




# Exploring Otherness as an Opportunity for Intercultural Dialogue in a Colombian Public University English Program<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Embracing intercultural dialogue through *Otherness* can enable higher education institutions to ethically address intercultural issues in local communities facing globalization. Strategies such as the anglicization of the curriculum rarely address interculturality as they overlook its complex and polysemic nature. To shed light on this problem, we drew on intercultural education from a decolonial perspective to study the English program of a Colombian university that promotes internationalization from a territorial perspective. The research strategies included document analysis of 15 communicative tasks, English language faculty' narratives, and students' artifacts. To commit to decoloniality, we intertwined these strategies through *diálogo de saberes* (knowledge dialogues methodology) seminars with faculty. The findings suggest that the tasks openness to diversity and inclusion might contribute to intercultural dialogue but the subtle ways in which they reproduce colonial ideologies hamper it by impeding *Otherness*. This finding implies the need for decolonial professional development and further research.

**Keywords:** communicative tasks; decoloniality; *diálogo de saberes* seminar; intercultural education; internationalization; Otherness.

## Resumen

**Explorando la otredad como una oportunidad para el diálogo intercultural en un programa de inglés de una universidad pública colombiana**

La adopción del diálogo intercultural a través de la *Otredad* puede ayudar a las instituciones de educación superior a abordar éticamente asuntos interculturales en las comunidades locales que enfrentan la globalización. Estrategias como la

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anglicización del currículo rara vez abordan la interculturalidad porque ignoran su naturaleza compleja y polisémica. Para contribuir a una solución, recurrimos a la educación intercultural desde una perspectiva decolonial para estudiar el programa de inglés de una universidad colombiana que propone la internacionalización desde los territorios. Las estrategias de investigación incluyeron el análisis de 15 tareas comunicativas, narrativas de profesores de inglés y artefactos de estudiantes. Comprometidos con la decolonialidad, entrelazamos estas estrategias a través de seminarios en diálogo de saberes con profesores. Los hallazgos sugieren que la apertura a la diversidad y la inclusión en las tareas pueden contribuir al diálogo intercultural, pero las formas sutiles en que reproducen ideologías coloniales lo obstaculizan al impedir la Otredad. Este hallazgo implica la necesidad de desarrollo profesional e investigación en clave decolonial.

**Palabras clave:** tareas comunicativas; decolonialidad; seminario en diálogo de saberes; educación intercultural; internacionalización; alteridad.

### **Résumé**

#### **Explorer l'altérité comme une opportunité de dialogue interculturel dans un programme d'anglais d'une université publique colombienne**

L'adoption du dialogue interculturel via *l'Autre* peut aider les établissements d'enseignement supérieur à aborder de manière éthique les problèmes interculturels des communautés locales confrontées à la mondialisation. Les stratégies telles que l'anglicisation du curriculum abordent rarement l'interculturalité parce qu'elles ignorent sa nature complexe et polysémique. Pour contribuer à une solution, nous nous tournons vers l'éducation interculturelle dans une perspective décoloniale pour étudier le programme d'anglais d'une université colombienne qui propose l'internationalisation à partir des territoires. Les stratégies de recherche comprenaient l'analyse de 15 tâches communicatives, des récits de professeurs d'anglais et des artefacts d'élèves. Engagés en faveur de la décolonialité, nous entrelaçons ces stratégies à travers des séminaires de dialogue des savoirs avec les enseignants. Les résultats suggèrent que l'ouverture à la diversité et l'inclusion dans les tâches peuvent contribuer au dialogue interculturel, mais que les manières subtiles par lesquelles elles reproduisent les idéologies coloniales l'entravent en empêchant l'altérité. Ce constat implique la nécessité d'un développement professionnel et d'une recherche dans une perspective décoloniale.

**Mots-clés :** tâches communicatives ; décolonialité ; séminaire de dialogue de savoir ; éducation interculturelle ; internationalisation ; altérité.

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## INTRODUCTION

In response to globalization demands on the internationalization of higher education processes, a Colombian public university has embraced intercultural dialogue with both local communities and transnational institutions to address local conditions (Universidad de Antioquia [UdeA], 2017a). This public university engages in internationalization from a territorial perspective to promote equity and peace. Such a perspective demands to question and problematize decontextualized, alienating, homogenizing, and extractivist globalization practices that disregard local, multi-scalar, and dissimilar knowledge relations between the territories the university serves and globalization processes. Instead, a territorial perspective of internationalization commits to fulfill teaching, research, and service in the regions by recognizing contextual conditions, meeting local needs, maximizing capacities, and seizing affordances (UdeA, 2017a). This approach prioritizes local communities in international collaboration and alliances. Consequently, internationalization processes can contribute to higher education institutions preparing students to take a critical and ethical stand towards world trends by cultivating their intercultural sensitivity to resignify local contexts (Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015; Usma et al., 2018). One of the strategies this university has embraced for the resignification of the territories consists of a research policy based on *diálogo de saberes*, or knowledge dialogues, as termed by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) (Mena-Lozano et al., 2020; PAHO, 2022).

*Diálogo de saberes* as a research methodology entails communication processes between culturally, ethnically, epistemologically, and ideologically diverse people, groups, and communities to improve intercultural well-being emphasizing the solution to local problems and their causes through mutual understanding and stable relationships (PAHO, 2022). As a research policy, *diálogo de saberes* aims at knowledge construction for the protection and celebration of life in all its plurality through epistemological relationships build on communication with familiar, spiral lived experiences between diverse ancestral knowledge and modern epistemologies. This research policy attempts at the respect for the diverse origins, forms, and purposes of knowledge by valuing rurality, ethnicity, alternative sexualities, native languages, and ancestral practices as much as urban, white, male, European epistemologies (Mena-Lozano et al., 2020).

### Interculturality in the Internationalization of Higher Education

However, these approaches to internationalization and research differ from regular practices in tertiary education. In general, higher education has commonly responded to globalization pressures by adopting homologable curricula, English as a lingua franca, majoritarian European and Asian languages, and international mobility. The latter has urged higher education institutions to promote gender, racial, cultural, and national diversity and inclusion (Duong & Chua, 2016; Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015).

However, such strategies equate diversity to the flow of students from different nationalities perpetuating representations of cultures as nationality-bounded, prescribable, static, and homogenous (Dervin & Simpson, 2021). Moreover, these strategies neglect the multiple intercultural interactions in which students engage with *the Other* virtually and remotely, inside and outside campuses. As a result, interculturality reveals its polysemic nature, as educational actors understand intercultural issues differently (Dervin, 2016).

In the case of Latin American universities, for example, intercultural strategies meet lower figures in accessibility to higher education, international students, and proficiency in English and other dominant languages (Hamel et al., 2016). Similarly, diversity and inclusion carry a different meaning because race, gender, language, and cultural issues take other forms. For example, race in Latino America challenges the conception of White vs person of color as the concept becomes silent and mainly refers to Indigenous and Afro-descendant individuals and communities because mestizos constitute the majoritarian privileged group (Navia-Antezana & Czarny-Krischkautzky, 2024). Likewise, queer identities enjoy lower visibility in the Latin America curriculums than in USA or Spain (Vázquez, 2021). Similarly, language diversity takes the form of the pervasiveness English language ideologies in majoritarian Spanish and Portuguese-speaking contexts, the invisibilization of minoritized Indigenous, Creole, and sign languages, and the scarcity of majoritarian European and Asian languages as elite privileges (Miranda et al., 2024). On top of that, the internationalization agenda competes with local goals because it serves the rationale of transnational organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank which economic and development policies distant from the region's strengths, capabilities, needs, and identities (Chiappa & Finardi, 2021; Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015).

