

**INTEGRATING CULTURAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNING: ANALYZING ITS IMPACT ON STAFF MEMBERS AT A
BILINGUAL SCHOOL IN TUNJA**

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UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS-TUNJA

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Thesis, partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Pedagogy

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Nota de Aceptación

Firma del presidente del jurado

Firma del jurado

Firma del jurado

Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English language learning process among staff members at a bilingual school in Tunja, utilizing participatory action research. Data collection involved language tests, focus groups, teacher journals, semi-structured interviews, and student artifacts. Results indicated that cultural literacy was constructed through the interactions of staff members during the English course. By examining the challenges faced, the processes of cultural interaction, and the practices developed throughout the learning journey, the conclusion highlights the importance of recognizing and incorporating participants' cultural backgrounds into the educational framework, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of language acquisition and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Keywords: cultural literacy, English language learning, dialogic pedagogy, bilingual education, culturally relevant pedagogy.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza el impacto de integrar la literacidad cultural en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma inglés entre los miembros del personal en una escuela bilingüe en Tunja, utilizando investigación-acción participativa. La recolección de datos involucró pruebas de idioma, grupos focales, diarios de profesores, entrevistas semiestructuradas y artefactos de los estudiantes. Los resultados indicaron que la literacidad cultural se construyó a través de las interacciones de los miembros del personal durante el curso de inglés. Al examinar los desafíos enfrentados, los procesos de interacción cultural y las

prácticas desarrolladas a lo largo del trayecto de aprendizaje, la conclusión resalta la importancia de reconocer e incorporar los antecedentes culturales de los participantes en el marco educativo, mejorando así la efectividad de la adquisición del idioma y fomentando un entorno de aprendizaje más inclusivo.

Palabras claves: Literacidad cultural, aprendizaje del idioma inglés, pedagogía dialógica, educación bilingüe y pedagogía culturalmente relevante.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The integration of cultural literacy into the English language learning process is essential in contemporary educational environments, especially in bilingual contexts where diverse cultural identities converge. This thesis investigates the impact of incorporating cultural literacy into the English learning process for staff members at a bilingual school in Tunja, Colombia. As educational institutions become meeting points for various cultures, it is crucial to adapt educational practices to reflect and embrace this diversity, promoting an inclusive and effective learning environment.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze how the integration of cultural literacy into an English course affects communication and interaction within the school community. The research questions focus on identifying the challenges faced by staff members when communicating in the target language, describing the process of cultural interaction, and characterizing the cultural literacy practices developed throughout the English learning journey.

This thesis aligns with the research line of Humanism, Society, and Ethics within the master's program in Pedagogy, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations and social responsibility in educational practices. By integrating these principles, the study underscores the need for a more inclusive and humanistic approach to language teaching that respects and values the diverse cultural backgrounds of all participants.

Chapter one addresses the problem statement, justification, and instructional design.

Chapter two discusses the theoretical framework supporting this research, focusing on four

key areas: cultural literacy and dialogic pedagogy in language learning, culturally relevant pedagogy in language learning, impact of social background on language learning, and bilingual education and cultural identity. Chapter three outlines the methodological framework of the research, including the approach, paradigm, method, participant profile, and the setting of the study. Chapter four presents the findings based on the specific objectives of the research. Chapter five outlines the conclusions, revealing how culturally relevant pedagogy, coupled with practical language activities, enhances both language proficiency and cultural awareness among participants. Finally, chapter six addresses the pedagogical implications and suggests areas for further research.

In summary, this research demonstrates how culturally relevant practices, combined with dialogic pedagogy, contribute to a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Wells, 1999). The findings offer valuable insights into the impact of cultural literacy on English language learning, providing recommendations for educators and policymakers in bilingual and multicultural contexts.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Discussions around cultural literacy have been at the forefront of academic debate. This discourse has evolved from a homogeneous, top-down creation of canons and artifacts (Malkki, 1995) to a more pluralistic and fluid conceptualization. This shift opens the possibility of understanding cultural literacy as a social construction. It is through cultural encounters and interactions, such as those present in the English language learning process, that cultural literacy becomes an opportunity. According to Street (1984), literacy as a social practice should encompass oral and written practices as intertwined activities within situated contexts.

