and I used Google

Meet to have individual meetings in which we had an introductory session to provide an overview and explain the role and direct intervention of the participants in this study. Finally, we also had another virtual meeting to have an interview to co-interpret the gathered data.

On the other hand, the participants were part of the teaching staff of two institutes for work and human development, whose educational services centered on teaching foreign languages. These institutions offer their services to any person who is interested in learning another language to achieve subsequent purposes in terms of economic benefits, academic requirements, migration, and self-improvement. Therefore, they work with a varied population whose ages range from 12 years old and above.

In this fashion, the mission and vision of the institutes align with the National Bilingual Program's goals and the normative included in *Norma Técnica Colombiana* 5580 - NTC 5580 (ICONTEC & Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2007). The latter states that these institutes have to center on developing learners' communicative competencies so that they can interact with other individuals and interpret any type of text presented in the target language. Besides, the normative requires these institutions to have a teaching staff in which 80% of teachers hold an international certification that proves a C1 language proficiency level, and 20% of teachers need to have a certification that shows a B2 language proficiency level. That is why these institutions are constantly encouraging educators to take different international exams to obtain the highest language proficiency level.

Lastly, these institutions have partnerships with international publishing houses that have equipped them with specific English textbook series to guide their academic processes. For this reason, their language curricula were designed based on the contents and organization of the

textbooks. Also, these institutions claim to have developed their own teaching methodologies that teachers have to implement to guarantee students' meaningful learning.

Participants

Along these lines, I have used theoretical and practical sources to support my interest in making visible and positioning the expertise and knowledge of practitioners. For this reason, I did not establish a specific profile to select participants since I have learned that all teachers' voices have the same right to be heard. Consequently, I started having some conversations with my colleagues in which I shared a brief overview of the project and invited them to be part of this initiative. The exercise contributed to having some colleagues accept my invitation.

The participants were six in-service English teachers named Lucía, Aitana, Margarita, Charlie, Lady, and John, who have worked in institutes for work and human development. They had been part of different undergraduate programs from which they obtained a B.A degree in Education with an emphasis in English Language Teaching or Modern languages with an emphasis in Spanish, English, and French. Besides, Lucía, John, and Lady had carried out postgraduate studies in Teaching Foreign Languages and Educational Psychology.

Their work experience ranged from two to seven years as English language teachers in different academic scenarios such as schools, language institutes, and universities. When being part of institutes for work and human development, the participating teachers were involved in several types of lessons and activities that define the language curriculum in these institutions. For instance, they led regular sessions where the English textbook was the axis of teaching and learning processes. They were also in charge of immersion classes and writing and speaking

clubs, where they planned and implemented their own activities. Additionally, they conducted assessment sessions centered on students' speaking skills.

The before-mentioned activities allowed participants to have different experiences that shaped their teaching of the English language and culture[8]. Participating teachers shared their lived experiences through WLS that configured the primary data source of this study. Each participant went through a different introspective and reflective moment; yet, time constraints and personal issues directly impacted the construction of their stories. That is why I decided to rely on the representativeness criterion to select their stories for the process of analysis and interpretation. Although representativeness tends to be associated with choosing a sample that best characterizes all participants to generalize the findings in qualitative research (Lavrakas, 2008), the narrative dimension of this study did not facilitate complying with that purpose. Instead, I related representativeness to the detailed and thorough description of participants' pedagogical practices that gave an account of their experiences and reflections (Omona, 2013) to understand and highlight the nuances of each WLS.

Consequently, I made the following decisions[9] bearing in mind the previous criterion. First, I did not include John's story in the process of data analysis since his written production focused on developing the imagery of a story instead of accounting for his experiences and

[8] Although English language and culture are related to addressing cultural information about England or North American communities in the language classroom, such designation holds a different meaning in this study. As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, I understand culture as a dynamic and evolving construction subject to change depending on social interaction and the influence of socio-political and economic events. Thus, teaching the English language and culture is not only centered on transmitting facts related to English-speaking communities but also on understanding how teachers' and students' cultural realities impact and transform language learning and teaching.

[9] I believed it necessary to share the previous decision-making process to be faithful to the ethical considerations of the study. I considered it relevant to give credit to every participants' story regardless of their inclusion in the data analysis. Such action contributes to acknowledging participants as subjects of study and not as mere informants or objects of study, which helps transform the traditional practices in qualitative research.

reflections when teaching culture. Therefore, this situation led me not to include his text because it did not develop a written life story.

Likewise, I conducted the data analysis revolving around the stories of Lucía, Aitana, Charlie, Margarita, and Lady. The analysis of their written life stories gave origin to the three categories discussed in the Data Analysis and Findings chapter. Nonetheless, I only presented the outcomes of only three of the stories since they provided a detailed depiction of participants' meaningful experiences. Besides, the compulsory length of this manuscript did not allow me to present the discussion of the other participants' stories. Yet, their stories will be included in other academic papers.

Lastly, teachers played the role of participants in this study. The idea was not to treat them as mere informants whose labor centered on disclosing personal stories and information so that the researcher could gather rich data for the project. Instead, the teachers had the opportunity to make their voices visible and participate in the data analysis. They had essential work validating the findings since their insights and opinions corroborated or contested my interpretation of their stories (Boylorn, 2008). Accordingly, this dynamic supported a dialogical relationship in which both the participants and the researcher contributed to the study's development.

Data Collection Procedure

I decided to use teachers' Written Life Stories (WLS) to conduct the data collection process. Agreeing with Park (2013), writing is a process that echoes people's experiences, considerations, and struggles related to life events that have shaped their world visions and identities. For this reason, I invited the participating teachers to write narrative texts to make

meaningful life stories visible to explain their teaching of culture. Writing became an intimate exercise for participants to go through an introspective and reflective moment. As participants authored their narratives, they were free to choose significant experiences to share and give coherence to them through the written texts. They did not limit themselves to describing present or past stories but elaborating on such events and understanding the rationale behind their actions as language teachers concerning culture. Hence, WLS worked as a reflective tool to comprehend and report teachers' knowledge (Barkhuizen & Benson, 2008).

WLS aimed to scaffold teachers' introspection to help them make sense of their past and present experiences. To do so, I relied on the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry (temporality, sociality, and place) proposed by Clandinin and Huber (in press) to develop a protocol that guided teachers when creating their narratives. The protocol followed three stages: introduction, introspection and reflection, and creation described as follows.

- Introduction: The participants and I had individual meetings in which we dialogued about the purpose of the inquiry, their roles, and expected actions in this inquiry. Afterward, I presented the written consent so that participants signed it as long as they had fully understood their rights and the data management during and after the study. Later, we discussed the content of a worksheet (Appendix A) designed for teachers to develop when going through the following two stages. To ensure teachers' understanding of the worksheet, I shared with them some samples of WLS and my exercises of introspection, reflection, and creation of my written text. Finally, we made agreements regarding time and communication, so participants created their WLS without any inconvenience.

- Introspection and reflection: This stage guided teachers through an introspective and reflective process to make sense of their experiences before writing their final narratives. For this reason, they were asked to comply with the activities of the worksheet presented in the previous stage. Initially, the participants joined a digital mural (Appendix B) that worked as a tool to organize their ideas. Later, they were invited to think about a meaningful experience when teaching culture in a language institute. With that in mind, they were required to select significant events, people, or places connected to the previous experience that helped them explain their actions. Finally, they made notes of the before-mentioned ideas and their corresponding reflections using the tools of the digital mural.
- Creation: Once the participants had completed the last activities, they wrote their narratives (Appendix C). The participants were free to choose the language, genre, and length of their text. I only suggested focusing on their narratives' content rather than the form since it was relevant to explain their stories in depth. When finishing the writing process, they sent their papers to me.

After completing those stages, the participants and I had individual interviews to expand on my interpretation of the WLS. Instead of collecting more data, the interviews were part of the validation and co-interpretation process.

Correspondingly, this protocol emerged after making several methodological decisions and adjustments to guarantee that teachers made sense of their meaningful experiences. These actions were part of the piloting experience that I will narrate below.

Piloting Process

When I started designing the data collection procedure, I intended to invite teachers to create multimodal narratives. I had chosen this type of narrative as it supports participants to include other modes of representation (photographs, videos, graphics) to go through a deeply reflective process when elaborating on their meaningful experiences (Barkuizen et al., 2014; Menezes, 2008). In this case, the idea was that teachers used their own photographs, class materials, or videos as sources of self-representation to elicit more detailed stories and explanations related to their teaching of culture in language institutes.

To do so, I created a set of questions to help participants reflect upon specific dimensions related to their practices when addressing culture. However, after dialoguing with my thesis advisor, I realized that such a procedure did not agree with the principles of narrative inquiry as the questions would limit participants to choose experiences that were entirely meaningful to them. Subsequently, the protocol was developed around the question: What meaningful experience have I lived regarding my teaching of culture in a language institute? That protocol included similar activities to the ones outlined in the final version. The difference was that participants were asked to integrate personal sources of self-representation related to their meaningful experiences to expand their reflections when creating the final narrative.

Nevertheless, after piloting the protocol, I realized that multimodality did not comply with its purpose. The preliminary participants used the multimodal elements as decoration but not as sources to fully explain their meaningful experiences. In the light of this event, I resolved to focus the data collection procedure on the WLS as writing supported the introspective and reflective process required for this study.

Researcher's role

I was a co-narrator and co-interpreter of the participating teachers' narratives in this study. For Mendieta (2013), narrative inquiry supports a dialogical interaction between the participants and researchers where "in light of their personal understandings of particular teaching and learning situations, collaboratively reconstruct and make sense of what happens inside and outside the classroom." (pp. 139-140). Initially, my work centered on supporting teachers during the creation of their narratives, seeing that some of them had inconveniences organizing their ideas and facing the writing process. Later, the participants and I developed some collaborative work regarding data analysis since they corroborated and made suggestions on my interpretation of their narratives. This activity facilitated building a heterarchical relationship because the perspectives of the participants and the researcher were present when shaping the research findings. Finally, I shared the final version of the manuscript with the participants to validate the information that emerged from this initiative.

Ethical Considerations

This inquiry faced two ethical issues in terms of confidentiality and credibility. Firstly, this research initiative was responsible for guaranteeing participants' anonymity and respectful treatment of their narratives. Accordingly, the teachers signed a written consent form (Appendix D) that notified them about the aim of the inquiry and the use given to the provided data. Besides, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant when mentioning their stories to generate confidence during and after the study. Likewise, I did not mention the participants' workplaces and the affiliation of the English textbooks to avoid ethical and legal inconveniences.

Further, I was concerned about assuring the project's credibility so that readers could trust the authenticity of the research findings (Nowell et al., 2017). Then, co-interpretation and

validation-through-theory strategies helped me comply with this labor. Co-interpretation involved participants in the data analysis so that they provided more details on their experiences and commented on my understanding of their stories. This activity contributed to having varied interpretations and decentering the researcher's authority and biased perspective toward data. Besides, I used validation-through-theory by taking advantage of participants' WLS and the theoretical discussion developed in the Literature Review Chapter to strengthen the data analysis. These procedures assisted me in giving an account of participants' experiences without losing track of their original ideas and acquiring a better understanding of their stories based on the conceptualization proposed in the literature.

In short, this chapter reported the theoretical and methodological elements that supported the research design of this study. Besides, I narrated the decisions to ensure a reliable and coherent data collection process. The next chapter describes the data analysis and emerging findings from the participating teachers' WLS.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis & Findings

After gathering data, this research initiative centered on analyzing the written life stories of the participants. For this reason, the present chapter reports on the data analysis process and the emerging findings. In the first section, I account for the procedures and steps followed to examine data in the light of an inductive thematic analysis approach. This approach contributed to reconstructing and interpreting the participants' theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development. In the second section, I outline the three relational categories that represent the findings of this study. The categories are discussed in depth by addressing the stories of each participating teacher.

Data Analysis Framework

The data collection process aimed to guide the participating teachers through an introspective and reflective moment to become conscious and understand their teaching of the English language and culture. I designed a procedure for the participants to construct written narratives that accounted for their life stories. Writing turned into a personal exercise for teachers to reflect upon their meaningful experiences and decide how to present their ideas to the world. To do so, I conducted an introductory session to inform teachers about the generalities of the study and their expected roles. Later, they developed a worksheet[10] that walked them through choosing their meaningful experiences, organizing their ideas before writing, and creating their narratives. Finally, this process facilitated the collection of six written life stories, but I only worked with five of them to carry out the data analysis.

[10] The worksheet was previously explained in the Research Design chapter.

In this fashion, I found an inductive thematic analysis approach suitable for analyzing participants' written life stories (WLS). Such an approach aligns with the paradigmatic analysis in narrative inquiry, which has to do with comprehending what people express about a social phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1995; as cited in Barkhuizen et al., 2014). That is to say that this analysis concentrated on understanding participants' voices and stories included in the WLS. Then, this approach helped me explore and examine their meaningful experiences and reflections regarding teaching the English language and culture. Consequently, this process led me to engage in a dialogical relationship with the participants. It facilitated that we constantly exchanged thoughts and ideas that provided further insight into the interpretation of the WLS to reconstruct their theories of practice. Thus, we constructed a heterarchical relationship to build the data analysis process from the participants' perspectives and mine as the teacher-researcher (Mendieta, 2013).