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As has occurred in the region, Colombian universities have aligned with national language policies that promote English in response to the OECD and World Bank's recommendations (Ortiz et al., 2020). These policies foster investment in English programs reducing the resources for the protection and strengthening of other native and minoritarian languages, sometimes even hampering the promotion of Spanish and majoritarian languages in academic settings. Furthermore, such language policies worsen the lack of accessibility to higher education causing drop-off and graduation delay rates to increase, especially for students at academic risk (Ortiz et al., 2020; Usma et al., 2018).

Despite these shortcomings, some Colombian public universities, like the one in this study, have recognized the potential benefits of internationalization and the promotion of English (Miranda & Molina-Naar, 2021). They have committed to supporting local research agendas and national knowledge through internationalization policies that recognize local contexts, critically address globalization issues, and advocate for comprehensive education that includes academic writing, research, and scientific dissemination. They also recognized the

importance of English within a multilingual ecology that should meet disciplinary and communal practices.

In this complex scenario, decolonial perspectives offer a way to sustain and strengthen these policies for the region's development (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Mena-Lozano et al., 2020). From a decolonial perspective, progress can take a material, economic, and emancipatory form. This perspective opposes coloniality understood as epistemic violence inherent from colonial powers by the small elites and amplified through capitalism and neoliberalism market wars between modern powers. Decolonial opposition implies advocating for active disruption and dismantling of colonial hierarchies to promote epistemic justice rebuilding indigenous and the Other's knowledges, lifestyles, and ways of being by making them as valid, legitimate, valuable, and central as the westernized forms of knowledge production. Setting this proposal in motion implies breaking of colonial matrixes of power as marginalized, excluded, and decentralized voices and forces are stressed and emphasize in educations, academy, and research. In this way, knowledge can circulate freely and collectively for communal benefit instead of for private and individual advantage (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

In other words, universities can educate students beyond the technical preparation to efficiently utilize available resources or over the mercantile transformation of knowledge into services for global biopolitics. They can contribute to regional development through comprehension and appreciation of the natural, physical, spiritual, and cultural phenomena interplay in humankind's well-being (Castro-Gómez, 2007).

### **A proposal for internationalization from the territories**

The Colombian public university where this study took place has aimed for emancipatory progress proposing a territorial approach to internationalization for equity and peace (Universidad, 2017a). The institution acknowledges the geohistorical relationships of territories in a multi-scalar, critical, and reflective manner to break the dichotomy of regionalization versus globalization. This recognition aims to break the reproduction of inequalities and the homogenization of forms of knowledge, its production, and its appropriation. Consequently, this university recognizes, celebrates, and fosters plurilingualism by protecting and promoting national and foreign languages.

Despite this, its foreign language policy focuses on English because of its international importance (Universidad, 2014). The policy incorporates a five-level institutional English program mandatory for almost all undergraduate students. The English program draws on a socio-cognitive perspective, adopts an English for general academic purposes model, and adapts the proficiency descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference. The program aims to improve students' academic performance, professional competitiveness, and employment opportunities, as well as to facilitate cooperation with the international scientific community. The

methodological approach consists of 15 communicative tasks for students to connect their personal and academic lives with opportunities to interact authentically in solving communicative problems similar to those in the real world (Universidad, 2017b, p. 11).

From an intercultural approach and a decolonial perspective, engaging in real-world communication problems implies recognizing the conflicts existing in interacting with the Other (Aguado, 2018; Dervin, 2016). Conflict resolution implies recognizing the Other in its diversity and *Otherness* constituting the intercultural dialogue to which this university commits. However, whether this English program's communicative tasks actually align with the university's promotion of intercultural dialogue is unknown.

Because this English program impacts more than 12,000 students and 217 language instructors both in urban and rural areas, addressing this question can contribute not only to this public university's internationalization goals, but also to the search for practical applications of this framework in the midst of regional and global tensions in language education (Álvarez-Valencia & Valencia, 2023; Gutiérrez et al., 2021). In addition, this study proposes an innovative understanding of interculturality beyond the relational, functional, or critical perspectives through *Otherness* challenging views of diversity in higher education as the exoticization of Other. For these reasons, this study complements the existing scholarly work.

Researchers drawing on this framework have approached a plethora of topics from higher education level, teacher education and identity, policy, textbooks, to many other contexts. However, none have explored language ideology in a university English program created to meet internationalization needs to find opportunities for intercultural dialogue. Scholars in higher education, for example, have focused on minoritized ethnic populations (Álvarez-Valencia & Miranda, 2022; Álvarez-Valencia & Valencia, 2023; Gutiérrez & Aguirre, 2022; Gutiérrez et al., 2020; Ortiz et al., 2020; Usma et al., 2018). Despite their great contribution, these studies present interculturality and decoloniality as issues of ethnicity. Others have inquired language teacher education (Álvarez-Valencia, 2021; Álvarez-Valencia et al., 2023; Arismendi & Ramírez, 2019; Fernández, 2021; Granados-Beltrán, 2021, 2022; Herrera Pineda, 2018). Even though these studies shed light on language education, their scope cannot account for in-service language teachers' ideologies and practices when working with students in various disciplines. Scholars have also problematized English textbooks (Núñez-Pardo, 2020, 2022; Soto-Molina & Méndez, 2020). Other scholars have inquired about queer teacher identity (Ubaque-Casallas & Castañeda-Peña, 2021) and gay men slangs (Ramírez-Espinosa, 2021), policy analysis (Baker et al., 2024; Hurie, 2018), and immersion and exchange programs (Ayala Zárate, 2020; Rodríguez-Fuentes & Denny, 2024). Despite their pragmatical insights, these studies inform little about what is occurring inside our programs.

Consequently, this case study seeks to broaden the understanding of how the social constructions of the Other in the pedagogical tasks of an English Program can contribute to the promotion of intercultural dialogue within the framework of the

internationalization of higher education. This inquiry offers an alternative to confronting the ambiguity of the term interculturality through Otherness (Aguado, 2018; Dervin & Simpson, 2021). To account for the theory that supports this project, its impact, and possible development, we present in the following sections the conceptual framework, the method, our findings, the discussion, and the conclusion.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand how the social constructions of the Other in the communicative tasks proposed by this English program contribute to intercultural dialogue as part of the university's internationalization, we adopt an intercultural education discourse and a decolonial perspective (Aguado, 2018; Dervin, 2016). Intercultural education promotes understanding the complexities of racial and social conflicts without resorting to the classification and stratification of ethnic or cultural groups (Aguado & del Olmo, 2018; Dervin, 2016), while the decolonial approach deconstructs metanarratives associated with the university as a symbol of progress and moral superiority, supported by the hierarchy of knowledge, the fragmentation of societies, and the dominance of reason (Castro-Gómez, 2007).

### Intercultural Education

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Interculturality carries theoretical and practical tensions between European and Latin American perspectives, giving it a polysemic and somewhat confusing meaning in foreign language teaching and learning (Aguado, 2018; Dervin, 2016; Ferrão, 2010). Globalization reaches language classrooms primarily through the dynamics of local markets, media flows, the internet, social networks, and the indirect and virtual interactions students have with the Other (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Killick, 2011). Interculturality arises because students come to the classroom sharing cultural backgrounds and life experiences enriched by the geographical and historical contexts they come from, along with the material and symbolic resources gained through both physical and virtual interactions (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Therefore, not all discourses on interculturality account for the diverse forms of interaction. Instead, they reduce interculturality—and, by extension, internationalization—to differences in nationality, ethnicity, language, race, or any other form of exoticism (Aguado, 2018; Dervin, 2016). For these reasons, we adopt a perspective of intercultural education that moves beyond relational, functional, and critical visions of interculturality while assuming social responsibility (Aguado, 2018).