Beyond teaching English, institutions and English language classrooms can aspire to reflect the societies they wish to create. Schools are microcosms of society, providing a palpable vision of the social realities and backgrounds experienced daily in every home. Thus, schools become literacy communities—a center of intercommunication where literacy takes place through interactions with others.

Broadly defined, literacy communities are "dynamic classroom environments rich in social relationships, partnerships, and collaborations involving talking, reading, thinking, and writing" (Rousculp & Maring, 1992, p. 384). Within these communities, members learn through social interactions to appropriate the discursive practices sanctioned by the community, acquire community norms and values, and fully participate in reading and writing activities (Hiebert & Raphael, 1996).

In this way, the school serves as an authentic reflection of modern society's experiences. Even when reproducing pre-established cultural forms and presenting them as universal, the school legitimizes the established social order (Giroux, 2005). This reality is somewhat masked when discussing private schools in Colombia, particularly bilingual schools. The common perception of bilingual schools includes students with wide opportunities to learn English, parents who significantly invest in their children's education, highly qualified professionals, and well-maintained facilities. However, this perception often overlooks staff members who maintain the school infrastructure or perform essential functions with low visibility. This disparity highlights the gap between privileged and underprivileged community members concerning their exposure to cultural knowledge and the target language.

To document this issue, a diagnostic process was carried out with a group of employees at a private bilingual school in Tunja. Qualitative instruments such as language test, a semi-structured interview and an initial focus group were employed. These tools aimed to explore the beliefs of the administrative staff regarding their adjustment to the bilingual environment. Additionally, a teacher's journal and participants' artifacts were analyzed throughout the course, and a final focus group was conducted to assess the overall effectiveness of integrating cultural literacy in the English learning process. The participants included teacher assistants, general service workers, kitchen staff, maintenance personnel, receptionists, the head of human resources, accounts, drivers, architects, among others.

Despite their significant roles, these staff members formed a distinct segment of the school community that did not speak English. Therefore, understanding their perspective on being part of a bilingual school and the challenges and opportunities they encountered was crucial. They were invited to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) and participate in an initial focus group.

In this bilingual school, English was primarily spoken in classrooms across various subjects. However, considering the institution's bilingual philosophy, a substantial portion of the school community was not yet integrated into this environment. The information collected revealed their essential role in interacting with teachers and students, as they assisted in preschool classrooms, distributed snacks and lunch, and maintained the physical infrastructure.

The results showed a strong desire among these staff members to fully integrate into the school's bilingual culture. Daily interactions with students highlighted their commitment to acquiring English language proficiency, motivated not only by the need for effective communication but also by the desire to optimize their professional roles. They viewed English proficiency as crucial, allowing them to engage more effectively with students and embrace opportunities for personal and professional growth. Many had not studied English for years due to time constraints, lack of necessity, misconceptions about the language, or financial limitations preventing them from enrolling in English courses.

Following the diagnostic phase, an initiative to plan an English course for the administrative staff was discussed and approved by the school principal. Sixty members

volunteered, took a placement test that included both a written and an oral component, which were conducted by English teachers from the school in an interview format and a language test form (see Appendix B). Of the 60 individuals who took the exam, 27 expressed a desire to participate in this research, while the remaining participants were offered a program in intermediate-advanced English; however, they are not part of this investigation.

The test results indicated that most had a very low level of grammar, listening, reading, and writing competencies. Consequently, they viewed this as a challenging opportunity to better assist students and teachers. They suggested incorporating more speaking, pronunciation, reading, and vocabulary practice to meet their communication needs, which naturally led to the consideration of a dialogic pedagogy to facilitate cultural dialogue and understanding beyond linguistic domains.

Thus, the problem statement for this research consists of three aspects aligned with cultural literacy. First, understanding the experiences of staff members learning English. Second, creating a course that addresses their language learning needs in real-life contexts. Finally, considering their diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, the aim is to integrate staff members as active participants in a bilingual school community through building cultural literacy.

The following research question emerged to guide the subsequent research:

Research question

What is the impact of integrating cultural literacy in the English learning process of a group of staff members from a bilingual school in Tunja?