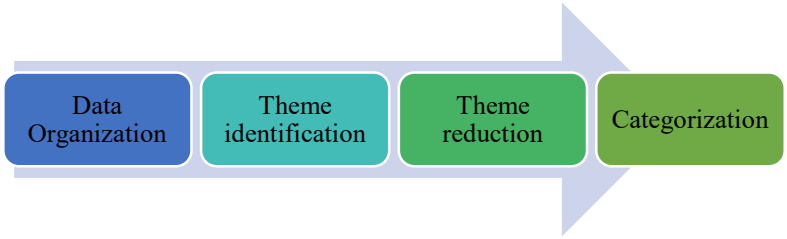
Likewise, the before-mentioned approach permitted me to address and analyze data following an inductive procedure. This scenario implies going through a bottom-up analysis so that the themes and categories emerge from the collected data rather than imposing a pre-existing study framework (Nowell et al., 2017; Terry et al., 2017). To do so, I started analyzing data by focusing on the short stories (Barkhuizen, 2016) embedded in the WLS. The short stories were small excerpts that accounted for specific experiences that had been entirely meaningful for participants. For instance, the following short story emerged from one of the WLS: "Coincidentally, one day you will find a reading about Down syndrome that, amidst the reality of your country, makes you start wondering how you can change reality or raise your students' awareness about it at least" (Lady's WLS, May 2021; own translation). From this excerpt, I identified the theme called *Fostering awareness about the other*, which was compared and

contrasted to other participants' themes to configure a category that represented how teachers use culture to respond to their contextual realities. Hence, I conducted an analysis that allowed the reconstruction of the theories of practice by reporting the commonalities among all the WLS and the particularities that characterize each participant's stories (Given, 2008).

In this way, the inductive thematic analysis approach assisted me in managing and interpreting the data systematically. Not only did I use it to identify and construct themes and categories based on the gathered data, but I also utilized it to connect data with theory and strengthen my interpretation of the studied phenomenon (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Therefore, I adhered to four steps that guided me from the data organization to the construction of the categories. The steps were data organization, theme identification, theme reduction, and categorization (Figure 2), developed employing four matrices in Excel.

Figure 2

Steps for an Inductive Thematic Analysis



Source: Own creation

The first step had to do with organizing the WLS to ease their management during the analysis and interpretation. Initially, I designed Matrix 0 (Appendix E) to make the original WLS manageable. I addressed each story and divided its corresponding paragraphs into sentences that expressed a complete idea. Later, I assigned an indexing label that helped me locate the specific section and line where the sentence appeared in the WLS. For example, the following idea came

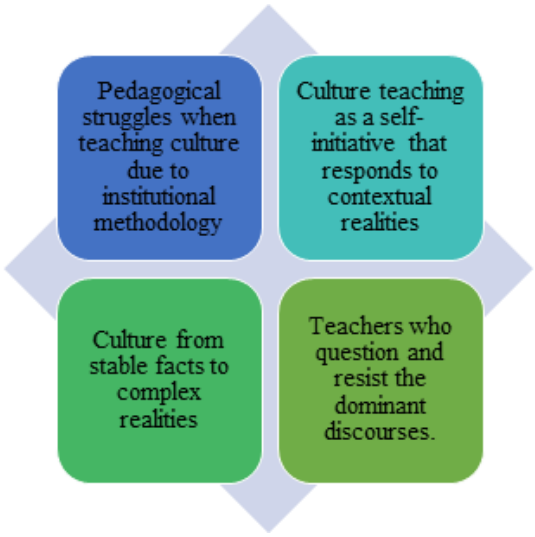
from Lucía's story: "And tadaaa. I got the idea to talk about pop culture. Why not? " In the matrix, I labeled it as P2L4 as it was located in the fourth line of the second paragraph in the original narrative.

Afterward, my labor moved to identify the themes in each WLS. I engaged in intensive reading to familiarize myself with the stories and better understand the participants' experiences. Then, I designed Matrix 1 (Appendix F) to write and record all possible themes spotted in each WLS. The themes were named using simple words, noun phrases, or participants' verbatim to describe the observed phenomena without altering the original ideas. To illustrate, Matrix 1 included the theme *Partial freedom when teaching* that emerged from Lucía's WLS. I could recognize it after reading this short story: "I was informed some days ago that I had to organize an immersion lesson, and well. It might be a really good thing or a terrible one. It gives you the freedom to create whatever topic you want to address and carry out any activity, but... students do not take those lessons well sometimes" Additionally, I created hyperlinks to connect Matrices 0 and 1 so as not to lose track of the original data fragment that contained the theme.

Subsequently, I started reducing the previously identified themes in a two-stage procedure. Firstly, I carried out this process with each one of the participants' stories. There was a revision of Matrix 1 to look for connections among the themes from the individual WLS. So, I employed colors as a visual aid to classify and group the recurrent themes for each participating teacher. The outcomes of this exercise were organized in Matrix 2 (Appendix G), in which I established broader labels to group the individual recurrent themes. Secondly, I continued with the reduction process by conducting a cross-sectional analysis to recognize the common themes among all the participants. This process gave rise to four general themes that represented the preliminary categories of the study, as visible in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Themes after Data Reduction



Source: Own creation

Next, I consolidated the categories that configured the study's findings. To do so, it was necessary to design Matrix 3 (Appendix H) to organize the four big themes that emerged from the previous step, the samples of teachers' WLS, and the theoretical support from the Literature Review chapter. It strengthened my analysis and interpretation of data to reconstruct participants' theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture. This procedure concluded by displaying the findings through three relational categories: *teaching culture in the borderline between the burden of universalism and context-responsive practices*, *pedagogical endeavors to interconnect dominant and local cultural realities*, and *bursting the Westernized cultural bubble through EFL teaching*. I elaborate on these categories in the section of findings within this chapter.

To conclude this section, I guaranteed the trustworthiness of this analysis by implementing three validation strategies (Nowell et al., 2017). Firstly, instrument validation

served the purpose of enhancing credibility by confirming that the emerging categories matched the original participants' WLS. Then, any reader can corroborate the link between participants' experiences and my understanding of them. Secondly, theory validation strengthened the confirmability of my data analysis by taking advantage of the literature review to develop a better explanation and interpretation of the WLS. Finally, I conducted a process of co-interpretation for the participating teachers to discuss the data analysis and elaborate more on their experiences. Such a process also helped me improve the credibility of the study and my reflexivity as a teacher-researcher to identify how my biases had permeated the data analysis. That is why I designed and implemented a protocol (Appendix I) to conduct a semi-structured interview with each participant. The outcomes of the interviews were used to expand on and enrich the data analysis.

The completion of the previous procedures gave rise to the study's findings, explained in the following section.

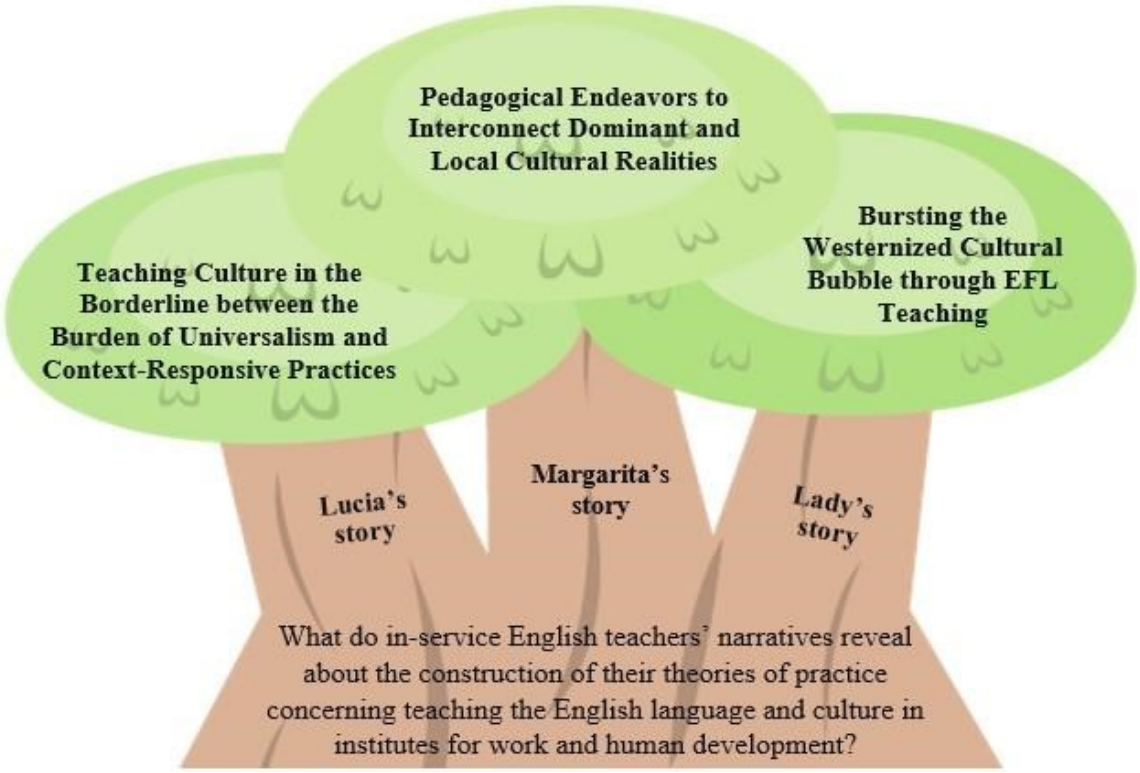
Findings

My purpose in this section is to present and discuss the findings of the study. They emerged from understanding and interpreting the WLS of Lucía, Margarita, Charlie, Lady, and Aitana. Although the stories of the five participants were genuinely significant, only three of them were discussed in this chapter. I made that decision, bearing in mind the representativeness criterion explained in the Research Design chapter and the maximum allowed length of this manuscript. It implies that these stories accounted for more varied events that provided richer data regarding participants' meaningful experiences, without meaning that the other stories were less relevant for the study since all of them were used in the data analysis. Thus, their WLS originated three relational categories that answered the main research question, as visible in

Figure 4. The categories displayed the outcomes of unveiling and reconstructing the participating teachers' theories of practice when teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development.

Figure 4

Relation between the Research Question and the Categories



Source: Own creation

The first category, *teaching culture in the borderline between the burden of universalism and context-responsive practices,* represented the struggle of integrating culture in educational scenarios that intended to homogenize language learning and teaching processes. This category emerged from participants' tensioning experiences when developing their self-constructed

initiatives[11]. On the one hand, the initiatives were hindered by top-down teaching methodologies that overlooked the role of culture and enacted one-size-fits-all procedures to have students master the English language. It embodied the imposition of one vision of knowledge to universalize learning and teaching at the expense of learners' needs and interests (Santos, 2010; as cited in Candau, 2016a). Yet, their self-constructed initiatives allowed placing value on students' cultures as a means to make language teaching a context-responsive practice.

The second category, *pedagogical endeavors to interconnect dominant and local cultural realities,* portrayed participants' complex understanding of culture and its impact on their pedagogical practices. This category arose from participants' efforts to negotiate between dominant cultural representations and cultural realities embedded in their educational contexts. Their self-constructed initiatives departed from an essentialist vision that intended to give reliable and accurate descriptions of people's realities for students to learn (Subedi, 2013). Yet, this static vision served the purpose of activating students' experiences. Consequently, their self-constructed initiatives also focused on addressing learners' cultural trajectories (Holliday, 2012) to contribute to their personal development.

Lastly, the category *bursting the Westernized cultural bubble through EFL teaching* showed that the self-constructed initiatives also disrupted the Western tradition concerning teaching culture in ELT. I decided to assign the before-mentioned name bearing in mind a participant who claimed that language learners and teachers seemed to live in a cultural bubble where it was only worth learning about countries such as Canada and the United States while

[11] In the WLS, participating teachers shared their meaningful experiences and reflections on a lesson they designed and implemented to teach culture. In this chapter, I referred to those lessons as self-constructed initiatives in an attempt to place value on participants' efforts to produce knowledge in educational scenarios where they were treated as subalterns of Western academic production (Walsh, 2009a). Besides, those self-constructed initiatives were the materialization of the participants' theories of practice since they elucidated teachers' theoretical, experiential, and empirical knowledge used to make sense of their teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

disregarding other cultural realities. Consequently, I understood that their initiatives had challenged such a panorama. The WLS unveiled that participants recognized that neither the English language and culture nor their teaching were neutral practices since they had a connection to power, history, and social inequality (Nieto, 2010; Darder, 2012). As a result, their self-constructed initiatives committed to demystifying the stereotypical representation of language and culture from different fields of action. Besides, it contributed to raising students' consciousness about social issues and resignifying teachers' labor.

In this fashion, my purpose was to present each category by emphasizing the tensions experienced by the participating teachers when addressing culture in the language classroom. That is why the categories showed that participants held a complex understanding of culture and its teaching, being the result of dealing with cultural essentialism, top-down teaching approaches, and their personal knowledge concerning teaching culture. Hence, the analysis and interpretation process did not intend to judge participants' stories but to give voice to their meaningful experiences and make sense of them.

The following subsections will present the stories of Lucía, Margarita, and Lady when teaching the English language and culture and their corresponding interpretations.

Lucía's Story

She was an in-service English teacher who had mainly worked in institutes for work and human development. As a participant in this study, she always made the struggles and tensions she experienced visible when being part of those institutions. She firmly believed that those places viewed teachers as people who sold English as a high-quality product. Then, she sometimes felt discouraged since her workplace was not very supportive when exploring other

perspectives concerning language teaching. Although her educational context was very restrictive, she exercised her agency to develop a self-constructed initiative for integrating culture into the English class. Such initiative showed that her theory of practice concerning teaching culture aimed at contributing to students' personal development instead of only instructing people to be proficient language users.