Relational interculturality fails to acknowledge the power dynamics present in intercultural encounters because it assumes these dynamics are natural. It ignores domination, conflict, injustice, inequity, and prejudice within intercultural encounters. Functional interculturality recognizes the possibility of conflict and seeks to mitigate it through intercultural knowledge, but only insofar as it maintains existing



social, political, and economic structures without questioning their operations (Ferrão, 2010; García & García, 2014).

Neither do we adopt the critical perspective to interculturality, as several Colombian authors do (Álvarez-Valencia, 2021; Álvarez-Valencia & Miranda, 2022; Ferrão, 2010; García & García, 2014; Granados-Beltrán, 2021, 2022; Ortiz et al., 2020; Usma et al., 2018). They explicitly denounce mechanisms and examples of oppression, injustice, and inequity by using historical analysis of the social, political, and economic structures that sustain sociocultural, ethno-racial, gender, sexual orientation, and other inequalities (Ferrão, 2010; García & García, 2014; Walsh, 2009). However, critical interculturality fails to recognize the intersectionality of individuals as representatives of multiple cultures and with various identity markers—a perspective that intercultural education encompasses (Dervin, 2016).

### **Decoloniality in Intercultural Education**

We propose to see intercultural education from a decolonial perspective (Castro-Gómez, 2007). This perspective goes beyond merely denouncing inequalities, the binary of oppressor and oppressed, and the abstraction of emancipation. Through decoloniality, we can analyze the communicative tasks of the program by questioning metanarratives of university epistemic and moral superiority that objectivize peoples and nature (Castro-Gómez, 2007). Recognizing subjectivities questions the assumption of difference as a necessary condition for diversity from a complexity paradigm (Aguado, 2018; Castro-Gómez, 2007). Adopting complexity entails challenging the colonial views of knowledge embedded in the structure of Latin American universities as a branched, Cartesian, analytical, disciplinary framework disconnected from the world and humanity (Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 86).

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The decolonial perspective recognizes ethnic and racial relationships that privilege European authors. In this sense, decoloniality goes beyond postcolonialism and cultural studies. On the one hand, postcolonial scholars' critic European colonial practices drawing on Western canons such as poststructuralism and postmodernism represented by authors like Foucault, Derrida, Gramsci who embodied Eurocentrism and the Global North episteme contradicting themselves. They promote, for example, nationalism and radicalism (Grosfoguel, 2011).

On the other hand, decoloniality embraces pragmatism through critical dialogue in epistemic, ethical, and political projects advocating for pluriversality. Decoloniality recognizes that breaking coloniality occurs in the racial, ethnic, and sexually marginalized, invisibilized, and excluded spaces and bodies (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). On the contrary, postcolonial and cultural studies remain in the abstractions of colonial discourses or economic relations, respectively, but fail at pragmatically escaping Cartesian dualism between natural and social sciences and humanities. In response, the decolonial proposal recognizes that an articulated network between race, episteme, and language constitute capitalist power. Therefore, decolonialization aims at challenging the language that constitute the

multidimensional system of racial, ethnic, epistemic, and economic hierarchies inherited from the colony.

The decolonial perspective in intercultural education enables the university, and in this case, this English program, to open itself to a diversity of knowledge and ways of life traditionally and subtly overlooked reaffirming its social, cultural, and economic relevance (Castro-Gómez, 2007). First, this perspective challenges instrumentalization of languages to mere economic purposes. Second, decoloniality challenges subalternized identities and colonial ideologies of instructors and learners. Third, decoloniality of language education aims at raising stakeholders' awareness of the sociopolitical and economic impact of English in the shaping of global dynamics. Four, teaching languages challenge epistemic *universality* while embracing *pluriversality* by including marginalized ethnic groups and rural communities' knowledge and practices (Granados-Beltran, 2022).

### **Otherness vs. Othering: Upsetting the Cultural Other**

10/36 Recognizing complexity in constructing the Other constitutes the process of Otherness. This process reconciles the polysemy of interculturality around an intercultural perspective that addresses injustice in education (Dervin, 2016). Otherness involves challenging understandings of the Other based on identity markers that suggest difference such as origin, nationality, language, accent, sex, gender, race, and ethnicity. Recognition of the Others' complexity challenges cultural-studies and postcolonial construction of the Other in the colonial/modern word system as cultural constructs (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). This process known as Othering employs discourses of differentialist bias to hypertrophy the cultural deviations from the imaginary European subject and reduces their complexities to deterministic categorizations such as stereotypes and representations (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007; Dervin, 2016). Othering shapes into ethnocentrism, racism, xenophobia, sexism, and classism (Dervin, 2016). Challenging stereotypical assumptions confronts these isms along with condescension and physical violence while scrutinizing imaginaries of superiority (Dervin, 2016). Thus, Otherness involves recognizing the Other under fair conditions (Aguado, 2018; Dervin, 2016).

Otherness begins by identifying similarities rather than highlighting differences, as other interculturality discourses often do (Dervin, 2016). Finding commonalities challenges power relations and confronts dominant ideologies. Furthermore, starting by acknowledging similarities is a way to combat prejudice, hate speech, static and prescriptive cultural views, and the overemphasis on difference (Aguado, 2018; Dervin, 2016). From this perspective, analyzing language use centers on questioning metanarratives of idealization, simplification, or exclusion of the Other as well as identifying its construction (Aguado, 2018; Castro-Gómez, 2007; Dervin, 2016).

## **Intercultural approach and decolonial perspective in Colombian Higher Education**

Scholars drawing on interculturality and decoloniality in foreign language education at the higher education level have researched its impact on minoritized groups, teacher education, materials, classrooms, language policy, and exchange programs. In regards minoritized groups, Usma et al. (2018) report a sociolinguistic profile of Indigenous students and the challenges the English language program posts to their identity, language, and academic success. Ortiz et al. (2020), Gutiérrez et al. (2020), and Gutiérrez and Aguirre (2022) advocates for critical intercultural dialogue and decoloniality as a pedagogical proposal in English language education for indigenous and Afro-Colombian students as well as professional development. Arias-Cepeda (2020) denounces the invisibilization of Indigenous English teachers in Colombia and epistemic inequality. Álvarez-Valencia and Miranda (2022) add to this framework social semiotics to understand the indigenous students' agency in reshaping English language policies and resignifying their traditions, identity, and languages. Álvarez-Valencia and Valencia (2023) explore opportunities for sustainable intercultural dialogue between education actors and indigenous students.

With regard to language teacher education, Álvarez-Valencia (2021) reports a pedagogical intervention articulating theoretically and pragmatically interculturality and multimodality perspectives. Granados-Beltrán (2021) recounts the incorporation of critical interculturality for the decolonization of English teaching courses. Fernández (2021) focuses on the role of a language learning platform in the development of critical intercultural attitudes and behaviors. Granados-Beltrán (2022) proposes a framework of six criteria from critical intercultural and decolonial perspectives to contest six colonial tensions in English language teacher education caused by the national foreign language policy. Álvarez-Valencia et al. (2023) take intercultural approaches and constructivism to inquire about the intercultural dimension of education quality policy for teaching programs.

In the context of teacher education in French, Herrera-Pineda (2018) incorporates intercultural communicative competence in an intermediate French class for pre-service language teachers using fictional intercultural environments. Arismendi and Ramírez (2019) research the academic, social, and languages challenges indigenous students in an English and French language teacher program face to succeed. Arismendi (2021) employs students' linguistic biography to analyze their needs and understandings of interculturality in English and French language teacher education.