General objective:

To analyze the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English language learning process among a group of staff members of a bilingual school in Tunja.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify the challenges that the staff members of a bilingual School have faced when communicating with the members of the community in the target language.
- Describe the process followed by the participants in their attempt to establish genuine cultural interaction with the members of the academic community in the target language in specific social situations.
- Characterize the cultural literacy practices built by the participants within the school community throughout their English learning process.

1.2 Justification

While it is true that cultural literacy takes place through communities of interaction where relevant aspects such as socioeconomic level, previously acquired personal goals and conceptions, and external influence integrate into the teaching-learning process of each individual immersed in a literacy community. It is also true that societies interact mainly among their peers and counterparts, which leaves aside the cultural influence that individuals may have with cultural communities with which they share for work reasons, but not as active individuals.

Workplaces should become inclusive environments where all employees and workers have the opportunity to interact and benefit mutually through cultural interaction and the construction of literacy with a common goal. Inclusive workplaces foster a culture of respect and collaboration, which can significantly enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness. As highlighted by Shore et al. (2011), inclusive workplaces are characterized by practices that ensure all individuals feel valued and have equitable access to opportunities, which can lead to increased creativity and innovation. When employees from diverse backgrounds engage in meaningful interactions, they bring unique perspectives that can enrich problem-solving and decision-making processes (Shore et al., 2011).

Moreover, inclusive environments contribute to personal and professional development by supporting continuous learning and cultural literacy. Cultural literacy in the workplace involves understanding and appreciating diverse cultural contexts, which

enhances communication and reduces misunderstandings among team members. According to Cox and Blake (1991), managing diversity effectively requires creating an environment where all employees can contribute their skills and experiences, thereby fostering a more inclusive and productive workplace. This approach not only benefits individual employees but also strengthens the organization's ability to compete in a global market by leveraging diverse viewpoints and skills.

The construction of literacy within a workplace is not limited to formal education but also includes informal learning through interactions and shared experiences. As argued by Gee (2015), literacy is a social practice that extends beyond reading and writing to include the ability to navigate and contribute to various social contexts. In this sense, workplaces that promote cultural interaction and literacy contribute to a more dynamic and adaptable workforce.

Creating inclusive workplaces where cultural interaction and literacy are prioritized aligns with broader organizational goals of enhancing employee engagement and performance. By fostering an environment where all workers can participate fully and benefit from shared learning experiences, organizations can achieve a common goal of increased innovation and effectiveness.

This research aims to analyze the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English language learning process of a group of workers in a bilingual school. To achieve this, it is necessary to understand how communities learn among themselves, taking into

account their social backgrounds, opportunities, and challenges in a developing country like Colombia.

According to the World Bank (2023), Colombia faces significant challenges with multidimensional poverty, which affects 12.1% of the population. Moreover, only 4 out of every 10 high school graduates in Colombia can access higher education, and the country ranks 75 out of 111 countries in English proficiency (EF EPI, 2023). These statistics highlight the broader socio-economic context surrounding this study and underscore the importance of addressing educational disparities through initiatives such as integrating cultural literacy into language learning processes.

Therefore, within the benefits provided by this research, various categories can be identified, including personal, academic, institutional, social, epistemic, and methodological aspects. These make this study relevant, indispensable, and a priority in the specific field of cultural literacy in the learning of the English language in the workplace settings within academic settings.

On a personal level, identifying the challenges that staff members have faced in their English language learning process will enhance the cultural literacy construction of each individual by outlining a cross-cutting English program that covers familiar and high-interest topics for each participant. This will strengthen confidence in the use and mastery of the language, allowing personal, professional, and self-confidence growth.

Academically, describing the process followed by participants in their attempt to establish genuine cultural interaction within a bilingual academic community will provide

insights into how to start building cultural literacy in bilingual school settings with different socioeconomic characteristics. This will contribute to reducing social gaps and characterizing interactions in more literate societies, serving as a basis for future research.

Institutionally, analyzing how a group of workers can interact with students and teachers in bilingual contexts will develop quality programs that contribute to institutional well-being. It will raise awareness of the need to include all human resources in bilingual policy formulation and establish an institutional model that other institutions can consider.