Teaching Culture in the Borderline between the Burden of Universalism and Context-Responsive Practices

Lucía's WLS showed the tensioning lived experiences when integrating culture into her educational context. The decision to teach culture resulted from her limited academic freedom and the opportunity to plan and design a specific lesson part of the institutional language curriculum. Although it seemed to be a promising scenario for Lucía to take control of her pedagogical practices, it also made her feel uncertain about students' reactions when implementing her self-constructed initiative. In the interview, she affirmed that her uncertainty had to do with learners' attitudes towards an unusual lesson that did not follow the characteristics of the regular classes given in the institution. Past experiences taught her that some students were very supportive of activities such as her self-constructed initiative. But some others preferred to have lessons centered on addressing textbooks' content since it was the axis of the teaching and learning methodology promoted by the institution. In other words, Lucía's workplace enacted a transmission model in which teachers were expected to transfer knowledge to learners without any alteration of official parameters (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). That is why she hesitated over the self-constructed initiative because she knew that conducting alternative approaches to language

learning might bring teachers' pedagogical practices into question, as visible in the following excerpts.

> I was informed some days ago that I had to organize an immersion lesson, and well. It might be a really good thing or a terrible one. It gives you the freedom to create whatever topic you want to address and carry out any activity, but... students do not take those lessons well sometimes *(Lucía's WLS - P2L1, May 2021; own translation)*

> What I say is that it is a very good or bad thing depending on the students mainly. They take the lesson well sometimes. I mean, some students do love the topic, but other students do not like it much, right? Let's say they can spoil your lesson. Indeed, while working there, I realized that there are two types of students. There is a student who enjoys the activities that are not part of the book and other new options. Besides, that student enjoys that the teacher proposes different things, games, or something more interactive. Whereas other students only want to address the textbook's content because that is what they bought. Otherwise, they will feel that the teacher is stealing something from them, right? Or maybe the teacher is doing his job to bother, right? *(Lucía's Interview - A1L2, August 2021; own translation)*

The previous situation showed that Lucía's concerns came from the influence of universalism in her context. According to Santos (2010, as cited in Candau, 2016a), universalism has worked as an ideological device to provide equal conditions for everyone to access education, and yet it leads to imposing a so-called accurate vision of knowledge worth promoting at school. Therefore, I could notice the traces of universalism in the transmission approach enacted in her workplace. The institution developed a teaching methodology promoted as a purported effective mechanism for students to learn English. This practice impacted the institutional curriculum and learners' perceptions of language learning since there was a need for making teachers comply with the methodology. It was visible when Lucía stated that some students felt discomfort when teachers did not address the contents dictated by the textbook. Then, I could infer that she experienced the imposition of a top-down methodology presented as the unique possibility for guiding language learning and teaching processes. Besides, this

scenario resulted in Lucía minimizing the importance of her knowledge reflected in her self-constructed initiative for integrating culture in the language classroom.

Likewise, in the co-interpretation, we agreed that universalism also permeated her teaching of culture as she was immersed in a "performance-oriented discursive context" (Lanas, 2017, p. 561). We understood that her institution acknowledged and valued her professionalism as long as she implemented a pre-designed and measurable methodology that assures the purported proper teaching of the foreign language. The performance orientation posed a dilemma for Lucía because the pressure of being professional drove her to doubt the value of her initiative for integrating culture into the English classroom. For instance, she claimed that "Otherwise, they will feel that the teacher is stealing something from them, right? Or maybe the teacher is doing his job to bother, right?" Thus, this event represented an obstacle for Lucía to choose whether to keep being a top-down teaching model implementer or to make room for her knowledge and convictions by developing her self-constructed initiative.

Although the burden of universalism made Lucía hesitant about her pedagogical practices, she decided to shape her teaching of culture to attend to the contextual realities. In the WLS, she indicated that her self-constructed initiative emerged as an opportunity to respond to the needs previously identified concerning her institution and students. Integrating culture turned into a means for her to improve learners' general knowledge about a 20th-century cultural phenomenon and bridge the generation gap between them. Besides, Lucía described in the interview that her previous pedagogical beliefs led the initiative to have students' cultural realities as the center of the English class. It implied that Lucía acknowledged the significance of students' cultural backgrounds; therefore, she made room for them in her lessons (Nieto & Bode, 2018). For instance, the following fragments demonstrate that Lucía's initiative facilitated the

interaction between young and old students by having them exchange experiences and perceptions to gain a better understanding of the 20th century.

> Many students are very young, and they have mentioned their lack of knowledge regarding the 20th century in class. That's the perfect opportunity! Besides, I could help old students mingle with the young ones. It would be a great class. *(Lucía's WLS - P2L6, May 2021; own translation)*

> I don't know if I included it in the narrative. I don't remember, but we started. I think I did mention Uncle Sam. We started talking about capitalism, consumerism, and the 20th-century cultural influence on the present that resulted in so many things we have nowadays. Then, of course, students who lived that age started sharing their experiences, what they had gone through. So, young students got up to date with things that one might not have lived. They connected old students' experiences with what we were watching because it was based on a video. We started connecting the dots. The best part was the conversations, the exchange of perceptions and experiences. Let's say, linking what characterized every person. *(Lucía's Interview - A8L1, August 2021; own translation)*

Consequently, Lucía's experiences taught me that she used the self-constructed initiative to transform her teaching into a context-responsive practice. She integrated culture to spread historical information and recognize the importance of students' experiences in language teaching and learning. This event meant that her teaching of the English language and culture centered on being sensitive to the realities present in her educational scenario rather than following imposed agendas to meet specific objectives (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Additionally, we agreed during the co-interpretation that her initiative positioned culture as a socially situated practice. She employed the teaching of culture to bridge the gap between the dominant culture enacted at school and students' realities (Nieto, 2010). It was noticeable when she concentrated her pedagogical practices on helping old and young students mingle since the institutional methodology overlooked the generational differences. She noticed the dominant culture had to do with institutional attempts to homogenize the learning process, disregarding the differences among students in terms of age, experiences, and interests. Yet, acknowledging those differences

led her teaching of culture to value all learners' experiences and provide equal conditions for them to be heard and understood. In other words, her initiative allowed the encounter and understanding of the diverse cultural realities that are part of the language classroom.

Shortly, Lucía's WLS revealed that the self-constructed initiative arose as a mechanism to cope with the methodological tension experienced in her educational context. She faced the imposition of a top-down teaching methodology that restrained her power to decide on her pedagogical practices. Nevertheless, she relied on her personal knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2013) to make room for the integration of culture in the English class. Her teaching did not limit to complying with the requirements of the institutional methodology, but she instead appealed to students' lives to develop her initiative. Therefore, she accomplished that students' cultural realities turned into the axis of the teaching and learning processes.

Pedagogical Endeavors to Interconnect Dominant and Local Cultural Realities

Lucía's self-constructed initiative combined cultural information and students' world visions. The WLS displayed that her teaching of culture initially concentrated on addressing pop culture as the main topic of the initiative. This decision resulted from her intention to have students expand their general knowledge of pop culture as an event in the 20th century. Similarly, she developed in the interview the characterization of pop culture in her initiative. She took advantage of historical information to help students gain a factual-based vision of a complex cultural phenomenon. Her pedagogical practices concentrated on presenting facts of representative characters from entertainment to politics linked to pop culture. The following passages exemplify Lucía's usage of historical information to establish dominant and

homogenizing cultural descriptions to be introduced to students as a reliable and stable representation of reality (Candau, 2016a).

> And tadaaa. I got this idea to talk about pop culture. Why not? Many students are very young, and they have mentioned their lack of knowledge regarding the 20th century in class. That's the perfect opportunity! *(Lucía's WLS - P2L5, May 2021; own translation)*

> I remember I talked about NASA, the Cold War, Michael Jackson and his influence on the new-century trends, and a superficial overview of clothing. It was more about characters, important characters that were part of that moment — We also talked about Churchill, Marilyn Monroe, Muhammad Ali, Chaplin, Martin Luther King, Margaret Thatcher, and well. I don't know. I tried to provide a sociopolitical perspective on the topic. *(Lucía's Interview - A15L1, August 2021; own translation)*

Introducing information about significant figures related to pop culture made me aware of Lucía's essentialist understanding of culture in the language classroom. Essentialism presents culture as a fixed construction composed by a set of attributes worth knowing and adopting, which legitimizes dominant cultural realities in society (Holliday, 2009; Subedi, 2013). Her essentialization of pop culture was visible when she treated the lives of some representative characters as a reliable source to give an accurate description of what happened in historical moments related to the subject matter. Thus, I could infer that this action legitimized the dominant narratives developed around pop culture since Lucía and her students only explored one perspective to explain that socio-cultural phenomenon in the 20th century. Therefore, such essentialization generated an intercultural encounter favoring the dominant structures. Agreeing with Walsh (2006), Lucía centered on equipping students with general knowledge about the Other through the English language, and yet there was no room for questioning the *status quo* that supported pop culture at the beginning of the initiative.

On the other hand, Lucía's WLS pointed out that her self-constructed initiative also connected with students' cultural realities. She understood that teaching culture held a twofold

purpose: transmitting factual-based information and transforming students' understanding of the world. It indicated that she acknowledged culture's complex and dynamic nature by exploring its blurred and versatile boundaries beyond stereotypical representations (Holliday, 2010). Not only was her initiative oriented toward discussing pop culture, but also it showed students how past events impacted their lives. In the interview, she mentioned that her purpose was to use information about pop culture as a triggering topic for learners to recognize the connections between their current personal realities and past events. In this way, her initiative made students aware that their cultural realities did not happen in a vacuum but intertwined with social dynamics that permeated every individual and group in society. The following passages show that Lucía's initiative facilitated the expression of students' voices and experiences to find out the connections with the past and examine them in class.

> I hope I left a mark on students so that they don't see the past as an old thing, and that's it, but rather as a world of references and connections with themselves. *(Lucía's WLS - P5L2, May 2021; own translation)*

> I feel that pop culture links, or that's what I tried to do in the class. Linking not only what is on TV, Marilyn Monroe, a certain type of music, and that's it. No. It's about their influence here and now, an influence on what happened back then regarding history, politics, and many other things behind it. I believe that it is OK to know them, and I feel that it allows furthering students' experiences and opinions. I don't know. It makes room for them to express themselves, right? So I said that first, it's a good opportunity for them to see those connections, and second, there is a strong conversation topic because it holds a lot of influences and exciting things. Then, it is a good conversation topic. *(Lucía's Interview - A4L1, August 2021; own translation)*

The effort to show the relation between the present and the past revealed her understanding of culture as a socially situated practice. We learned in the co-interpretation that she comprehended the interconnection between culture and socio-political and economic processes mediated by power, which supported dominant groups to define what is culturally valid in a social group (Nieto, 2010). For instance, Lucía's initiative did not only present the

linkage between pop culture and entertainment. She also emphasized how history and politics permeated this cultural phenomenon. That is to say that she deconstructed the purported neutral view of pop culture (Darder, 2012) by making students aware of how their current world visions resulted from the influence of past social dynamics that determined the understanding of reality. Besides, I could infer that her self-constructed initiative placed students' experiences and opinions as equally valuable as the cultural information of pop culture. This situation generated a dialogical atmosphere in the language classroom where all cultural realities were discussed symmetrically (Walsh, 2009a).

Lastly, Lucía's actions demonstrated that her theory of practice elucidates a complex understanding of culture. Her self-constructed initiative showed that she was constantly negotiating between an inherited essentialist view of culture and her personal comprehension of the concept. Thus, she became a mediator of dominant and local discourses so that her teaching of culture allowed achieving subsequent purposes. In this case, she aimed to use culture and the English language to contribute to students' personal development by integrating their experiences and teaching them to question taken-for-granted facts circulating in society.

Bursting the Westernized Cultural Bubble through EFL Teaching

Lucía's self-constructed initiative also committed to questioning the influence of the West on cultural phenomena. The WLS portrayed that her initiative concentrated on discussing the relationship between pop culture and the cultural imposition conducted by the United States. In this way, she intended that her students understood how the studied cultural phenomenon had to do with other dynamics in 20th-century society. In the interview, she detailed that her initiative guided students through challenging the cultural imposition conducted through mass media and

entertainment. This exercise required them to examine their own experiences and determine the circumstances in which they had been victims of American media consumption. In other words, Lucía aimed to show learners that dominant groups used culture and language to exert their symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) and introduce world visions in a subtle way for people to adopt, as visible in the following extracts.

> Oh! A tiny detail. I did not mention that I talked about capitalism and the pressure for imposing American Culture on the Western world at the time, right? It is nothing new, but it is always interesting to have Uncle Sam in class. Entertainment is more than the TV, and it was one of the most relevant conclusions from the lesson. *(Lucía's WLS - P6, May 2021; own translation)*

> The video mentioned Uncle Sam and its influence. There was also criticism about entertainment. Let's say the promotion of TV programs and many things. Then, we talked about each one's series consumption before and now. We concluded that most of what one consumes as multimedia, such as series and social networks, comes from the United States. Then, we questioned ourselves: why does it happen? Why doesn't it come from another place? Do you know any other place? And the answers were limited. So, we wondered why some things are a trend for people who do not have access to other things. Maybe it's because that is the easiest to access (unintelligible) I don't know in the Mandarin language. However, that is what they offer to us; ergo, that is what you consume. It's difficult to have access to other things. That was one of the most relevant discussions we had. They limit your options and impose what they have, not because of its value, but that's what they have. *(Lucía's Interview - A10L1, August 2021; own translation)*

The previous experiences revealed Lucía's understanding of the connection between power and culture. For instance, she strove to make visible the power exercised by the United States to establish a predetermined cultural reality for other individuals to attain economic and political purposes. This situation taught me that she recognized how the United States represented the West as the dominant culture that symbolizes progress and autonomy for other groups to follow while overshadowing social issues present in society (Holliday, 2012). Similarly, we coincided in the co-interpretation that she addressed the ideological dimension of culture (Nieto, 2010). She recognized that pop culture was not a simple cultural phenomenon in a

specific country, but it worked as a mechanism to reproduce discourses of power focused on imposing an idea of cultural superiority at the expense of other realities. Thus, her self-constructed initiative allowed demystifying the so-called neutrality of pop culture so that her students became aware of the power that lay beneath such a phenomenon and how it had pervaded their lifestyles and thoughts.