Regarding materials and policy, Soto-Molina and Méndez (2020) examine and compare the concepts of linguistic colonialism and cultural alienation in university guidebooks for English teaching, and Baker et al. (2024) problematize assumptions about English as a colonial language in higher education through the perspectives of English learners from five countries. In terms of pedagogical experiences with no pre-service teachers, Gómez-Rodríguez (2017) examines the development of English learners' global literacy through critical discussion of major United States news media,

and Villada-Castro (2023) inquires how raising French language learners' awareness of their Otherness problematizes ethnocentrism, monolingualism, and mononormativism while promoting intercultural competence. Finally, regarding abroad programs for undergraduates, Rodríguez-Fuentes and Denny (2024) problematize the beliefs bounding institutional international collaboration when visiting students do not come from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math programs but peripheral ones to mentor them as writers with voice, agency, and rhetoric so that they become decolonial agents.

## METHOD

The methodological approach aligned with a qualitative paradigm grounded in intercultural education and a decolonial perspective, underpinned social constructionism. The qualitative nature consisted of an intrinsic exploratory case study (Patton, 2015; Richards, 2003; Yin, 2011). The research aimed at a detailed description of the discursive and ideological mechanisms influencing the construction of Otherness embedded in communicative tasks (Dervin, 2016). The strategies utilized for generating data were qualitative (Richards, 2003). These strategies make supported our attempt to embrace intercultural education and decoloniality by fostering diverse forms in which faculty construct their knowledge (García et al., 2002; Mena Lozano et al., 2020). Therefore, we underpinned social constructionism when analyzed how the tasks and participating faculty socially construct categories the Other.

### Data Generation

For data generation, we implemented three strategies: the analysis of 15 tasks from the program in an on-site modality (See Appendix A), the construction of faculty narratives in 10 *diálogo de saberes* seminars (knowledge dialogue methodology); and the students' final products.

#### *Document Analysis*

The 15 tasks were understood as cycles that include three basic elements: the model material, actions or subtasks A and B, and the context or conditions. Each task included a description of the task, subtasks, stages, actions, and support protocols. These protocols comprised rubrics (Universidad, 2017b). Tasks were examined as documents that actively influence "networks of actions" (Prior, 2008, p. 112). The tasks promoted interaction and involved the development of cognitive processes so that students achieved the proposed objectives, presenting the language in a structured, sequenced, and gradual manner (Universidad, 2017b).

### *English Faculty's Narratives*

Faculty narratives consisted of stories of lived and told experiences through which they made sense of their knowledge and practice (Barkhuizen, 2011). They made connections to give coherence and unravel the complexity of their stories. However, the construction of narratives may include inconsistencies or meaningless anecdotes (Barkhuizen, 2011). Furthermore, narrators may change their understanding of experiences or assign them different meanings when retelling the story. Therefore, narratives were co-constructed to build knowledge (Barkhuizen, 2011; García et al., 2002).

### *Diálogo de Saberes Seminars*

To generate the faculty narratives, we implemented 10 diálogo de saberes seminars (García et al., 2002; Mena Lozano et al., 2020). This strategy constituted our attempt at embracing a decolonial perspective in research (Mena-Lozano et al., 2020). Initially, we followed Mena-Lozano et al. (2020) suggestion of carrying out the seminars in a physical place, but we soon realized that some faculty preferred virtual meetings. Consequently, we implemented six seminars onsite and four virtually.

In each seminar, we used both analog and digital audiovisual tools for interaction and data recording. Analog tools included writing exercises where faculty members expressed their feelings, understandings, or opinions about the tasks. Digital tools included voice recorders for on-site seminars and Zoom recordings, Padlet posts, and Google documents for virtual seminars. The seminars were conducted in Spanish in an informal environment.

The seminars structure mainly resembled a loose and informal faculty meeting, but we adopted the framework and three different interactive research strategies proposed by García et al. (2002). Therefore, the seminars began with an explanation of the project concepts, the seminar objectives and dynamics, the participants' reasons for involving, and their roles within the seminar. Additionally, every seminar included a "description, expression, interpretation, awareness, and evaluation" phase (p. 59).

In the description phase, faculty shared their daily stories for them to identify encounters, agreements, disagreements, and conflicts in their classes. In the interpretation phase, they sought to make sense of their stories by explaining and problematizing them. In the awareness phase all participants recognized interaction and communication difficulties that occurred during the seminar to propose alternatives to interaction and interpretation of "experiences, knowledge, and meanings" (García et al., 2002, p. 62). Finally, in the evaluation phase faculty assessed the seminar's dynamics, participation, and the researchers' roles as facilitators to identify the possibilities and limitations of this strategy (García et al., 2002).

The seminars were planned and implemented between December 2023 and May 2024. Invitations to the seminars were sent out a week in advance through the

School of Languages' communicator, who distributed them via institutional email and the professors' WhatsApp group. Table 1. shows the seminars by date, theme, interactive strategy, and implementation mode.

**Table 1.** *Summary of Diálogo de Saberes seminars*

Seminar Number	Date	Topic	Strategy	On-site	Online
1	December 12, 2022	Faculty identification with the tasks	Quilt	x	
2	March 3, 2024	Faculty comprehension of internationalization at home and their strategies	Workshop	x	x
3	April 1, 2024	Faculty understanding of peace building, interculturality, and diversity	Workshop	x	x
4	April 10, 2024	Faculty ideologies on the social role of the university, English for academic purposes, and English learning	Workshop	x	x
5	April 22, 2024	Faculty problematization of Otherness in the tasks	Tree problem	x	x
6	May 6, 2024	Faculty perceived opportunities for Otherness within the tasks	Tree problem	x	

### *Students' Artifacts*

We also asked students to share their final products and analyzed them as artifacts (Yin, 2011). Final task products mediate between students' actions and thoughts (Wertsch, 1991, p. 119). The final products included videos, video scripts, email messages, motivation letters, letters of intent, slide presentations, magazine articles, newspaper profiles, among others. These materialize the meaning that students construct (Yin, 2011, p. 152).

To select them, we follow three criteria:

1. Participant faculty related the chosen final product with ideologies or discourses about cultural values and knowledge identified during the document analysis.

2. Participant faculty referred to them as the materialization of imaginaries of cultural realities, knowledge, and representation of the Other.
3. Participant faculty had detailed knowledge of the final product because it had already been submitted, assessed, and graded.

## **Context**

This study took place in a leading Colombian public university approaching internationalization from a territorial perspective to promote intercultural dialogue for equity and peace (UdeA, 2017a). We designed this study during the 2021 Colombian Social Boom in which mass media reported several racism and classism cases. Simultaneously, the institution had socialized its internationalization policy relating it to the development plan that fosters diversity, interculturality, equity, and peace. In this scenario, the foreign language policy and the English program were under assessment by various institutional actors including the Vice provost, the internationalization office, and the School of Languages, among others, to update them to the new institutional realities. For example, English was not the major language for students' international mobility; international mobility was only one internationalization strategy along with internationalization at home; and a multilingual language policy was being formulated to replace the current English-focused foreign language policy. We applied for a 2022 institutional grant, won it, and started the study in July 2023.

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The English program employed over 217 English language instructors, most of them adjuncts and a group of about 17 full-time lecturers and tenured professors who advised the program coordinator academically. The program coordination team made sure to provide the five program courses to every college year-round. As a result, the program served over 12.000 students from most colleges in online and onsite modalities. Although at the moment of the study, most courses were served virtually, we decided to focus on the onsite version of the program as it constituted its core, while the massive virtual implementation rather responded to a series of contingencies.