Regarding social aspect, Freire and Macedo (1989) define literacy as a “set of social practices that promote democratic and emancipatory change; moreover, it constitutes an eminently political phenomenon that must be approached within the context of a theory of power relations and an understanding of social and cultural production and reproduction” (p. 35). So, socially, characterizing the cultural literacy practices built by participants in the educational community through their English language learning process, this research will allow them to be recognized as active agents in a bilingual educational community. This will increase their self-esteem and personal value, enabling them to apply for higher-interest positions, benefiting their families as well. Additionally, it will show how changing perspectives in the social composition of the bilingual classroom and school can bring benefits to interaction with its community.

Epistemologically, this research will compile a clear vision of how communities build cultural literacy through valid theoretical supports applied to interactions in a

bilingual school setting, considering their specific needs. This will generate responses to the issues found in this research proposal.

Moreover, the application of culturally relevant pedagogy principles by Ladson-Billings (1995) in the methodological design of this research allows for a deeper understanding of the participants' backgrounds, needs, and aspirations. This approach ensures that their cultural identities, educational experiences, and personal challenges—such as lack of opportunities, educational disparities, and socio-economic struggles—are acknowledged and integrated into the curriculum. By addressing these factors, the learning environment becomes more inclusive and responsive to the participants' realities.

In complement, dialogic pedagogy serves as a practical framework within the classroom, creating spaces where participants can actively engage in speaking and other language practices. By fostering an environment of open dialogue, this approach helps participants build confidence and linguistic skills through interactive activities. Together, these pedagogical approaches enhance the effectiveness of the English language learning process by ensuring that the curriculum is both culturally relevant and practically engaging, tailored to the participants' specific needs and backgrounds.

As evidenced by the aforementioned, this study becomes relevant and necessary concerning the construction of cultural literacy among communities, particularly with regard to English language learning processes in academic contexts where English serves as a mediating vehicle of interaction.

Chapter 2. Instructional Design

The pedagogical intervention developed for this study followed the constructivist framework proposed by Vygotsky (1978), aiming to create the necessary conditions for the data collection process. Within this framework, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995) was employed to guide the design and implementation of an English learning program that addressed the specific needs, expectations, and proficiency levels of a group of staff members, with a strong focus on their cultural identity. CRP emphasizes fostering academic success, developing cultural competence, and promoting critical consciousness, which were essential in shaping the instructional strategies used throughout the intervention.

The instructional design was organized around three key pedagogical objectives: (1) to design lessons that support a group of staff members in their daily English interactions within a bilingual school, (2) to implement lessons aimed at enhancing the staff members' ability to use English effectively in their roles, and (3) to evaluate the impact of these lessons on their overall communication skills within the school's bilingual environment. These objectives facilitated continuous reflection and provided ongoing, inclusive assessment of both the learning process and the outcomes.

The instructional design will be presented in three stages—lesson planning, development, and evaluation—reflecting the structure set by these objectives.

2.1 Stage 1. Lesson planning

Contextualized lessons were planned around real-life situations that the participants faced daily at the bilingual school (interacting with students, teachers, and daily tasks). From semi-structured interviews, initial focus group, language test, a list of topics was generated to be addressed in the classes, allowing participants to integrate their learning into daily activities within the educational institution. The identified needs which subsequently dictated the topics of the lessons were:

- Learning to greet and respond to greetings.
- Specific vocabulary related to food, fruits, vegetables, and kitchen utensils.
- Ways to ask about food choices and table service.
- Commands for giving instructions to children in class and during daily activities, such as standing up, sitting down, blowing their nose, lining up, being quiet, putting away supplies, taking out supplies, brushing their teeth, going to the bathroom, coloring, paying attention, etc.
- Specific vocabulary about classroom elements.
- Specific vocabulary related to cleaning supplies and tasks like sweeping, mopping, fixing things, watering plants, driving a vehicle, and taking out the trash.
- Managing verb tenses to enhance language proficiency by incorporating learned vocabulary.

- The need for fun and engaging classes to boost motivation to attend.
- The need to manage digital tools and platforms to enhance language learning and use educational environments outside a typical classroom.
- The need to conduct an initial English proficiency assessment.
- The need to create ways for program participants from different work areas (kitchen assistants, general services assistants, administrative staff, pedagogical assistants, teachers, drivers, and maintenance staff) to interact.
- The need to establish a schedule that allowed participants to complete their daily duties while attending classes before heading home.