In the end, Lucía's experiences showed her awareness of the ideological nature of culture. Her self-constructed initiative helped to show her students that dominant social discourses have permeated their world visions. That is why she committed to making students not take their cultural realities for granted. Consequently, her self-constructed initiative intended to have learners develop a critical understanding of their realities. Thus, teaching culture facilitated deconstructing the purported neutrality that the Western tradition in ELT has assigned.

Margarita's Story

Margarita was an in-service English teacher who had worked in schools and institutes for work and human development for more than seven years. In this study, she shared different tensioning experiences regarding teaching the English language and culture. She felt that addressing culture was not one of her strengths as a teacher although she was aware of the importance of this element in the language classroom. Yet, she recognized that her actions resulted from an imposed responsibility for teaching English for communicative purposes. Despite the given circumstances, she developed a self-constructed initiative that changed her personal meaning of culture and its teaching. For that reason, her theory of practice started revolving around impacting students' realities rather than explaining cultural information.

Teaching Culture in the Borderline between the Burden of Universalism and Context-Responsive Practices

The integration of culture represented a tensioning practice for Margarita due to its overlooked position in the language classroom. In the WLS, she acknowledged that culture was a low priority for teachers since they were trained to help students use grammar in predetermined contexts. In other words, educators were expected to teach language as a function (Tudor, 2001) so that learners communicate in specific situations. However, she problematized the previous practice based on her personal experiences. In the interview, she claimed that complying with such a vision of language turned teaching into a mechanical process that did not allow teachers to explore other elements in their pedagogical practices. That is why she shared the struggle lived when reflecting upon the role of culture in her lessons. She realized that her teaching enacted language as a function, overshadowing the inclusion of cultural elements aligned with her perspective of teaching culture, as visible in the following excerpts.

> I have to confess that teaching culture is not one of my strengths. I believe that culture is an important element that we sometimes forget about, but not because we do not consider it relevant but our classes at some point become a matter of repetition so briefly language becomes mechanic. However, this is not our bad, because we are taught that the main goal for the students is to use the language in context, but sometimes we forget other elements that are tied to this and this is my experience about. The fact of forgetting the relevance of broaching cultural aspects when teaching. (*Margarita's WLS – P3L2, June 2021*)

> I thought that one reaches the point where it is only about grammar as a function. You have to use grammar, and this is the context where you can use it. This element and time issues transform language learning into a mechanical process. Besides, I recently reflected upon this topic and experienced several things related to culture indeed. Let's say we do things mechanically, and that is why I even thought that my lessons did not provide cultural aspects, right? *(Margarita's Interview – A2L1, August 2021; own translation)*

In this fashion, Margarita's reflection showed me that universalism had permeated her teaching of culture when enacting a communicative approach (CA). When she mentioned that her labor intended to help students master the language in context, I could infer that she had a vision of language teaching focused on complying with communicative purposes. It means that she contributed to the development of communicative competencies in which language worked as a means to convey messages in a fixed socio-cultural context within the classroom (De Assunção Barbosa, 2007). However, Margarita's words, such as "but our classes at some point become a matter of repetition" raised my awareness of her discontent with the CA. I understood that she experienced the burden of universalism by recognizing that the CA had turned her teaching into a repetitive and instrumentalist practice, which limited her options to explore a cultural dimension in the classroom. This situation implies that Margarita struggled with an inherited and homogenizing teaching perspective that worked as a valid source of knowledge (Santos, 2010; as cited in Candau, 2016a) in her context and reproduced the privileged condition of the CA. Therefore, such an approach worked as the dominant teaching paradigm that did not account for Margarita's comprehension of addressing culture.

The burden of universalism also impacted Margarita's role when deciding on her teaching of culture. She characterized her teaching of culture as a weak point resulting from external practices' influence. For instance, she claimed that "I have to confess that teaching culture is not one of my strengths" and "this is not our bad, because we are taught that the main goal for the students is to use language in context" The present event led us to conclude in the co-interpretation that she struggled with being considered as an implementer of an instrumentalist vision of teaching (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). That is to say that she did not feel comfortable pursuing a dominant approach that seemed to provide an effective formula for teaching and

learning English as a foreign language. Besides, it diverted Margarita's attention away from her pedagogical beliefs that regarded culture as an element of paramount importance in the language classroom. Thus, this situation placed Margarita in a disempowering position (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) regarding her teaching of culture, seeing that she was constrained to enact the CA instead of making room for her conviction of the value of culture in foreign language education.

Given the previous struggle, her teaching of culture emerged from an attempt to negotiate between the CA and her pedagogical beliefs. The following excerpts show that Margarita started developing her self-constructed initiative by integrating cultural content that became the subject matter and served a twofold purpose. First, cultural content allowed her to meet the requirement of teaching the English language for communicative purposes, in this case, having students grasp vocabulary related to a specific situation. Besides, the interview's fragment portrays that she envisioned the cultural content as a mechanism to propose a different communicative context from the ones utilized in her educational setting. Her self-constructed initiative aimed to use culture to incorporate students' contextual realities in the classroom because she considered that connecting the English class with students' lives helped raise their interest in the learning process. Additionally, cultural content supported her in guiding learners to analyze information and develop an informed position. In other words, her initiative used culture to transform foreign language learning and teaching into processes that intend to impact students' worlds (Agudelo, 2007).

> In April, May I was told to be in charge of a class which main goal was to make student use vocabulary in a specific context. I settled on choosing a topic closely related to the students and satisfying for me to teach, so I decided on food and personality traits. I remember that I chose this one, because I had seen a video about this and it fully called my attention not only the vocabulary used on the video, but also the topic is sort of weird. This is a video about the link between food and behavior based on research made by a behavioural food expert and researcher, so I knew for sure that my students would find it unusual and could lead to set up a good debate about it. Surely other elements led me to

> this decision. For instance, the interest of students when they are taught topics linked to their daily lives, moreover the significance of encouraging students to digest information in order for them to make strong arguments to defend their ideas. *(Margarita's WLS - P4L2, June 2021)*

> So, I believe that what makes me think about another topic or activity for students to address is precisely that. I know that the students learn the same grammar, but we know that grammar can be approached from diverse contexts. Then, what I do is propose a context that differs from the ones set by other teachers. *(Margarita's Interview - A4L2, August 2021; own translation)*

Margarita's rationale behind her self-constructed initiative demonstrated the effort to transform her teaching into a context-responsive practice by appealing to the dynamism and complexity of culture. According to Jiménez and Peña (2009), cultural processes hold a hybrid and dynamic nature since they involve both a static and subjective understanding of social reality. For instance, I observed that Margarita combined both a concrete and a personal representation of culture by placing value on the content about food and personality traits, and students' experiences. Thus, her teaching experiences taught me that there was an ecology of knowledges (Santos et al., 2007) because she created an environment where diverse kinds of knowledge were equally accepted to establish a dialogue between the cultural realities present in the classroom. Such ecological perspective supported her intention of making language learning and teaching meaningful processes that responded to contextual realities as they meant to involve students' lives and contribute to their personal development. It was visible when Margarita developed her self-constructed initiative to help students analyze cultural content carefully and take a stand toward the studied phenomenon. Consequently, Margarita's labor strove to raise students' critical understanding of their and others' cultural realities instead of limiting herself to boost learners' communicative competencies.

In brief, Margarita's self-constructed initiative for teaching culture symbolized an attempt to balance a dominant teaching approach and her pedagogical beliefs. Her WLS made visible a pervasive teaching approach that had subordinated her pedagogical practices to developing communicative competencies, limiting her agency to explore other elements such as culture in the language classroom. Yet, deciding to integrate culture allowed Margarita to commit to her pedagogical beliefs, which centered on transforming English language learning and teaching into meaningful experiences for learners. Hence, the teaching of culture encouraged her to cultivate learners' communicative proficiency and incorporate their cultural realities into her lessons.

Pedagogical Endeavors to Interconnect Dominant and Local Cultural Realities

While Margarita used culture to negotiate between the CA and her pedagogical beliefs, her teaching also connected dominant and local cultural realities in the classroom. The WLS displayed that the self-constructed initiative initially focused on teaching new vocabulary related to a subject matter. She used a multimedia resource to introduce a theme such as people's food preferences, personalities, and Americans' eating behaviors. She characterized those topics as cultural content so that her students could learn about them and expand their language repertoire simultaneously. In the interview, she said that the cultural content was research information about how eating habits and dietary choices were used to determine someone's personality traits and the ways American people eat certain dishes. This situation implies that Margarita drew on a top-down perspective of culture that holds a predominant position in ELT, which aims to define a concrete construction of human beings' realities despite their complexity (Atkinson & Sohn, 2013), as noticeable in the following fragments.

> This is a video about the link between food and behavior based on a research made by a behavioural food expert and researcher … Then as soon as they finished to watch, we worked on the new vocabulary to them. a student told me about the strangeness of food behavior that American people have. *(Margarita's WLS - P4L2 - P4L9, June 2021)*

> For instance, it (the video) mentioned that if you took much time to order your food, you were an indecisive person. It also said that if you enjoyed more fruits than spicy food or ate more fruits and vegetables, it meant that you were easy-going and made better decisions. On the contrary, if you liked spicy food, you were an adventurous or daring person. *(Margarita's Interview - A5L3, August 2021; own translation)*

In this regard, I could infer that Margarita's self-constructed initiative followed a top-down approach that viewed culture as a homogenizing construction. The WLS depicted that her initiative had to do with teaching information about food preferences and people's behaviors, which she classified as cultural content for students to comment on during the class. Then, her pedagogical practice created an intercultural encounter with an abstract representation of the Other, which imposed a fixed description of individuals' behaviors and choices so that learners can understand how the Other experiences the cultural reality (Candau, 2016a). Her self-constructed initiative led to enacting an exercise of cultural appreciation in which students engaged in connecting their and others' cultural particularities. This exercise contributed to strengthening social coexistence, but it overlooked the cultural domination processes embedded in the teaching of culture in the language classroom (Siqueira, 2017).

Margarita's experiences also made me realize that her teaching upheld the association between culture and nation. To illustrate, she provided learners with information about American people and their eating behaviors. The present action implies that her self-constructed initiative legitimized a prescriptive characterization that generalized the culture of a specific country concerning eating behaviors (Holliday, 2010), creating an illusory standard of how American people relate to food in their daily lives. Hence, her pedagogical actions reinforced and spread

cultural stereotypes for students to learn in class (Kramsch, 2013), which may not fit with the personal cultural realities of those individuals who recognize themselves as Americans. Besides, Margarita added in the co-interpretation that the previous situation correlated to the lack of time. She stated that teachers did not have much time to plan their lessons or develop them because of the institutional methodology. That is why she appealed to the stereotypical representation of national culture to make it accountable for her students and easy to manage in the language classroom.

Although Margarita's self-constructed initiative initially adopted national culture to comply with the communicative approach, her teaching turned to place value on the cultural realities that were part of her classroom. This situation is visible in the WLS when she narrated that her initiative was also oriented toward knowing students' opinions about the video used to present cultural content. Yet, that activity symbolized a destabilizing moment since the unexpected outcomes transformed Margarita's understanding of culture. Not only did her students comment on the video content, but they also started discussing the information based on their personal experiences, leading to the development of a debate that Margarita did not plan. Thus, she encouraged students to debate to compare and contrast their cultural realities. Likewise, she recounted in the interview that students did not simply accept the cultural content introduced in class. They relied on their personal experiences during the debate to contest the video information as it did not fit what they had lived so far. This event made Margarita realize that culture had to do with American eating behaviors and students' experiences and insights. In other words, her self-constructed initiative also integrated learners' personal cultural trajectories as a depiction of particular cultural realities (Holliday, 2012), as visible in the following extracts.

> I have to confess that this class was mainly for students to pick some vocabulary and work on it, but it became a culture class that I did not even think about [it]. The first part

> of the class was for them to watch the video and pick some unknown vocabulary for them. Then as soon as they finished to watch, we worked on the new vocabulary to them. A student told me about the strangeness of food behavior that American people have which Next, I asked them to give me their opinion on the video, so in that specific part of the class is folding their pizza in half surely this is not attached to all of them, but the video doesn't show it a strange thing to do, as a result I concluded that it was something they do when eating, then I had a sort of doubt about what students consider normal or not, so if it's something that they have never done. They consider it as abnormal and that for sure is part of culture apart from showing some American food behavior, they had the change to compare themselves to others which is part of culture too. Finally, they started to show agreements and disagreement about some of the things said on the video. *(Margarita's WLS - P4L7 - P4L12, June 2021)*

> The objective was that students talked about their personality traits and debated them. This lesson also had to do with critical thinking because the student did not take the topic for granted. For instance, they didn't say something like "—teacher, I do agree with everything that was said in the video" On the contrary, they said: "—teacher, I don't agree because I am like this, but the video showed the opposite. I don't believe in this". Of course, some students felt related to the video's content, but most of them didn't because it was a controversial topic. *(Margarita's Interview - A5L5, August 2021; own translation)*

The before-mentioned event let me conclude that Margarita started regarding culture as a socially situated construction. Agreeing with Nieto (2010), culture is an active construction whose change depends on the decisions made by individuals who are constantly interacting in society. In this case, being in contact with students' cultural realities made Margarita realize that culture went beyond transmitting factual-based information. This destabilizing moment helped her resignify culture and recognize that students' voices were also meaningful elements to strengthen EFL learning and teaching. It implied that her self-constructed initiative exhibited the fluidity of culture since it had to do with fostering cultural information and acknowledging its connection with local scenarios (Naidu, 2020). Hence, her self-constructed initiative connected the English language and culture with students' realities to increase the significance of learning and teaching processes.