## **Participants**

Following a decolonial perspective, participants included all the English program instructors who participated in the data generation process encompassing both the researchers and the seminar attendees. As researchers, we gained our status as participants because we shared our vulnerability as we engaged in intercultural dialogue to make sense of the frameworks that led this study to analyze the task, co-construct the faculty narratives with their stories, and approached their students to contribute with final products that they directed and assessed. We position ourselves as insider researchers because our roles as faculty of this language program granted us firsthand knowledge of the context, enjoying direct access to the institutional

documents and the trust of other participants who were our colleagues and coworkers in several other academic and professional projects. We understood the explicit and tacit norms, practices, and challenges of teaching in this setting. Finally, we navigated the data from the generation phase to the analysis based on our lived experiences at the program (LaFrance, 2023). In total, the research team consisted of six members, five adjunct instructors and one full-time lecturer.

The seminar attendees positioned themselves beyond mere informants because they drew on their expertise as language educators and their appropriation of the communicative tasks to praise, critique, and propose alternatives to foster equity and peace through intercultural dialogue. In total, twelve adjunct instructors, one full-time lecturer, and one tenured professor participated in the ten seminars. Finally, the students who consciously and voluntarily gave their informed consent for their final task products to be analyzed also account as participants of this study. Five students from English courses 3 to 5 shared their final work with the research team. To protect the confidentiality of participants in the findings session, we used descriptive pseudonyms in Spanish reflecting their role during the seminars.

## Data Analysis

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We conducted a deductive analysis drawing on a multifaceted discourse perspective using constructivist and critical approaches (Dervin, 2016; Ramírez et al., 2010). This approach facilitates investigating how discourses about the Other are constructed from privileged positions while examining their effects. We could identify shortcomings in the discourse by exploring the texts and language to find explicit or implicit biases related to various identity markers. For this analysis, Dervin (2016) suggests a set of questions drawn from the work of R. Dhamoon and Ingrid Piller, which we combined with the critical reading guide proposed by Ramírez et al. (2010). The list below shows the questions used:

1. Who is speaking? What is being discussed?
2. Who or what are the main participants, the less important ones, or the invisible ones?
3. Is technical and specialized language or common language used to refer to what is being discussed?
4. What verbs describe the processes carried out by the participants? For example, material, mental, or other processes.
5. How specific are the circumstances described?
6. How are causality, responsibility, and agency attributed to the participants?
7. How does the author refer to themselves, the participants in the text, and the audience? Does this reveal a vertical or horizontal power relationship?
8. How are social differences marked in the text? What is their relationship to positions of power?



9. Who or what is described as abnormal, subnormal, normal, inferior, or superior?
10. Who is the audience?
11. In cases where interaction occurs, what are the reactions?
12. If culture is mentioned, what is the purpose of mentioning it?
13. How could this text have been written or presented differently?

To analyze each task, we divided the task materials into its major parts. Then, we created a matrix in Excel to do the analysis. Each researcher was in charge of the analysis of three or four tasks.

For the analysis of the narratives, we developed deductive categories based on Aguado and del Olmo's (2018, p.8), Dervin's (2016, pp. 103-106), and Castro-Gómez's (2007) proposals. Each of these authors draws on critical perspectives while questioning the social categories that result as constructions from social interactions, among them the concept of interculturality. Therefore, the deductive categories granted us a solid theoretical construct to analyze the data. We imported this list of categories to Nvivo 12 (License: NVP20-KZ000-6P0G6) to conduct a deductive analysis. Table 2 lists the categories and codes we develop for the analysis.

**Table 2.** *Deductive analytic categories and codes*

Category	Code
<b>Foundational Principles</b>	End differentialist biases
	Recognition of diversity
<b>Inclusive Teaching and Learning</b>	Active education agents
	Meaningful processes
	Holistic evaluation
<b>Adaptive Education Practices</b>	No universal recipes
	Constant experimentation
<b>Diversity and Collaboration</b>	Individualist biases
	Diversity enriches education
<b>Critical Pedagogy</b>	Failure in interculturality
	Exceptions, instabilities, and processes
	Intersectionality
	Flexibility
	Power differentials
	Language use
	Unveil the hidden discourse
	Critical thinking
	Reflect on biases and assumptions
<b>Curriculum and Content</b>	Diverse perspectives
	Representation
	Language origins
<b>Language Pedagogy</b>	Language as power
	Multilingualism
<b>Inclusive Classroom Practices</b>	Safe environment
	Equitable participation
<b>Teacher Training and Professional Development</b>	Decolonial training
	Ongoing learning
	Community involvement

<b>Community Engagement</b>	Cultural sensitivity
<b>Resource Selection</b>	Diverse resources
	Open educational resources
<b>Global Citizenship Education</b>	Cultural awareness
	Social justice
<b>Policy Advocacy</b>	Policy influence
	Institutional change

## FINDINGS

The findings show some opportunities for intercultural dialogue fostered through the social constructions of the Other proposed in the communicative tasks of the English Program. These possibilities exist within the curricular proposal because of the topics the communicative tasks cover and how the program instructors approach them. Nevertheless, the findings also unveil challenges for intercultural dialogue as the tasks reproduce ideological biases, colonial narratives, and cultural stereotypes, which mainly occur in subtle ways that faculty overlook.

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### Opportunities for Intercultural Dialogue

The program advocates for diversity and inclusion through the tasks and the faculty pedagogical practices. One, diversity appeared in the variety of peoples, characters, and places the tasks portray. Two, inclusion emerged in participants' commitment to promoting students' active learning. Three, diversity and inclusion became evident in the diverse methodological approaches the faculty recounted and the varied open access materials available. Finally, the two elements surfaced in the social justice issues presented to students during the task development.

#### *Diversity of characters, peoples, and places*

The tasks promote diversity of different groups of people at institutional, local, national, and international levels. The multi-scalar presentation of diversity widens students' perspectives as a participant teacher celebrates: "The program takes the student from his immediate context, such as his neighborhood or city, towards a global context, widening his perspective to different scenarios" (Voz, Seminar 3).

At the class level, the first four tasks of the program expose students to the diversity existing within the classroom as they share with the class their ways of living, family constitution, friends, background, skills, and interests through multimodal texts such as a video recording, an email, an interview, and an oral presentation. For example, task 1 in level 1 requires students to present their everyday routines, free time activities, and interests. Students recognize their classmates' ways of living and

the richness that surrounds them which some faculty used to include issues of dignity and equity.

At the university level, task 3 in level 2 and task 1 in level 4 invite students to explore the variety of spaces and activities within the university. These activities allow students to witness the university's efforts to promote inclusion, interculturality, ancestral peoples, sciences, and world perspectives. For example, for task 3 in level 2, the modelling text presents a conference brochure about food insecurity. One seminar attendee explained the kind of events students encounter while complete these tasks: "At the university, group activities take place to visualize ancestral cultures, such as fairs and presentations that highlight the importance of these traditions" (Voz, Seminar 3).

At the national and global level, students learn about influential people, ethnic diversity, and social issues. For example, for task 1 in level 3, students read about influential people in history such as Leonardo Da Vinci, David Bowie, Albert Einstein, and Frederick Douglas, and real entrepreneurs' profiles available online. In doing so, they talk about social issues. A faculty member explained this relationship: "The tasks include debates about contemporary issues and how individual profiles contribute to solutions" (Líder, seminar 5).

#### *Faculty commitment to teaching and learning*

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Faculty conveyed their commitment to make the communicative tasks meaningful for students. They connected the task to students' contexts, encouraging critical thinking and reflection, tailoring tasks to meet students' disciplinary needs, integrating real life scenarios, and promoting students' participation and ownership.