After analyzing the participants' needs and requests, an initial English proficiency assessment was conducted through an exam. The results showed a basic or nearly nonexistent proficiency in English. Based on this, twenty-five classes were planned according to the identified needs over a period of five months.

2.2 Stage 2. Development

Initially, three weekly sessions were scheduled, one of them in the bilingualism room to practice listening through audio exercises, videos, songs, and podcasts. Additionally, a course was created using Google Classroom, where participants enrolled using their email accounts. This allowed classes to be conducted in the bilingualism room in an organized and sequential manner.

A series of topics were planned for the weekly classes, each incorporating a cultural component such as a proverb, saying, video, or image that encouraged participants to reflect on cultural exchange through the English language. The classes were structured to include practical explanations of topics, emphasizing speaking and interaction among participants through dialogues, role-playing, games, questions, and peer surveys to practice specific themes. Furthermore, the use of the smart speaker Alexa allowed participants to engage interactively by using voice commands to ask how to say something in English or to play music in English. This interactive approach greatly facilitated interaction and the construction of cultural literacy among the participants.

Additionally, specific topics that they wanted to learn were chosen, such as vocabulary related to cooking, fruits, food, everyday tools, cleaning utensils, commands and instructions, and common daily expressions.

For instance, the kitchen staff began interacting in English during lunchtime, asking staff members what they wanted. They also established communication in English with international exchange students who had difficulty expressing what they wanted to eat. Waitstaff interacted with preschool and primary students by asking them in English which protein they wanted and which juice flavor they preferred. When delivering morning and afternoon snacks to classrooms, they greeted all the children in English.

Meanwhile, some pedagogical assistants acquired the linguistic tools needed to conduct activities with the students they were in charge of. They learned basic commands and vocabulary related to the classroom, allowing them to carry out playful activities and

workshops with the children. General services staff, maintenance personnel, administrative staff, teacher assistants, kitchen assistants, and drivers began greeting each other in English and practicing vocabulary within their service areas. The school receptionist started greeting all members of the educational community in English, including parents completing various procedures in the administrative building.

A significant and emotional event during this stage was the spelling bee, which for the first time included all teachers at school and the participants from this research. The participants prepared diligently, studying intensely in order to perform well in front of the English-speaking teachers. The surprise was unforgettable when one of the participants of this study won the spelling bee, beating several bilingual teachers. This event left a lasting impression on everyone involved and boosted the participants' confidence.

In addition to these activities, communal gatherings were organized and approved by the school administration. These get-togethers, sponsored by the school, allowed all participants to share meals in a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere, helping maintain motivation despite their tiring schedules. Moreover, the school directors approved a bonus system to encourage attendance and participation. This bonus allowed participants to redeem a certain amount of money at the school store, further incentivizing their engagement in the program.

2.3 Stage 3. Evaluation

This process was conducted through observation and the participants' artifacts from the lessons, which led the group of participants—made up of kitchen and teacher assistants,

administrative staff, maintenance and general services staff, and drivers—to acquire the necessary tools to interact daily in English in various contexts within the school.

The "get-together" sessions played a crucial role in maintaining the participants' enthusiasm and willingness to learn, even when faced with fatigue and the demands of their daily tasks and extended schedules. These gatherings not only reinforced the sense of community but also provided a space for participants to relax and reflect on their progress, which helped sustain their engagement in the learning process. Besides, the bonus incentive approved by the school had a positive impact on participants' motivation, encouraging them to continue attending and actively participating in the program.

Additionally, an “interactive reflection wall” was implemented, encouraging reflection and self-assessment through poster prompts (see Appendix C). This technique encouraged participants to engage in metacognitive activities by articulating their thoughts, insights, and evaluations in a visual and collaborative format. Also, through semi-structured interviews and initial and final focus groups, and teacher’s journal continuous and participatory assessment was conducted on literacy construction through the learning program and cultural exchange, co-creating content and using the findings to adjust the course interactively.

This approach followed CRP guidelines, emphasizing the importance of adapting instruction to students’ needs and contributions. One adjustment was reducing the number of classes from three to two per week due to participants’ workloads inside and outside the school, as most were parents who needed to care for their homes and prepare for the next

day. Another significant adjustment was allowing participants to bring their children to class, as leaving them outside the classroom caused stress and concern.