Additionally, we agreed in the co-interpretation that her self-constructed initiative also transformed culture into a site of struggle. The WLS indicated that learners came into conflict when comparing and contrasting their cultural realities with the video perspective since the latter did not match most of the students' eating behaviors and personalities. This situation made visible the tensions that emerged from the reliance on the video content, representing the dominant culture that exerts its power to define social values and interests to be followed (Darder, 2012) and ignores particular cultural realities that differ from the *status quo*. Nonetheless, her self-constructed initiative made room for students not to regard culture as a package to be integrated into their assets but as an evolving construction to be discussed. That is to say that Margarita's support for the unexpected debate generated an intercultural environment that favored a dialectical encounter among students' realities (Nieto, 2010; Candau, 2016b). She transformed the language classroom into a space for students to question and contest their and others' cultural realities instead of forcing them to acquire and reproduce cultural information about the Other.

To sum up, Margarita's experiences accounted for the complexity of understanding and teaching culture as part of her theory of practice. A destabilizing moment made her aware that culture went beyond promoting a dominant and static interpretation of culture centered on foreigners, but it also had to do with the cultural realities that are part of her classroom. That is why her self-constructed initiative connected cultural information related to a foreign social group and her students' cultural experiences. This fact helped Margarita make language learning and teaching meaningful experiences that impacted students' lives.

Bursting the Westernized Cultural Bubble through EFL Teaching

The implementation of the self-constructed initiative led Margarita to have a different understanding of teaching culture that questioned and contested the Western tradition in ELT. In the WLS, she concluded that language teachers did not need to be knowledgeable about factual-based information related to culture. She experienced that culture could be taught based on any topic embedded in students' realities. Likewise, she acknowledged in the interview that culture was an extensive topic whose complexity was not widely explored, even in ELT teacher education. For instance, she problematized her training to teach culture as an undergraduate student as she was exposed to superficial cultural information that did not relate to her reality. That is to say that having a static perception of culture is problematic to the extent that it affects the development of schooling practices (Nieto, 2010). Accordingly, Margarita resolved that teachers' labor had to do with connecting cultural information to students' lives to turn language learning and teaching into meaningful activities, as noticeable in the following fragments.

> Furthermore, teachers do not need to be either experts or have a strong cultural background to discuss about culture and recognizing our culture is the first step to recognize and respect others. Moreover, curiosity is something that need to be exploited as a resource to motivate students to dig into culture. To conclude I figured out that any topic can bring cultural aspects of the language, so we need to take advantages of them to boost up students' cultural skills. *(Margarita's WLS - P5L3 - P5L5, June 2021)*

> I do believe that culture is such a broad topic that is not even addressed well at university. I remember well, and I thought of it from there as well. I believe that we are close-minded regarding what teaching culture means. I remember my lessons on culture. My professor only approached the cultural shock and its stages and showed me many places. But until now, I came to realize that culture is not only about that. It is not only about knowing all the history behind the English language or the history of the United States or England, but it has to do with a significant culture that I can teach learners so that they find it meaningful, right? Indeed, the topic of cultural shock is included in one of the textbooks used in my workplace, right? Culture has to do with teaching the different stages of cultural shock, and that's it. But what does a student do with those stages? I mean, one does not go beyond, but limits to discuss the meaning of each stage. But let's say that the concern is about how to address that topic. How can I explain the stages in such a way that they become meaningful for the learner instead of only explaining their meaning? *(Margarita's Interview - A7L1, August 2021; own translation)*

In this way, I understood that Margarita challenged the role imposed on language teachers as implementers of dominant knowledge when teaching culture. While carrying out the self-constructed initiative, she experienced and learned that teachers did not need to acquire a vast amount of information about stereotypical cultural traits related to foreign communities to comply with their pedagogical labor. This situation taught me that she disrupted the naturalization of making teachers master an essentialist vision of culture since the latter represents a purported objective and reliable knowledge in the light of the Western paradigm (Oliveira & Candau, 2010). Instead, she discerned that culture also had to do with integrating and valuing students' realities in the language classroom. Thus, I could infer that Margarita noted teaching culture as a possibility to make visible alternative and subjective understandings of cultural reality that did not align with the Western vision of culture (Walsh, 2009c). Besides, we discussed during the co-interpretation that teachers have to transform the current dynamics of teaching culture. She stated that teachers have to strive to connect cultural information with learners' lives as it contributes to increasing the meaningfulness of language learning and teaching. Otherwise, teachers will perpetuate the transmission model (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) that reduces teaching culture to spread factual-based information. Then, Margarita's reasoning implied that teachers could establish an intercultural dialogue among the diverse cultural realities that converge in the classroom to be equally recognized and discussed (Candau, 2016b).

Briefly, Margarita's reflection accounted for her problematization of the *status quo* of the teaching of culture in the EFL classroom. Her experiences made her not take for granted the fact that teaching culture had been reduced to equipping students with monolithic information about foreign cultural groups whose official language is English. Such a vision of teaching culture represented a pointless practice for her as it centered on addressing objective and fixed cultural

information aligned with the Western paradigm. Therefore, Margarita proposed that teachers orient the teaching of culture to link cultural content and students' lives to raise their interest and involvement in English language learning and teaching.

Lady's Story

Lady was an in-service English teacher who had been part of academic communities in institutes for work and human development and universities. She narrated diverse tensioning moments related to teaching culture while participating in this study. The teaching methodology enacted in her institution and personal stereotypes made her feel puzzled when deciding how to integrate culture into her pedagogical practices. Yet, life experiences and personal knowledge led her to discover that teaching culture served the purpose of social transformation. That is why her self-constructed initiative concentrated on addressing a social topic to raise students' awareness about their cultural realities and the value of the difference. In this way, her decisions allowed resignifying what culture symbolized in her educational context.

Teaching Culture in the Borderline between the Burden of Universalism and Context-Responsive Practices

Teaching culture was a puzzling practice for Lady due to the pedagogical requirements of her workplace. In the WLS, her experience started when she was required to conduct a reading club for several students. To do so, she took advantage of her limited academic freedom to choose a social topic, specifically inclusion, to integrate culture. Nevertheless, she struggled with not knowing whether her students would find the theme appealing as it was not a priority in the institutional curriculum. In the interview, she recounted that she feared learners' reactions as

prior experiences led her to think that the students, who were part of private language institutes, were not close and interested in discussing social topics, which made it difficult to foresee their responses and attitudes towards the self-constructed initiative. In other words, she was concerned about handling students' responses when addressing controversial topics in the language classroom (Cuartas, 2020).

Likewise, she shared in the interview that shaping the self-constructed initiative brought her into conflict with the academic freedom given by her institution. Although she was allegedly free to select the topic of her initiative, she was aware that there was a burden of adapting her pedagogical practices to the institutional methodology. The latter expected her to carry out a reading club that caught learners' attention and met communicative purposes, contributing to language development. Therefore, as visible in the following extracts, she concluded that such a dynamic reduced her possibility of deciding on her own teaching practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

> Soon, you will feel curious about using your classes to address social topics, which will make you wonder whether this dynamic would be well-accepted by the students at the institute. *(Lady's WLS - P1L2, May 2021; own translation)*

> It was more fear and uncertainty about students' reactions because I don't know if it happens everywhere. But I have noticed in the institute that one can see several types of students with many thoughts and from different contexts. So, one tends to create stereotypes like - well, if this person is like this or comes from a certain social or economic context, I don't think that s/he is interested in social topics related to inequality or inclusion. So, it was more the fear of students' acceptance, what they were going to think and how they would face their own stereotypes. But deep down, it was me facing my stereotypes about the type of students who are part of these institutions. *(Lady's Interview - A5L1, August 2021; own translation)*

> These lessons are supposed to be clubs that go beyond the regular classes included in the student's study plan. However, the institution sells the idea to both students and teachers that we are entirely free to create these lessons, and plan them by using any preferred topic, bearing in mind learners' language proficiency level. But when I sit down to plan my class, I have to follow a protocol, the institutional methodology. But beyond that, I

> have to comply with the communicative objectives and guarantee a dynamic lesson. So, they sell the idea that those lessons give freedom, let's say, but one intrinsically has to meet specific standards concerning what to teach and how to teach, and they actually give the teacher a limited scope regarding what s/he really wants to do in class. *(Lady's Interview - A2L1, August 2021; own translation)*

In this fashion, Lady's experiences showed me that her teaching of culture was permeated by universalism due to the methodological imposition and her stereotypes. First, I could infer that she faced the dilemma of teaching English either for having students master a linguistic code or supporting them to achieve subsequent purposes regarding social reality (Siqueira, 2017). This situation was visible when she lived the pressure of assuring the development of reading competencies and learners' entertainment while attempting to integrate inclusion as the core of her initiative. It indicates that she was absorbed by an institutional methodology whose aim was to strengthen students' communicative competencies regardless of the class activity and contextual needs.

Additionally, in the co-interpretation, the present dilemma led us to agree that her knowledge held an inferior position vis-à-vis the institutional guidelines regarding teaching the English language and culture. She realized that no matter the intention to follow her pedagogical beliefs and transform her teaching practices, she had always been subjugated to comply with the language curriculum. That is to say that Lady experienced the coloniality of knowledge (Santos et al., 2007) since she had to obey the institutional guidelines presented as a purported reliable source of knowledge that intended to universalize a proper way of teaching in her educational context. On the contrary, her initiative had an undervalued epistemological position because it did not pursue the parameters of the dominant teaching perspective, making the initiative less worth exploring and implementing within her institution.

Consequently, I could notice that the burden of universalism was also reflected in Lady's stereotype about her students and the teaching of culture. She expressed that her stereotype emerged from presuming that her students were unconnected to social problems due to their socio-economic backgrounds, limiting their experience in the institute to learning a foreign language. This event made me realize that Lady's suppositions oversimplified students' experiences and cultural capital, impacting her own pedagogical practices (Bourdieu, 1991; Nieto, 2010). It implied that she took the complexity of students' cultural realities for granted as if they had not been exposed to life experiences related to social issues. That is why she doubted the impact of her self-constructed initiative on her students' learning process and understanding of social reality.

Despite the constraints, Lady resolved to use her teaching of culture to respond to her contextual reality. In the following passages, she expressed that her self-constructed initiative revolved around inclusion as the main cultural topic in the reading club. The selection of that topic resulted from Lady's need to attend to the current social dynamics back then since her initiative happened amidst a national strike in her home country. That is why she regarded inclusion as a suitable theme for raising awareness about minority groups and contributing to social change in the language classroom. She focused on guiding her students to understand the culture of inclusion through Down syndrome. Besides, she shared in the interview that her pedagogical belief had to do with helping students change their stereotypes about the difference and inviting them to transform social reality. To do so, she supported her students to create a toy that made people with different abilities visible as this exercise could help learners examine their own stereotypes and contribute to changing other individuals' ideas about the population related to inclusion. In other words, her self-constructed initiative emerged from her need to have

students analyze their and others' cultural realities critically and take action against social issues (Álvarez & Bonilla, 2009).

> Coincidentally, one day you will find a reading about Down syndrome that, amidst your country's reality, makes you start wondering how you can change reality or raise your students' awareness about it at least. (*Lady's WLS - P2L1, May 2021; own translation*)

> Bearing in mind what we have been talking about, I had the curiosity and the need because of what we were living back then. Why not talk about those topics in class? And maybe why not raise awareness about what we were living, what they had experienced? How can we generate those ideas that might produce a change not necessarily enormous? But if I can create a toy that makes visible or improves someone's quality of life, why can't I talk about this topic with my mates or friends throughout the day to raise awareness or help someone who needs it? I don't know. If I can create a toy, why won't I be able to do simpler things such as changing our behaviors, ideas, preconceptions, or stereotypes concerning those differences we all hold? Because we all have different abilities, only those differences are more notorious in some people or depending on their conditions. So, the lesson was about that in the end. How can I make my students conscious of it? How can I change my behavior and understanding of it? So why not give it a try? (*Lady's Interview - A11L2, August 2021; own translation*)

Lady's reflections showed me that her self-constructed initiative committed to making visible ignored cultural realities as a means to respond to her contextual reality. It was visible when she resolved to use a reading passage about Down syndrome to raise students' awareness concerning those individuals socially labeled as different. Following Walsh's ideas (2009c), I comprehended that her initiative advocated for the individuals and communities related to inclusion who have been treated as subalterns since they seem not to fit the Western paradigm of social diversity. Therefore, her pedagogical practices attempted to create a safe environment where the Other realities could be discussed and understood within a framework of tolerance and respect.

Her decisions also transformed EFL learning and teaching into processes that aimed to achieve subsequent purposes beyond having students master language usage. For instance, she intended to help students deconstruct their stereotypes about the Down syndrome population to

show them that everyone held different abilities, which were equally valuable. Thus, her self-constructed initiative contributed to destabilizing students' fixed representations of the Other and fostering the interaction among different cultural realities to understand their uniqueness despite the difference (Candau, 2016b). Besides, her initiative emerged from an attempt to attend to the claims of the national strike centered on raising individuals who were conscious of social reality. Accordingly, we co-interpreted that her pedagogical beliefs made students realize that they were not alienated from social phenomena. Instead, their cultural realities intertwined with others' world visions; ergo, they could help other individuals strive for equity from the English class (Nieto, 2010). Teaching the English language and culture was granted to foster awareness about the value of difference.

In short, Lady's WLS accounted for her effort to balance the influence of the institutional methodology and her pedagogical beliefs to make the English class a space that works for social transformation. She guaranteed that her self-constructed initiative connected language learning and teaching for communicative purposes and students' realities. It implied that her theory of practice had to do with building social awareness about the difference so that people understand it and work to make it visible through a foreign language.