For instance, task 2 in level 4 invites students to investigate ethnic diversity in Colombia regarding territories, traditions, clothing, food, and language. To make the task more relatable to students' contexts, a participant faculty member narrated how she connected this descriptive task to today's problems affecting Indigenous peoples: "I connect this task with the problems that indigenous communities face today, and students find it enriching. They tell me: 'Teacher, I didn't know anything about this, I love it, I feel that we should help these groups more'" (Costa, Seminar 4).

Likewise, faculty take advantage of the task proposal for students to construct and assess their life project. Task 1 and 2 in level 5 ask students to write a statement of purpose and a cover letter, respectively. Some faculty used these two tasks to engage students in planning their lives. Another faculty member explained her opinion about these tasks: "English 5 is interesting because it makes the student envision themselves into the world, exploring how they see themselves and how others see them" (Voz, seminar 1).

Faculty also regarded the tasks as an opportunity to cultivate critical thinking by addressing cultural problems. A teacher shared the advantage he saw in the communicative tasks: "The tasks present diverse themes that invite us to explore

perspectives beyond the superficial, allowing us to find the cultural value of certain groups or problems" (Filósofo, Seminar 6).

Teachers also tailored the tasks to meet students' language needs. For example, task 2 in level 5 requires students to role-play a job interview. Given the program's English for general academic purposes model, this task is the same in all colleges. Nevertheless, this faculty member modified and adapted the task to meet students' disciplinary needs: "There are tasks that I modify so that they connect more with the reality of my students. For example, in the job interview, we adapt the questions according to their professional interests" (Lider, Seminar 4).

This task also illustrates the integration of real-life scenarios, along with other tasks such as task 1 and task 3 in level 5 that allow faculty to guide students to find information about universities they want to apply for or actual research projects they are conducting.

These efforts along with the task assessment rubric encouraged students to take ownership over their final products. Faculty proposed ideas and changes to the tasks to make them more meaningful integrating their own worldviews. However, enriching the tasks with issues related to diversity highly depended on faculty members' experience.

#### *Diversity in approaches and materials*

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In addition to task-based instruction, faculty said to engage in a variety of other strategies to help students develop the tasks. Furthermore, the program offers readings, videos, video transcripts, grammar exercises, and links to online resources, which do not prevent faculty from bringing teaching materials they have designed or curated. Regarding strategies, faculty fostered collaborative learning and group discussion besides the one proposed in the tasks. Moreover, their language teaching approach integrated all language skills, and they found various scaffolding techniques to support students' learning including the use of Spanish. They also engaged students in conversations about diversity and inclusion and plan their interaction through fictional characters that feature disabilities, sickness, gender or stereotypical issues (Novato & Nuevo, Seminar 3). They also engaged in conversations as another participant teacher related:

I really enjoy every task, maybe not the specific task, but how I get to the task and how I get the students to the task. In the conversations that you have with them, in the interactions that you have in the classroom where they start to associate things. (Voz, Seminar 1)

These variety of methodological strategies demonstrates a degree of flexibility in faculty approach to intercultural issues. They show their adaptability to various topics present in the tasks but also emerging within their classes. In short, the analysis shows that faculty practices scape rigid recipes.

### *Social justice issues*

Finally, social issues are explicitly presented to students in the task description or in the proposed materials nurturing cultural awareness. Issues regarding slavery, food security, ethnic diversity, health, and gender violence appear in tasks such Task 1 in level 3 and task 2 and 3 in level 4. These tasks directly ask students to consider issues of equity, peace, health, access, and ethnicity. For instance, the reading about Leonardo Da Vinci addresses parental negligence and incarceration for homosexuality, and the reading about Frederick Douglas discusses slavery in the United States.

Some participant faculty also described how they approach Task 2 in level 4, which invites students to inquire about Colombian Indigenous groups and describe them. Faculty approached this task by problematizing minoritized groups and empathy instead of focusing on ethnic description and differentiation (Cuadriculado, Seminar 4). Other faculty used this task to challenge students to evaluate their biases regarding stereotypes of beauty and race (Nuevo, Seminars 3, 4). Attempts to recognize misrepresented groups and raise students' awareness of social issues showcase faculty attempts to shelter a safe space in the classrooms.

In conclusion, the tasks offer four opportunities for intercultural dialogue through the constructions of Otherness promoted in the official material and the faculty appropriation of it. Nonetheless, many challenges to the intercultural dialogue take place in the English program and across the proposed tasks. The following section expands on them.

### *Challenges to Intercultural Dialogue*

From an intercultural education approach and a decolonial perspective, the tasks and its faculty reproduced cultural and colonial biases against the Other hampering opportunities for intercultural dialogue. First, the tasks failed to represent historically marginalized groups. Two, neither did the tasks nor did the faculty stop differentialist biases. Third, the task and the faculty normalized traditional relations of power promoting colonial biases and practices missing opportunities to embrace decoloniality. In brief, the tasks reproduce stereotypes, stratification of peoples and forms of knowledge, and imaginaries about the university, while faculty missed opportunities to identify and challenge such vestige of coloniality.

### *Misrepresentation of historically marginalized groups*

In an attempt to provide model texts, promote academic literacy, and foster ethnic diversity the tasks misrepresent minoritized peoples. Task 2 in level 4 serves as the most illustrative example. The task asks students to describe a Colombian Indigenous group in terms of territory, traditions, clothes, food, rituals or celebrations, etc. The task incidentally isolates Indigenous people as objects to be studied from the objective distant that the academic authority invested by the university grant students. The

description requested reduced the identity of Indigenous peoples to a list of cultural facts lacking any intersectionality or complexity. The limitation of the topic romanticizes the Other as holder of ancestral magic but do not recognize other forms of being the Other. For example, members of the LGBTQ+ community, other ethnic groups, women, and working-class college students are all invisibilized in this well-intentioned proposal.

Other tasks also reproduce colonial ideologies. In task 1 from level 3, Students need to write a profile of a local social agent. To model the writing of this portrait, the program proposes a reading about Frederick Douglas retailing the life of a slave and abolitionist. Despite the importance of Douglas as historical figure, the fact that this United States character has been chosen raises questions. First, Colombia and Latin America have also undergone slavery processes. However, none of the protagonists of this history has been selected. In fact, the value of reading about Douglas' life seems to lie on its nationality and not on its lived experience.

In addition, none of the participant faculty problematized these tasks and materials. On the contrary, a couple of them celebrated the opportunity to learn about Indigenous communities. As a result, students reproduced these ideologies in their final products. The following excerpt shows the objectivization of the *Páez* Indigenous community:

In conclusion, the *Páez* people are of vital importance for the ethnic and cultural diversity in the country, their ancestors were the first settlers of this territory, for this reason we must fight to preserve the culture and tradition of this tribe, so that future generations can learn about the variety of customs, beliefs and traditions that exist in Colombia. (Journalist, Final product 1)

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This excerpt concludes a newspaper article about the *Páez* people in which the student relates the main cultural characteristics and their conflicts with Colombian illegal armed groups in their territory. Although her work showcases the completion of the task and a great achievement as a foreign language learner, the conclusion demonstrates her positionality as an outsider with a higher moral authority, her privilege out of the conflict as a spectator, and her perspective on the value of the *Páez* to an imaginary mainstream Colombia population.

### *Differentialist biases*

The tasks reinforce the differentiation between groups instead of calling for a recognition of similarities and commonalities as starting point of the intercultural encounter. For example, task 3 in level 4 asks students to nominate an outstanding scholar in their disciplines and engage in a debate to defend their choice. This task focuses on those successful scientists who stand out for ground breaking work, reinforcing the idea of outliers and that, even among them, they are different. From an intercultural perspective, this task misses the opportunity to guide students to

question what academic challenges, struggles, and dreams these idealized academic models share with them.