Chapter 3. Theoretical framework

Integrating cultural literacy into language learning is crucial for enhancing educational experiences, especially in bilingual contexts. This study, titled Integrating Cultural Literacy into English Language Learning: An Analysis of Its Impact on Staff Members of a Bilingual School in Tunja, focuses on examining how this integration affects the English learning process among staff members in an educational institution. This chapter structures the theoretical framework around four central axes that are pivotal throughout the research: cultural literacy and dialogic pedagogy in language learning, culturally relevant pedagogy in language learning, impact of social background on language learning, and bilingual education and cultural identity. Each of these axes provides valuable insights into the interaction between cultural contexts, teaching practices, and socioeconomic factors in language acquisition and educational outcomes.

To provide a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the challenges and opportunities present in the researched context, various national and international articles and studies have been selected and analyzed. These previous and current studies will be incorporated throughout this chapter to guide the research and organize the development of the text. This approach will contextualize and deepen the relevance of cultural literacy in English learning, offering a solid foundation for subsequent analyses and conclusions.

3.1 Cultural Literacy and dialogic pedagogy in Language Learning

Cultural literacy, as conceptualized by Street (1984) and Gee (2015), extends beyond mere reading and writing abilities to encompass participation in specific cultural

practices through language. Street (1984) argues that "literacy is a social practice, not just a technical skill" (p. 1), indicating that language learning involves socialization into the cultural practices of a community. In the research project, school staff members are being socialized into a new discursive community, enabling them to understand and engage with the cultural and linguistic dynamics of the school.

Cultural literacy, as a concept transcending mere reading and writing skills, refers to the ability to competently participate in the cultural practices of a specific community, using language as the primary vehicle. Street (1993) asserts that literacy is not an autonomous skill but a social and cultural practice manifesting in various ways depending on context. In language learning, this notion is crucial, as learning a foreign language involves not only acquiring linguistic skills but also understanding and appropriating the cultural contexts in which that language is used.

In these circumstances, dialogic pedagogy plays a critical role in facilitating the integration of staff members into the school community, fostering an inclusive learning environment through active participation in cultural dialogues. Dialogic pedagogy, drawing from the work of Freire (1970), complements this by emphasizing the role of dialogue in understanding and navigating these cultural contexts. Gee (2015) supports this view, stating that "literacy is a way of being and acting in the world, deeply intertwined with social and cultural practices" (p. 35). Thus, for second language learners to communicate effectively, they must develop a profound understanding of the norms, values, and meanings underlying the linguistic practices of the target community, a process that is significantly enhanced through dialogic interaction.

In the context of this research, the principles of dialogic inquiry proposed by Wells (1999) serve as a valuable framework. This approach emphasizes the importance of dialogue in the learning process, fostering a collaborative environment where participants can share their experiences and perspectives. By creating spaces for meaningful interaction, the research allows for the co-construction of knowledge, aligning with the goals of cultural literacy. Such dialogue not only enhances the participants' English language skills but also enriches their cultural understanding, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive educational environment.

The role of cultural literacy in language learning is therefore fundamental to achieving meaningful and authentic learning. Byram (1997) argues that intercultural competence is an essential component of language learning, allowing learners not only to communicate but also to interact effectively with native speakers in intercultural situations. This competence develops through immersion in the cultural practices of the target language, necessitating an educational approach that integrates both language instruction and exploration of cultural contexts.

Kramsch (1993) adds that "learning a language is largely learning a new way of interpreting the world" (p. 8), emphasizing the importance of cultural literacy in linguistic education. Dialogic pedagogy, by fostering open and continuous dialogue between learners and educators, supports this integration of cultural literacy, enabling a more nuanced understanding and engagement with the cultural contexts of the language. In the context of a bilingual school, as in the ongoing research project, integrating cultural literacy into the English learning process not only facilitates language acquisition but also enables

participants to navigate and actively engage in the school culture, promoting a more inclusive and equitable education.