Pedagogical Endeavors to Interconnect Dominant and Local Cultural Realities

Lady's self-constructed initiative managed to explore the topic of inclusion from both a socially dominant perspective and students' experiences. In the WLS, she emphasized the pressure of complying with the communicative requirements of her institution. For this reason, she resolved to include a reading that reported general information about Down syndrome in the reading club. It allowed her to follow the institutional methodology and make room for her

discussion of inclusion. Additionally, she expanded in the interview that the reading was used to provide a general perspective of the cultural reality lived by people with Down syndrome for students to discuss in the class. This dynamic led to commodifying the studied culture although it aimed at showing its nuances (Naidu, 2020), as observable in the following passages.

> Coincidentally, one day you will find a reading about Down syndrome that, amidst your country's reality, makes you start wondering how you can change reality or raise your students' awareness about it at least. Therefore, you will decide to bring that reading to the class and combine it with some extra activities that will help to create an atmosphere of reflection and fellowship among students. *(Lady's WLS - P2L1 - P2L2, May 2021; own translation)*

> The reading was an article by the United Nations. It was like a summary of a summit that took place last year. I don't remember specifically the month of the annual conference on Down syndrome. The reading talked about Down syndrome, the characteristics of a person who has this syndrome, the impact on someone's health, and the syndrome's history. It also talked about how the syndrome has been treated in society regarding life expectancy, how its treatment has varied over time in terms of social inclusion, and those contextual things, let's say. (*Lady's Interview - A7L1, August 2021; own translation*)

The previous events made me realize that her self-constructed initiative appealed to a dominant cultural representation of inclusion due to the need to meet the methodological requirements. She chose a reading expected to give an accurate description of what living with Down syndrome meant and social efforts to include this population in society. Nonetheless, this activity enacted an essentialist understanding of the culture of inclusion that tried to provide a reliable representation constructed by individuals who did not have the studied condition so that learners could access this cultural reality (Holliday, 2012). Although this exercise intended to make culture manageable, it also encouraged the spread of cultural stereotypes that did not consider the complexity of people with Down syndrome's experiences (Núñez-Pardo, 2018). Hence, students acquired a limited and superficial vision of others' identities through teaching the English language and culture. Moreover, Lady commented on the essentialization of culture

in the co-interpretation. She stated that it was complex not to use such a vision of culture since the reduced class time only allowed addressing social topics superficially. Besides, there was a limited possibility for developing follow-up lessons to explore different perspectives on inclusion due to the student rotation. Thus, using factual-based information helps teachers make culture accountable for students and assures the fulfillment of the institutional methodology. Yet, she recognized that teachers should pursue an alternative approach to culture in the English class.

Although her self-constructed initiative essentialized people with Down syndrome, she faced a turning point that facilitated involving students' lives as cultural realities embedded in the local context. The following extracts display that Lady's strategy to boost students' agency was to have them design a toy to make diverse disabilities visible and raise people's awareness about them. Yet, she mentioned in the interview that this activity exceeded her pedagogical expectations since it encouraged students to realize that they had also been victims of discrimination. This situation led students to start proposing that their toy prototypes not only represented people with specific abilities but also contributed to improving their quality of life. This situation astonished Lady and led her to share with learners the power to decide on the class procedures regarding teaching and learning culture. That is to prove the importance of studying topics that correlate students with the realities of those individuals who are part of their cultural background and have been silenced by dominant groups (Carreño Bolívar, 2018).

> Following the methodology, you will introduce the formal part of the lesson, in which you will make room for your students to share their memories about the toys and games from their childhood and their understanding of how those elements impact a kid's life and world visions. After sharing the reading, you all will create different toy prototypes that foster the visibility of diverse disabilities. *(Lady's WLS - P4L2, May 2021; own translation)*

> The last activity was focused on the visibility of people with Down syndrome by using or creating toys that had facial traits of this population. But something happened. Students realized that they had also experienced those stereotypes and the discrimination without even noticing it. For instance, I asked them about their favorite toy when they were kids, and there was a common answer. Women answered that they usually had soft toys such as teddy bears, dolls, a Barbie, and so on. Men generally chose LEGO bricks, traditional toys such as the spinning top, and yo-yo balls. They all believed it was a strong stereotype that attempts to define which toys are appropriate depending on whether you are a girl or a boy in Colombia or countries where these stereotypes exist nowadays. *(Lady's Interview – A3L1, August 2021; own translation)*

> So, when they started to think about what to create, they also suggested, "—teacher, you mean to create a toy that reflects the traits of a certain condition, or can I create a toy that improves the quality of life of a person?" and I agreed. Why not? Both options are OK. So, the last activity emerged from both the students and me, and it really caught my attention. Why wouldn't I let them do it if it was their creation? I found this situation interesting because they got closer to the topic and analyzed their possibilities. *(Lady's Interview, A12L1 - August 2021; own translation)*

In this line of thought, Lady's actions let me conclude that her self-constructed initiative also addressed the socially situated dimension of culture. To illustrate, she did not limit approaching the reading about Down syndrome but integrated learners' perceptions to activate their prior knowledge of inclusion. She endeavored to make room for students' cultural realities constructed from their own experiences or learned from others' insights while interacting in society (Nieto, 2010). Thus, her initiative achieved to associate the cultural realities of students and people with special needs in the language classroom. Then, students could challenge their stereotypes and understand that their realities were not distant from what others lived despite the difference. In this way, Lady generated an intercultural encounter that supported symmetrical exchange and discussion of experiences for students to comprehend better themselves and the Other (Candau, 2016b; Walsh, 2009b). It means that learners established a dialogue with the

Other to examine how everyone had struggled with stereotypical cultural representations despite their particularities.

Correspondingly, I noted that Lady's initiative also explored the conflicting nature of culture. While students were designing their toy prototypes, they discerned that society had imposed a stereotype that tried to model their identities and disregarded their particularities during childhood. Therefore, her teaching of culture helped students analyze how dominant cultural narratives had permeated their personal cultural realities (Holliday, 2009; 2012) to make them believe that their genders defined which toy was appropriate for them. Besides, she guided learners not to take their realities for granted, so they became aware that culture is used to exert power over individuals. That is to say that her pedagogical practices backed students to examine their experiences and empowered them to exercise their agency and strive for a more just society (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

To sum up, Lady worked on linking dominant narratives in terms of culture and language teaching to students' experiences representing the local culture of her educational setting. Then, it was possible to see that her theory of practice attempted to reconcile an essentialist cultural vision with students' realities related to inclusion. Hence, her teaching of the English language and culture allowed problematizing taken-for-granted cultural practices and raising awareness about the Other.

Bursting the Westernized Cultural Bubble through EFL Teaching

Addressing inclusion conducted Lady to disrupt the tradition of teaching culture in her educational setting. In the WLS, Lady concluded that it was necessary to keep working on similar proposals to teach culture regardless of the institutional implications. The self-

constructed initiative allowed her to explore inclusion as a cultural matter overlooked in her workplace. Similarly, she communicated in the interview that her personal experiences related to inclusion were essential when deciding to integrate this vision of culture. Her teaching addressed culture beyond conventional dynamics, such as describing places, learning vocabulary, and talking about holidays and celebrations. Besides, her initiative did not rely on the contents included in the teaching materials used by her institution to teach culture. In other words, she decentered from the ethnocentric perspective that seems to guide the traditional learning and teaching of culture in ELT (Cuartas, 2020), as noticeable in the following fragments.

> I hope this overview boosts your motivation and reflection. Above all, I hope that it supports you to follow your instinct and promotes more of these spaces without overthinking the consequences of trying to comply with the methodology or administrative issues. *(Lady's WLS – P6L1, May 2021; own translation)*

> Why had I chosen that reading? Because it got my attention when searching for class material since it connected with the contextual reality back then and what we were doing with my sister. Above all, I usually use a website to look for material for the reading and writing sessions, and this page generally utilizes those topics taught as culture in class. For instance, how to describe places, vocabulary related to holidays, birthdays, and so on. Let's say that when I was looking for material to plan my class, that reading was completely different from what one regularly finds in the textbooks and the activities related to vocabulary to use in a specific context or specific information to present to the students. So, it was an unusual reading that stood out from the others. *(Lady's Interview, A7L2 - August 2021; own translation)*

In this way, I comprehended that Lady distanced from the traditional teaching culture and explored its dynamism and complexity. In her self-constructed initiative, she chose and equated inclusion to a proper cultural perspective to study, seeing that it differed from the regular topics used in the English class. It indicates that she did not adhere to the orthodox teaching of visible and invisible cultural traits (Kramsch, 2013) that enact a monolithic representation of foreign communities. Instead, she approached an alternative vision of culture to make visible those

cultural realities ignored in the language classroom and society. Besides, Lady mentioned in the co-interpretation that addressing inclusion resulted from an intrinsic responsibility to discuss social topics in the language classroom. In this way, students were going to have the opportunity to analyze their own experiences and share their positions about social issues through the English language.

Moreover, her experiences taught me that integrating alternative visions of culture allowed challenging the authority given to English textbooks when teaching culture. Lady highlighted that selecting inclusion helped her go beyond what was regularly included in English language and culture textbooks. Agreeing with Forman (2014), her decision subverted the power given to the textbook by the Western tradition in ELT to define what is worth teaching and learning in the language classroom. Accordingly, Lady moved from being a mere implementer of dominant knowledge to exercising her agency to transform her teaching based on her personal knowledge. This situation arose from Lady's pedagogical beliefs that regarded teaching the English language and culture as practices that respond to the contextual reality (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

In summary, Lady's experiences and reflection revealed that her self-constructed initiative was detached from the Western paradigm that equates teaching culture to equipping students with information about other individuals and social groups. On the contrary, she resignified the teaching of culture as a possibility to address social topics in the language classroom to raise awareness about cultural realities silenced in society. Thus, she transformed language teaching and learning into processes that support students to promote social change through initiatives created at school.

To conclude this chapter, I can state that the WLS of Lucía, Margarita, and Lady allowed me to reconstruct their theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development. The theories of practice depicted that the participants negotiated between their personal knowledge and the vision of language teaching enacted by their institutions to develop their self-constructed initiatives to integrate culture into the language classroom. On the one hand, the participating teachers tended to be absorbed by top-down teaching methodologies that reduced the decision-making power over their pedagogical practices. Yet, they made room for their pedagogical beliefs to make the teaching of culture a meaningful practice for their educational contexts, which was materialized through the self-constructed initiatives.

The first category showed that participants' theories of practice envisioned the teaching of culture to question top-down teaching models and to attend to students' realities in their educational contexts. Initially, Lucía, Margarita, and Lady recognized that their institutions imposed methodologies that universalized language learning and teaching processes focused on developing students' communicative and linguistic competencies. Therefore, participating teachers acquired the role of implementers although their pedagogical beliefs and knowledge centered on the importance of responding to contextual realities. Yet, they integrated culture to modify instrumentalist teaching practices through their self-constructed initiatives. In this way, I comprehended that the teaching of culture allowed participants to transform the English class into a space that embraced students' experiences to make learning a meaningful practice connected to their cultural realities.

In the second category, I learned that participants' theories of practices accounted for a complex and dynamic understanding of culture. On the one hand, the participating teachers

appealed to an essentialist view of culture through historical information and descriptions of some cultural groups. This action helped them make culture accountable for students although it strengthened the power of the dominant vision of culture in ELT. Nonetheless, they took advantage of the culture embedded in their contexts, emphasizing students' experiences and voices in the language classroom. Besides, the present situation facilitated the intercultural encounter in which learners exchanged and discussed their experiences to question dominant cultural representations and strive for social justice.

The last category taught me that the theories of practice challenged traditional pedagogical practices aligned with the Western paradigm concerning the teaching of culture in ELT. Participating teachers developed self-constructed initiatives that contributed to demystifying the neutrality of culture so that students recognize the relationship among culture, ideology, and power. Likewise, they achieved to resignify what culture symbolized in their educational contexts. It means that their pedagogical practices showed that teaching culture had to do with integrating contextual and cultural realities into their lesson instead of only transmitting factual-based information to students. Consequently, they took advantage of culture to raise learners' awareness about social topics and boost their agency to pursue social justice in the language classroom.

In a nutshell, this chapter presented the data analysis and findings of the study. The next chapter reports on the conclusions and implications for further research.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

The present chapter intends to explain the conclusions and implications for further research of this narrative study. I initially answer the research question *What do in-service English teachers' narratives reveal about the construction of their theories of practice concerning teaching the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development?* through an account of the conclusions that emerged from the investigation. Later, I share the implications to encourage research related to this initiative. That is how I conclude the chapter by proposing some questions that might work as a departure point for other projects.

Conclusions

This study aimed to understand and make visible teachers' knowledge and expertise in teaching culture in the EFL classroom. In this way, I can state that the three relational categories that emerged after analyzing and interpreting the WLS in the previous chapter answer the main research question and meet the objectives posed for this inquiry. It means that the findings allowed me to unveil and understand participants' theories of practice that represented their attempts to transform the teaching of the English language and culture from a socially-situated perspective. Besides, the theories of practice account for teachers' tensioning experiences when dealing with institutional requirements and their pedagogical beliefs when teaching culture.

Firstly, I can posit that participants' theories of practice emerged amidst educational scenarios that overlooked the role of culture when teaching English as a foreign language. The institutions required practitioners to follow teaching methodologies that attempted to provide universal procedures, strategies, and materials to ensure proper language learning. Such a

practice involved teachers in a transmission model that validated helping students master grammatical and communicative competencies as the ultimate goal of language teaching (Cuartas, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Santos et al., 2007). It implies that teachers were confined to reproducing a dominant vision of teaching that characterizes them as implementers of the knowledge produced by educational stakeholders that control the development of language curricula and study plans in institutes for work and human development. Consequently, they faced a disempowering scenario where their theories of practice, representing their knowledge and expertise, were not widely supported since they did not fit the allegedly accurate models of teaching and learning imposed by their institutions (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Lanas, 2017).