Other tasks that demonstrate this differentialist biases include tasks 2 and 3 in level 3 which require students to inquire about places and differentiate them as good to visit from a tourist perspective. Task 2 asks students to survey people to know about the places they prefer to visit in the city. Task 3 asks students to select places to visit during the day and at night. These tasks reproduce marginalization of city areas when faculty do not intervene and problematize the model texts and students' choices. Additionally, none of these two tasks require students to get involve with the community in the areas they choose, not even virtually.

Task 2 in level 3 promotes interaction with visitors not with locals. In addition, this task model text focuses on the perspective of English-speaking foreigners from power countries and emphasizes the appeal of the city for them, reinforcing colonial ideologies. One of the visiting places the model text describes refers to a popular party area in the city, but it only highlights the party venues without problematizing the area suggested. Ironically, local news constantly reports issues related to prostitution, child sexual abused, scams, and gentrification closely associated to foreigners in the area. The following excerpt from the task handout illustrates this point:

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The people who undertook this survey were all tourists from Australia (5 people: 4 men, 1 woman), the United States (3 people: 2 men, 1 woman) and New Zealand (2 people: 1 man, 1 woman). Seven men and three women. Informal conversations with said participants made me realize how attractive Medellín is for foreigners. (Universidad, 2014)

#### *Normalized traditional relations of power*

An English for general academic purposes model and the leading research nature of this university seem to contribute to the normalization of academic stratification. In an attempt to promote internationalization, the three tasks in level 1 invite students to position themselves as candidates in a cultural exchange with English speaking countries. Task 1 in level 5 requires students to write a statement of purpose for a university in an English-speaking country, and Task 2 in the same level position them in the English-speaking job market. These tasks embody subtle ideologies about internationalization. They emphasize that learning English implies to create relations with English speaking nations, that English equates international mobility, and that meritorious academic and professional path should lead to leave the country and move to an English speaking one. Even if the tasks do not explicitly refer to the Global North, neither do they suggest international mobility to the Global South. Finally, none of these tasks provide a pragmatic reason for students to enroll in international mobility and assumed this is the way to be in academy.

Furthermore, during seminar 2, participants explicitly express their lack of familiarity with the institutional international policy. Consequently, faculty had little



political and theoretical knowledge besides their own internationalization experience to question, problematize, or potentialize these tasks. "I tell them: 'that is the model, it is international, but it can be applied to Brazil, to other places in South America and even here'" (Voluntad, Seminar 2).

Moreover, some seminar attendees even recognize from their teaching experiences two issues with these tasks. One, students may not have a plan for international mobility or graduate education or simply may not even understand the dynamics of an academic career. Two, students may not want to leave their country or to move to an English-speaking country. Many of them even translate their final products into Spanish later to apply for international mobility programs in Latin American countries or to apply for graduate school in Colombia.

Besides the ideological assumptions about internationalization and subtle promotion of brain drain, Task 1 in level 3 and Task 1 in level 5 ask students to research and choose national and international universities where they would like to study. These two tasks emphasize epistemic colonialism by promoting universities highly ranked under neoliberal indicators of knowledge production, research, and academic quality. In other words, these tasks reproduce stratification of knowledges and normalized rankings that hamper universities development when these are not high performing research or international universities. The sum of findings leads to conclude that despite advances in diversity and inclusion, the tasks hamper intercultural dialogue as they impede Otherness in subtle ways many times imperceptible to faculty. The following session will expand on the implications of these findings.

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## DISCUSSION

Inquiring about the opportunities for intercultural dialogue through *Otherness* in communicative tasks of this institutional English program, we found instances of advocacy for diversity and inclusion that may contribute to intercultural dialogue for equity and peace. However, fostering diversity alone can promote differentialist biases and misrepresentations of marginalized, invisibilized, and minoritized groups hampering Otherness. These findings leave practical insights when approaching intercultural issues.

On the one hand, the promotion of diversity and inclusion represents a first and important step towards intercultural dialogue. First, the program's and faculty attempts at considering diversity respond to the call to challenge a long history of policies and programs neglecting cultural, linguistic, social, and ethnic diversity (Gutierrez et al., 2021). The fact that the tasks explicitly recognize peoples' and ethnic diversity breaks common silence about multi-diverse communities in the territory (Gutierrez et al., 2021). Second, diversity belongs to every moment of the education process (Dervin, 2016). Therefore, incorporating diverse means and modes of communication utilizing today's digital tools, as these communicative tasks propose, equip students to understand, construct, and share meaning in the construction of the

Other at the social, cultural, and geopolitical level (Álvarez-Valencia, 2021). Third, inviting students to explore their immediate and close contexts as several tasks propose also deviates from a tradition of textbooks privileging a prescriptive, rigid, and singular perspective of culture and language (Núñez-Pardo, 2020).

On the other hand, these attempts fall short to host intercultural dialogue without the implementation of other decolonial actions. First, the design of the tasks needs to include the participation of diverse communities to escape monolithic and monocultural views from the outsider's perspective. (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Núñez-Pardo, 2020). Task 2 in level 4, in which students write about Indigenous communities, exemplifies the outsider's perspective and prescriptive understanding of Indigenous cultures. Including the insiders' perspective implies to recognize that learning of English depends on the material conditions that determine the learner's identities (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). Consequently, the designing of communicative tasks should account for learners' socioeconomic class and status, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion preferences, spirituality, education background, and rurality to empower them instead of marginalizing them (Baker et al., 2024). Tasks such as the three tasks in level 1, in which students apply to a cultural exchange program, and the two first tasks in level 5, in which students apply to postgraduate programs and job positions abroad, show the little consideration of this insider's perspective. They omit the cultural capital and background students have to approach these tasks as well as their interests and community values (Miranda et al., 2024).

Second, the tasks and its implementation should go beyond presenting diversity to students. Both the task proposal and faculty pedagogical actions should equip students to critically assess instances of racism, discrimination, and injustice (Dervin, 2016). In the student's final product about the *Páez* Indigenous community presented above, the student recognized the armed conflict they face but missed the contextual conditions that brought them to that situation and practical actions to protect them. In other words, diversity and related terms such as community or culture cannot replace actual people because they may share more than characteristics that categorize and stratify them. They also share dreams, wishes, and agency. Forgetting this results in using diversity to reproduce racist and xenophobic attitudes (Dervin, 2016). In the case of the tasks, appealing to ethnic groups such as Indigenous and Afro-Colombians creates imaginaries about majorities in Colombia and monocultural diversity. As a result, internationalization efforts invisibilize multiple forms of diversity positioning students' identities as subaltern to these imagined majorities (Ortiz et al., 2020). In this context, students learn English to passively complete globalization and neoliberal agendas instead of meeting and responding to the territorial contexts, capacities, and needs (Baker et al., 2024)

Third, intercultural dialogue will take place in the English program when the design and implementation of the task put together these fragmented views of diversity (Dervin, 2016; Ortiz et al., 2020). Consolidating these fragments implies designing tasks that recognize and promote multiple forms of diversity, the real capacities, agency, and contributions of invisibilized and minoritized groups, and

multiple forms of knowledge construction (Álvarez Valencia, 2018; Álvarez-Valencia & Miranda, 2022; Ortiz et al., 2020). In terms of the resources serving as text models for the development of the tasks, they need to stop promoting naturized and glorified lifestyles and ways of being that hamper the visibility of plurality. The pop culture characters, researchers, entrepreneurs, and universities used for the tasks exemplify the dissemination of Western hegemonic cultures utilizing incomplete and biased narratives (Núñez-Pardo, 2020, 2022). On the contrary, teaching and learning resources should explicitly present and problematize issues of cultural and identity markers beyond ethnicity and language diversity but also gender, sexual orientation, rurality, etc. (Gutiérrez et al., 2020; Ubaque-Casallas & Castañeda-Peña, 2021; Usma et al., 2018).