Nevertheless, teachers' theories of practice positioned culture as a means to challenge the *status quo* of ELT curriculum in their institutions. Participants believed that their pedagogical practices also needed to connect to contextual realities instead of restricting themselves to help students be proficient language users. That is why teaching culture represented an opportunity for integrating students' cultural realities into the language classroom (Álvarez & Bonilla, 2009; Nieto, 2010). It signifies that teachers acknowledged that learners' experiences, insights, and opinions were also worth including and discussing in their lessons. In this way, they meant to transform language learning into a meaningful practice since it linked students' lives and the institutional guidelines. Besides, integrating culture facilitated raising students' awareness of social topics, sensitizing them about other cultural subjects, and destabilizing their perceptions of reality.

Consequently, integrating culture represented a tensioning experience for the participating teachers. They had to deal with either complying with the institutional teaching

methodologies or following their personal knowledge of culture and language. It means that they struggled with teaching culture to help students develop their communicative competencies although culture also symbolized an opportunity to respond to contextual realities. Yet, they managed to negotiate between both perspectives to strengthen language learning and teaching processes from a socially situated perspective.

Likewise, I concluded that the participants' theories of practice enacted culture as a dynamic and evolving construction in the language classroom. Initially, the participants introduced an essentialist view of culture to provide their students with an accurate representation of other individuals and social phenomena. They took advantage of historical facts and mainstream information to present visible and invisible cultural traits that oversimplify the relationship between nationality and culture and describe people's behaviors and thoughts (Holliday, 2012; Kramsh, 2013; Subedi, 2013; Turizo & Gómez, 2006). The previous dynamics resulted from the teachers' need to make culture accountable for students so that the latter acquire such cultural information to expand their general knowledge and gain a better understanding of others' realities while learning a foreign language. Consequently, their pedagogical practices supported a dominant perspective of culture that intends to define what is socially valid to learn about the Other for students to incorporate into their knowledge. Besides, this situation generated an intercultural encounter that undervalued students' cultural realities and disregarded the discussion of social practices that perpetuated discrimination and inequity (Candau, 2016a; Holliday, 2009, 2010; Walsh, 2009b).

Nonetheless, the participating teachers' theories of practice showed that their essentialization of culture worked as a departure point to connect and integrate students' realities into the EFL class. The participating teachers utilized static and homogenizing cultural

information to activate students' knowledge and include it in class discussions. It implies that teachers moved to address a socially situated vision of culture since they valued learners' lived experiences and turned them into the axis of learning and teaching processes (Atkinson & Sohn, 2013; Jiménez & Peña, 2009; Nieto, 2010). Therefore, their pedagogical practices concentrated on supporting students to examine their own and others' cultural realities and not take them for granted. Teaching culture had to do with raising learners' awareness of the relationship between culture and power and how the former is used to perpetuate social issues such as discrimination. Participants also focused on helping students exercise their agency to make the subaltern voices visible in society. Consequently, teaching culture transformed the language classroom into a space for students to be in contact with other cultural realities and symmetrically exchange their experiences and world visions. Besides, learners had the opportunity to discuss and question dominant cultural realities and deconstruct their stereotypes (Candau, 2016b, Walsh, 2009a).

In this fashion, I understood that their theories of practice reflected the constant struggle between essentialist and non-essentialist visions of culture. On the one hand, they introduced culture through fact-based information to make it understandable for students and expand their general knowledge of social and political topics. Yet, such a vision of culture did not suffice their understanding of teaching the English language and culture. That is why educators integrated students' experiences into the lessons to raise awareness about their own and others' cultural realities. Thus, their pedagogical practices centered on addressing a socially situated and ideological dimension of culture to transform language learning and teaching processes into meaningful processes.

Likewise, the theories of practice accounted for the participants' awareness and effort to disrupt the vision of culture and its teaching defined by the Western paradigm in the TEFL field.

Their pedagogical practices challenged the naturalization of having teachers transmit factual-based information and regarding them as the embodiment of cultural knowledge worth learning at school. On the contrary, they demonstrated that teaching culture could depart from acknowledging the cultural realities embedded in the educational context and making room for them in the English class. Then, their labor concentrated on mediating between students' experiences and the language curriculum to make learning a foreign language a meaningful activity (Cuartas, 2020; Forman, 2014; Siqueira, 2017).

Finally, the participants' actions also contributed to the resignification of culture in their institutions. They demystified the neutrality of culture by disseminating its relationship with ideology in the English class. In this way, teaching culture allowed raising students' awareness of how dominant social groups employ culture to pervade people's understanding of reality and impose specific ideas and perceptions to achieve political and economic objectives. Besides, practitioners opened the possibility of addressing culture as a social topic while learning a foreign language. It implies that the language class contributed to sensitizing people about cultural realities that have been left aside and developing proposals that strive for social justice (Darder, 2012; Holliday, 2012; Morgan, 2007).

Implications for Further Research

Conducting this research initiative taught me that it is possible to resignify the meaning of culture and highlight the value of teachers' knowledge within foreign language education. Ergo, I would like to invite the readers to further research on culture and EFL teaching from a poststructuralist and socio-critical perspective. The idea is to continue exploring the complexity and dynamism of culture and the value of teachers' theories of practice when it comes to language learning and teaching. Such dynamics demonstrate that research on culture and EFL

teaching can go beyond an instrumentalist approach centered on developing pedagogical strategies to make students more knowledgeable of foreign countries and cultural groups associated with the English language. Therefore, I intend to share other possible scenarios to study this research phenomenon.

In this fashion, I believe it is appropriate to further inquiry on English language teachers' theories of practice related to culture and other areas of study. This research practice might broaden the understanding of teachers' beliefs and insights that support their constant decision-making process in the language classroom. Besides, it strengthens the relevance of teachers' knowledge in the ELT field since their voices and experiences also shed light on the complexity of language learning and teaching. Therefore, research will help generate an academic environment that supports difference and equity in knowledge production and vindicates practitioners' right to be heard and listened to in their field of action.

Likewise, this study showed that teachers were aware of the imposition of top-down methodologies in institutes for work and human development. That is why they questioned the limitations caused by those methodologies when deciding on their teaching of the English language and culture. Then, there is an opportunity for examining teachers' insights about challenging the *status quo* of teaching in those institutions from a decolonial perspective. This research exercise might help identify and comprehend the counter-discourses developed by teachers who construct mechanisms and proposals to resist the methodological imposition lived in their workplaces.

Similarly, while the participants and I worked on the co-interpretation of their WLS, they showed interest in learning in-depth about the concepts used to describe their understanding and teaching of culture. This situation made me realize that it is necessary to develop other

procedures when guiding teachers to make sense of their stories. Therefore, I consider it is possible to carry out a research project in which participants join study groups to analyze their teaching of culture in the light of critical interculturality and their peers' voices. Such exercise might support teachers to comprehend the implications of their pedagogical endeavors and transform their teaching of culture into a practice committed to social justice from the difference.

Additionally, the present inquiry indicated that the institutional language curriculum plays a relevant role when characterizing the teaching of the English language and culture. Yet, the institutional documents related to the curriculum were underexplored since the research interest focused on teachers' lived experiences. Therefore, I found it relevant to conduct a document analysis that allows unveiling discursive practices that have permeated the teaching of culture in different educational contexts. This exercise may elucidate how culture is used to favor socioeconomic and political dynamics through EFL learning and teaching.

To conclude, I suggest the following questions to continue exploring the before-mentioned research scenarios:

a. How do English language teachers construct their theories of practice concerning English language teaching?
b. What counter-discourses have English language teachers developed concerning the Western epistemologies that shape the teaching of culture in ELT?
c. How do English language teachers redefine their understanding of culture and its teaching through study groups in the light of critical interculturality?
d. What discourses does the institutional ELT curriculum enact concerning the English language and culture?

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Appendices

Appendix A

Worksheet for Creating a Written Narrative



Appendix B

Sample of the Digital Mural



Appendix C

Sample of a Written Narrative

Bogotá, mayo 22 de 2021

Mi querida amiga:

Te escribo esta carta para contarte algo que quizá todavía no sabes. Muy pronto la curiosidad por utilizar el espacio de tus clases para tocar temas sociales hará que te cuestiones si tal vez esto pueda ser bien recibido por los estudiantes del instituto. Inicialmente tu hermana te contagiará el entusiasmo y el empeño que le ha puesto a buscar formas de generar inclusión en el día a día.

Coincidencialmente, un día encontrarás una lectura sobre el síndrome de Down que, en medio de la realidad de tu país, hace que comiences a plantearte cómo puedes cambiar la realidad o al menos generar algo de conciencia en tus estudiantes sobre ella. Por estas razones, tomarás la decisión de llevar esta lectura a clase y la complementaras con algunas dinámicas extras que ayudarán a crear una atmosfera de reflexión y camaradería entre estudiantes.

La sesión se extenderá por hora y media, y tendrás la compañía de cinco estudiantes de diferentes niveles, algunos con los que ya has tenido clases regulares lo que te hará sentir un poco más de confianza.

Como es usual iniciarás la sesión con una actividad para romper el hielo con tus estudiantes; seguido, en concordancia con la merodología que debes seguir, introducirás la parte formal de la sesión dándole el espacio a tus estudiantes para que compartan sus memorias respecto a los diferentes juguetes y juegos que tenían de pequeños, así como sus interpretaciones sobre la importancia de esos juegos en un niño y cómo puede afectar su percepción del mundo.

Luego de compartir la lectura, entre todos idearan diferentes diseños de juguetes donde promuevan la visibilidad de diferentes tipos de discapacidades. Pero te sorprenderás, no solo por la creatividad de tus estudiantes y su interés por el tema, porque algunos diseñarán juguetes que también ayudan a niños con discapacidad a tener una mejor calidad de vida al momento de jugar y de descubrir sus talentos.

Espero que esta mirada a lo que viene te sirva de motivación y de reflexión, sobre todo para que te atrevas a seguir tu instinto y generes espacios de este tipo sin pensar tanto en las consecuencias o repercusiones que habrá por el afán de seguir una metodología o por cuestiones administrativas.

Para que te asegures de lo que te acabo de contar, te envío una fotografía de una de las creaciones de tus futuros estudiantes, solo asegúrate de no mostrársela antes de que la cree.



Saludos desde el futuro,

Tu

Appendix D

Written Consent Form

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Estimado Docente,
Por medio del presente documento me gustaría invitarlo a participar en un proyecto de investigación llamado "Resignifying Culture through Critical Interculturality: an In-Service English Teachers' Narrative Experience" el cual estoy desarrollando como tesis de grado en la Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés en la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. El estudio tiene como objetivo explorar y hacer visibles las narrativas de los profesores de inglés las cuales darán cuenta de sus teorías de práctica en relación a la enseñanza de cultura en institutos de lenguas.

De esta forma, usted participará en el desarrollo de una narrativa escrita y una entrevista que hacen parte del proceso de recolección de datos e interpretación de los mismos. Dichos datos serán usados únicamente para propósitos académicos, garantizando la confidencialidad y respeto hacia sus opiniones e historias. Por este motivo, se usarán seudónimos para proteger su identidad si así lo desea. Además, si usted considera retirarse en cualquier etapa del proyecto, está en la completa libertad de hacerlo.

Por otro lado, posterior a la culminación de la investigación, los resultados serán publicados bajo la modalidad de tesis de maestría como requisito de grado al igual que en otras publicaciones académicas. En caso de tener alguna duda o inquietud de este proceso, no dude en comunicarse conmigo.

En total convencimiento que esta experiencia contribuirá al desarrollo profesional y humano de las partes involucradas, agradecería su participación en esta iniciativa.

Atentamente,

Diana Natalia Segura Linares
Licenciada en Educación Básica con Énfasis en Inglés
Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
dnsegural@correo.udistrital.edu.co

Consentimiento:

Yo _____ consiento que se me ha informado acerca de este estudio y el motivo de mi participación en el mismo. De igual forma, soy consciente de que no me encuentro obligado a ser participante del proyecto y, por ende, tengo la libertad de abandonar el proceso en el momento que lo crea conveniente. Asimismo, tengo claro que ante cualquier duda o inquietud puedo acercarme a Diana Natalia Segura Linares, persona encargada del proceso de investigación.

Firma de autorización:

Email:

Appendix E

Data Organization- Sample of Matrix 0

WRITTEN NARRATIVE		
AUTHOR		
NICKNAME	Lucia	
DATE OF CREATION	May 22nd, 2021	
P1	P1L1	Querido diario, aunque no es un secreto que enseñar no es ni de cerca lo que quisiera ser, me da a ratos un poco de alegría saber que al
P2	P2L1	Hace unos días se me informó que debía organizar la clase de inmersión y pues, bueno, eso es usualmente algo o muy bueno o muy malo: Da
	P2L2	Ajá. Exacto. Eso no ayuda mucho a la ansiedad, pero bueno, tengo que hacerlo, ¿verdad?
	P2L3	Sea como sea, me puse a pensar sobre qué tema presentar y recordé a Manuelito y sus clases estrella...
	P2L4	Yo diría que algo que me enganchaba eran sus clases sobre cosas que se salían de la clase, o del típico tema que lleva a gramática, yada
	P2L5	Y tadaaa. Se me ocurrió hablar de pop culture. ¿por qué no?
	P2L6	Muchos estudiantes son muy jóvenes y en clase a veces mencionan que desconocen harto del siglo XX. ¡Perfecta oportunidad!
	P2L7	Aparte de todo, podría unir más a los estudiantes de mayor edad con ellos. Sería una buena clase
	P2L8	Primero hablaríamos de íconos pop, luego de generaciones y...
	P2L9	¿y dónde está la discusión? ¡Eso! Podríamos discutir sobre la influencia de ese pasado en el presente, en el siglo XXI (que es lo que conocen
P3	P3L1	Vamo' a ver como nos va. Wish me luck!
P4	P4L1	¡Éxito total en ventas! No fue taaan wow como me imaginé que sería pero enganchó a la mayoría de estudiantes.
	P4L2	Se generaron unas conversaciones bien chéveres y vainas que no me imaginé que salieran de lo que propuse
	P4L3	¿Lo que más me sorprendió? Que algunos estudiantes no reconocieran a los personajes del siglo XX.
	P4L4	Como sea, algunos vieron caras nuevas y aprendieron.
	P4L5	Salieron del salón con una idea diferente de la cultura pop. Después de todo no es tan vacua, ¿verdad?
P5	P5L1	Recuerdo que mi profesora de inglés en el colegio llevaba clases interesantes con cositas de ese tipo y a la final eso fue lo que me hizo
	P5L2	Espero haber marcado a los estudiantes en algo, al menos a que no vean el pasado como algo viejo y ya, sino todo un mundo de referencias y
P6	P6L1	Oh! Pequeño detalle. No mencioné que hablé del capitalismo y la presión de la cultura
	P6L2	No es novedad pero siempre es interesante tener al tío Sam en clase
	P6L3	El entretenimiento es más que solo la tele, y esa fue una de las grandes conclusiones en clase.
P7	P7L1	I know, I know. Mi texto es todo un caos pero dicen que así es más auténtico
	P7L2	Espero que no me pierda dentro de mis mismas notas lol
	P7L3	En fin, solo quería compartir una experiencia bonita en clase que usualmente no se presenta.

Appendix F

Theme Identification- Sample Matrix 1

THEME IDENTIFICATION

RESEARCH QUESTION: What do in-service English teachers' narratives reveal about the construction of their theories of practice concerning the teaching of the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development?

Written Life Stories

Themes

Lucia	Immersion: Freedom when teaching	Going beyond grammar	Ignorance about pop culture - age	Bridging generational gaps	Meaningful learning about pop culture	Awareness of the influence of the past in the present	Questioning the USA power: Capitalism and cultural imposition	Unusual experience for a class	Uncertainty towards students' acceptance	Surprise: Unexpected outcomes	Discussing historical information and its influence					
	P2L1	P2L4	P2L5	P2L7	P4L5	P5L2	P6L1	P7L3	P2L1	P4L2	P2L8					
Aitana	Teachers' funds of knowledge: Sharing foreign culture related to English language	Conflict English vs. Other countries	English as an international language attached to all cultures	English beyond the center	Another language through English	Constraints bc of institute's system.	Learning about other cultures/countries	English imposition vs. Spanish	Willingness to repeat it	Students' interest						
	P2L5	P2L7	P3L2	P3L5	P4L7	P5L7	P6L6	P6L7	P7L7	P2L4						
Margarita	Struggle due to remote learning	Struggle with institute's methodology	Struggle with not knowing the students	Culture teaching as a weakness	Language as repetition vs. Culture	Language as repetition vs. Culture	Unusual topics to debate (food research)	Topics related to students' lives	From vocabulary to culture: surprise	Cultural differences: "normal" vs. Strange	Agreement and disagreements towards Others	Importance of including cultural elements	Teachers are not cultural dictionaries	Our culture is the first step	Teachers' curiosity regarding culture	Culture is everywhere & skills
	P2L1	P2L4	P2L5	P3L2	P3L3	P3L4	P4L3	P4L6	P4L7	P4L11	P4L12	P5L2	P5L3	P5L3	P5L4	P5L5

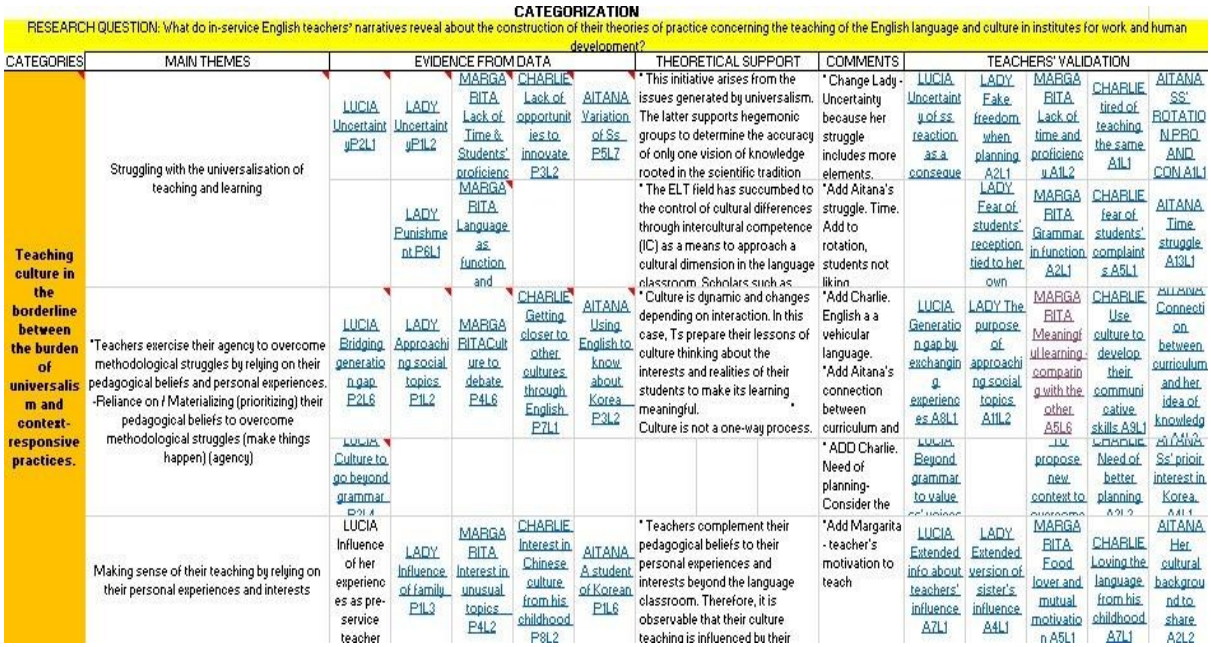
Appendix G

Theme Reduction – Sample Matrix 2

THEME REDUCTION – COMMON PATTERNS																	
RESEARCH QUESTION: What do in-service English teachers' narratives reveal about the construction of their theories of practice concerning the teaching of the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development?																	
Written Life Stories																	
	Themes																
Lucia	Freedom, uncertainty, surprise when teaching culture	Culture is more than grammar.	Culture teaching beyond the facts. Analyzing their social impact.	Culture teaching: Attending to contextual needs (generation gap and lack of knowledge)	Connecting cultural infomation to ss' realities(Past & present)	Fostering awareness about culture & power (Capitalism & cultural imposition)	Culture teaching from historical facts (information)										
Aitana	Culture teaching: Starting from Ts' knowledge	Culture teaching: Attending to ss' interests in foreign communities	Culture as language (Korean & E. as an international language)	Culture teaching from cultural facts	Resistance & Power: English and culture teaching aren't tied to the Center.	Struggle: Using English vs. SS' Spanish (a matter of meaningfulness)	Pedagogical Struggle: Variation of students										
Margarita	Pedagogical Struggle for culture teaching: Institution methodology (time) and Ss' language proficiency	Culture teaching as a weakness due to language as a function and repetition in institutions	Culture as national & behavioral information (American food eating habits)	CULTURE IS EVERYWHERE Culture teaching is important to go beyond language as a function	Culture teaching for debating about myself and the Other	Culture teaching where SS have a voice to agree and disagree. (no imposition of NC)	Culture teaching: Ts' knowledge (not need to know a lot about Other), interests, curiosity	Culture teaching: Ss' interest – unusual topic									

Appendix H

Categorization – Sample Matrix 3



CATEGORIZATION

RESEARCH QUESTION: What do in-service English teachers' narratives reveal about the construction of their theories of practice concerning the teaching of the English language and culture in institutes for work and human development?

CATEGORIES	MAIN THEMES	EVIDENCE FROM DATA					THEORETICAL SUPPORT	COMMENTS	TEACHERS' VALIDATION					
Teaching culture in the borderline between the burden of universalism and context-responsive practices.	Struggling with the universalisation of teaching and learning	LUCIA Uncertainty P2L1	LADY Uncertainty P1L2	MARGARITA Lack of Time & Students' proficienc	CHARLIE Lack of opportunities to innovate P3L2	AITANA Variation of Ss P5L7	* This initiative arises from the issues generated by universalism. The latter supports hegemonic groups to determine the accuracy of only one vision of knowledge rooted in the scientific tradition * The ELT field has succumbed to the control of cultural differences through intercultural competence (IC) as a means to approach a cultural dimension in the language classroom. Scholars such as	* Change Lady - Uncertainty because her struggle includes more elements. *Add Aitana's struggle. Time. Add to rotation, students not liking	LUCIA Uncertainty of ss reaction as a conseque	LADY Fake freedom when planning A2L1	MARGARITA Lack of time and proficiency A1L2	CHARLIE tired of teaching the same A1L1	AITANA SS' ROTATION PRO AND CON A1L1
			LADY Punishment P6L1	MARGARITA Language as function and						LADY Fear of students' reception tied to her own	MARGARITA Grammar in function A2L1	CHARLIE fear of students' complaints A5L1	AITANA Time struggle A13L1	
	*Teachers exercise their agency to overcome methodological struggles by relying on their pedagogical beliefs and personal experiences. -Reliance on / Materializing (prioritizing) their pedagogical beliefs to overcome methodological struggles (make things happen) (agency)	LUCIA Bridging generation gap P2L6	LADY Approaching social topics P1L2	MARGARITACulture to debate P4L6	CHARLIE Getting closer to other cultures through English P7L1	AITANA Using English to know about Korea P3L2	* Culture is dynamic and changes depending on interaction. In this case, Ts prepare their lessons of culture thinking about the interests and realities of their students to make its learning meaningful. * Culture is not a one-way process.	*Add Charlie. English a a vehicular language. *Add Aitana's connection between curriculum and	LUCIA Generation gap by exchanging experiences A8L1	LADY The purpose of approaching social topics A11L2	MARGARITA Meaningful learning - comparing with the other A5L6	CHARLIE Use culture to develop their communicative skills A9L1	AITANA Connection between curriculum and her idea of knowledg	
		LUCIA Culture to go beyond grammar P2L4						* ADD Charlie. Need of planning- Consider the	LUCIA Beyond grammar to value ss' voices		TO propose new contest to overcome	CHARLIE Need of better planning A2L2	AITANA Ss' prioir interest in Korea A4L1	
	Making sense of their teaching by relying on their personal experiences and interests	LUCIA Influence of her experiences as pre-service teacher	LADY Influence of family P1L3	MARGARITA Interest in unusual topics P4L2	CHARLIE Interest in Chinese culture from his childhood P8L2	AITANA A student of Korean P1L6	* Teachers complement their pedagogical beliefs to their personal experiences and interests beyond the language classroom. Therefore, it is observable that their culture teaching is influenced by their	*Add Margarita - teacher's motivation to teach	LUCIA Extended info about teachers' influence A7L1	LADY Extended version of sister's influence A4L1	MARGARITA Food lover and mutual motivation A5L1	CHARLIE Loving the language from his childhood A7L1	AITANA Her cultural background to share A2L2	

Appendix I

Sample of the Interview Protocol

Resignifying Culture through Critical Interculturality: An In-service English Teachers' Narrative Experience

Protocolo Entrevista

UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL
FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE CALDAS
Acreditación Institucional de Alta Calidad

Estimada Aitana,

Este documento tiene como propósito guiarle en la co-interpretación de su narrativa. Este ejercicio se llevará a cabo mediante una entrevista semiestructurada en donde podremos dialogar sobre la interpretación de sus experiencias significativas de tal forma que usted pueda corroborar o cuestionar la información presentada. Asimismo, la idea es que tengamos la oportunidad de profundizar en algunos aspectos mencionados en sus historias.

Por consiguiente, le invito a realizar las siguientes actividades antes de la entrevista:

1. Tómese algunos minutos para volver a leer su narrativa. Esta actividad le ayudará a activar las ideas y sentimientos relacionados con sus experiencias significativas.

2. Después de haber retomado el escrito, lea las preguntas que encuentra a continuación y piense en posibles respuestas para la mismas. Las preguntas fueron sugeridas con el fin de conocer más sobre aspectos puntuales que mencionó en su narrativa escrita. Por tal motivo, decidí incluir el fragmento puntual que me generó duda para que usted se sienta en contexto a la hora de responder. Tome apuntes de sus respuestas.

FRAGMENTO DE LA NARRATIVA	PREGUNTA
"Sobre todo porque algunos de los estudiantes no habían estado en la primera sesión… Como en el instituto no siempre tengo los mismos estudiantes."	1. ¿puede contarme más acerca de este contratiempo en su clase?
"Quería compartirlo con mis estudiantes y por ello decidí intentar algo muy loco.	

Además, muchos de ellos me han hecho saber que están interesados en la cultura coreana que quise crear un espacio donde ellos conocieran esta parte de una cultura que tanto me apasiona y relacionarlo con el idioma que ellos están aprendiendo."	2. ¿Cómo reaccionaron sus estudiantes durante la clase?
"Los profes siempre decimos que podemos ir a cualquier parte del mundo cuando sabemos inglés… Pero siempre nombramos sólo a USA y UK"	3. ¿puede contarme más acerca de esta razón que la influenció para desarrollar su clase?

3. Luego de haber tomado apuntes sobre sus respuestas, guárdelos y no olvide traerlos para el día de la entrevista.