Fourth, discursive and ideological devices that privilege Western hegemonic cultures and Anglophone varieties of English in faculty' discourses also need to be redressed through professional development. Although these discourses appeared subtly during the data analysis, participants entangled in conversation that showcased them. Therefore, the program needs to plan strategies to engage faculty in conversations about their attitudes, perceptions, and professional identity to unveil their ideologies and construct more inclusive perspectives (Aguado & del Olmo, 2018). Faculty may need support making connections with Colombian real life in urban and rural areas addressing complex and frequently invisibilized issues (Usma et al., 2018). One way to address such professional development emerge in the very research strategies these study and others have promoted as examples of decoloniality. This study drew on *diálogo de saberes* seminars, interactive strategies to research, and constructivist and critical approaches to elicit and value faculty' ways to construct knowledge. Besides our proposal, other studies have previously proposed decolonial approaches like *círculos de palabra* (word circle) (Álvarez-Valencia & Miranda, 2022; Usma et al., 2018). Both strategies come from work with Indigenous communities (Mena Lozano et al., 2020), but their value to integrate them in language teacher professional development lies in its emerging and co-constructed nature. It can potentially engage faculty in self-reflection, criticism, and intercultural sensitivity to welcome other forms of teaching and learning (Álvarez-Valencia & Miranda, 2022).

Despite the insights this study provides, we acknowledge its limitations. The first one being our capacity to convene faculty to participate. The twenty participants in our study cannot represent the more than 200 faculty members working in the program. We also recognize that this study limits to explore the existing tasks in the program but do not propose new tasks to foster intercultural dialogue, construct Otherness, and materialize decolonial pedagogies. Finally, although we attempted to include students' voices through the analysis of their final products, other dimensions of their perspectives are still missing. Consequently, further research should go beyond exploration and propose strategies to incorporate the voices of faculty and students in the design of *decolonial* curricular elements such as communicative tasks.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to answer what opportunities for intercultural dialogue exist through Otherness in the communicative tasks of an institutional English program. We started this research confident that answering this question will inform the institution whether this program aligns to the territorial approach to internationalization. Additionally, we trust that the study will leave valuable lessons for the field and education actors in search of intercultural and decolonial proposals to language education. In fact, this study leaves five main conclusions for the field. In first place, the communicative tasks cannot yet promote intercultural dialogue for equity and peace because they still reproduce subaltern visions of the Other while disseminating glorified dominant Western values about being and knowing without problematizing them. In second place, there is an evident advance in incorporating diversity and inclusion in the program and the data leaves useful examples of the multiplicity of topics and multimodality in the tasks. In third place, the promotion of diversity happens to be insufficient to construct Otherness in terms of mutual respect because of misrepresentations of marginalized groups occur given the outsiders' perspective and differentialist biases in the tasks. In fourth place, professional development strategies for faculty to embrace decolonial practices need to equip them with tools to question themselves as colonial agents. Finally, a decolonial professional development and decolonial research in language education can draw on pragmatic strategies such *dialogue de saberes* seminars.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A. 15 Communicative Language Tasks in the Foreign Language Program

**Table 1A.** *List of tasks by English course. Tasks from course 1 to course 3 include a context.*  
*Universidad de Antioquia (2017, February)*

Course	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
1	<p>Task: A host family will welcome you, so they have requested you to make a short video introducing yourself with basic personal information and a brief description of your regular activities to get to know you better.</p> <p>Context: You are going to apply to an exchange program in an English-speaking country. A host family has requested you a short video introducing yourself in order to get to know you better.</p>	<p>Task: Answer an email with the information requested in a previous email.</p> <p>Context: Read an email from the host family you are staying with, they are going to send their son/daughter to stay with your family here in Colombia. The host/hostess sends you an email asking you about the people you live with and the place where you live.</p>	<p>Task: Prepare for and carry out an interview for your exchange program, include information on your personal life, skills, and interests.</p> <p>Context: An exchange program requires you to take an interview with the official representatives.</p>
2	<p>TASK: Publish a short video on the platform describing your personality and interests.</p> <p>Context: Your teacher created a group on Google Classroom for you to get to know each other better.</p>	<p>Task: Ask a professional questions concerning his/her personal and educational background, academic interests and plans. Share the interview with your classmates (either in video or podcast format), Write one paragraph description of your Interviewee.</p> <p>Context: You and your team members are going to interview a professional from your academic unit.</p>	<p>Task: Your team will do the following: a) select a place or event; b) take or collect pictures of it; c) write a description about what people do and why you chose it; and d) post the product of your work on the website.</p> <p>Context: The university wants to develop the English language website, and your group will be in charge of writing about different places or events on campus.</p>

Course	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
3	<p>TASK: You and a classmate want to nominate a candidate. You will write a newspaper profile to send it to the organizers of the event. The report has to include the following: a) their biodata (50 words); b) an account of their deeds; and c) a list of arguments as to why this person should be the winner of the award.</p> <p>Context: A contest has been announced to award somebody for his/her actions in the city.</p>	<p>TASK: In small groups, you will create a questionnaire to find out about different people's opinions regarding the best places in Medellin. You will survey at least three people. Then, the whole group will analyze the collected information and share the results.</p> <p>Context: International students visiting the university want to learn about the best places to see in Medellin.</p>	<p>Task: Choose two entertaining activities in groups: one to do during the day and another one at night. Prepare a (poster) presentation to persuade the audience that includes the following: 1) a description of the places; 2) those activities you can do there, and 3) the reasons why you chose that place. The whole class will decide which proposal is the most appealing one.</p> <p>Context: Your faculty is providing the space to enhance their student experience. You and three more classmates will decide on two extra-curricular activities to take place in that space on campus. One during the day and one at night.</p>
4	<p>TASK: Read about three Colombian universities. Identify their location, weather, means of transportation used to get around and an extra feature of your choice. Share your findings with the class with an oral report.</p>	<p>TASK: The University will publish a series of articles about indigenous communities from our country. In pairs, you will write an article about one of them including: a) demographic and geographic information; b) language, food and clothing; c) traditions (celebrations and customs)</p>	<p>Task: The most influential scholar in a discipline will be chosen. He or she can be either alive or deceased. You and your classmates will participate in a forum to argue the reasons why your nominee is the best. Your nomination should be based on this person's contributions to the academic field.</p>

Course	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
5	TASK: You will apply to a graduate program in a foreign university. One of the requirements of the application process is to write a statement of purpose, so you will write one. It should include the following: a) a description of your educational background and the reasons why you chose the graduate program; b) a summary of your undergraduate achievements so far that stimulated your desire for graduate studies and c) the contribution you will make to the program and why they should choose you.	TASK: You will apply for a job in a very well-known institution/corporation in which a person will interview you. Prepare to answer questions related to your area of expertise, your personal and interpersonal skills, experience and other job-related aspects.	Task: To celebrate the end of the English program, your group will participate in an Academic Fair called Different Worlds. Your group will create a world from the perspective of your area of knowledge (e.g. A world from science, a world from education, etc.) Decide on the aspects you will include, e.g. economy, religion, language, government, education, traditions, inhabitants' characteristics, etc. You will be assigned a stand in order to present it to public in general. The format could have a video, posters, a mockup of your country, etc.