Dialogic pedagogy, rooted in Paulo Freire's ideas, has emerged as a critical approach in education, particularly in multicultural and language learning contexts. Freire (1970) maintains that "without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there is no true education" (p. 93). This principle is crucial in second language teaching, as dialogue not only facilitates the acquisition of linguistic competencies but also the construction of shared meanings from the cultural realities surrounding the language. In the context of a bilingual school, as in the current research, dialogic pedagogy serves as a means for administrative staff members, often marginalized from dominant linguistic practices, to become active participants in building their cultural and linguistic competence.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of dialogue in language learning. Vygotsky (1978) states that "every function in the development of the child appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level" (p. 57). This assertion underscores the idea that learning is a social process developed through interaction with others. In a bilingual environment, dialogic pedagogy enables school staff to interact with more experienced speakers, facilitating not only the development of their linguistic skills but also a deeper understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used. This approach is key in the degree project, which seeks to ensure that staff members not only acquire English skills but also integrate more fully into the educational community through the practice of cultural literacy.

The concept of dialogism is also relevant in this context. Bakhtin (1981) suggests that "meaning is given between people" and that dialogue is a continuous process of meaning-making (p. 123). In language learning, this means that words and phrases gain meaning through social interaction, which is particularly relevant for school staff learning English. Engaging in dialogic exchanges allows them not only to learn the language but also to contribute their own cultural perspectives, enriching the dialogue and strengthening the learning community. This process directly supports the project's goal of characterizing the cultural literacy practices developed within the school community.

Additionally, Freire (1985) emphasizes that "education should be an act of freedom and not oppression" (p. 67), an idea that resonates with the effort to include staff members in the educational practices of the bilingual school. Through dialogic pedagogy, these staff members not only acquire linguistic skills but also are recognized as valuable members of the educational community, with their own voices and experiences contributing to the collective dialogue. This approach is essential for achieving the project's general objective, which is to analyze the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English learning process of a group of staff members at a bilingual school in Tunja.

Finally, implementing dialogic pedagogy in a bilingual school responds to the need for creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments. Alexander (2008) highlights that "dialogue in education is a means to democratize teaching and learning" (p. 105). In the context of this project, this approach will enable school staff not only to gain proficiency in English but also to feel empowered to fully participate in school life. This will reduce barriers between different members of the educational community and foster a

culture of respect and collaboration, aligning with the objectives of promoting cultural integration and equity within the school environment.

Cultural literacy in language learning has been extensively researched, highlighting its importance in acquiring linguistic competencies. These studies examine how integrating cultural practices and dialogue enriches the learning process, showing that learning a language involves not only acquiring linguistic skills but also understanding and participating in the cultural practices associated with the language. The current literature emphasizes that cultural literacy plays a crucial role in creating educational environments that facilitate authentic language immersion, enhancing the connection between learners and the target language community.

The following research studies focus on cultural literacy within the context of learning a second language. Once reviewed, classified, and analyzed, they will inform the research objectives, theoretical foundations, methodology, findings, and relevance to the current investigation.

The study by Maine et al., (2021) aims to explore the role of cultural literacy in enhancing language learning through dialogic and creative practices. It seeks to understand how cultural literacy can improve language acquisition by fostering empathetic and inclusive interactions among learners.

The research is grounded in theories of cultural literacy as a social practice, emphasizing empathetic and inclusive interaction. This approach is supported by the work of Heath (1983), who highlights how cultural literacy practices influence learning

environments and participation by fostering mutual understanding and contextual learning experiences.

This study employs qualitative analysis through case studies in multilingual classrooms. This approach provides a deep understanding of how cultural literacy practices are implemented and their impact on language learning in diverse contexts, making it highly relevant for the purpose of this research.

The findings of Maine et al. (2021) underline the importance of cultural literacy in promoting engagement and understanding among learners from diverse backgrounds, enhancing their language acquisition and cultural awareness. The research demonstrates that integrating cultural literacy in the classroom can enrich the learning experience. Thus, this study supports the integration of cultural literacy in language learning, aligning with the focus of this thesis, especially when addressing staff members in a bilingual school who do not speak English. It also provides a solid foundation for justifying the incorporation of culturally relevant practices in this research.

The study by Maine et al. (2019) aims to reconceptualize cultural literacy as a dialogic practice. The authors seek to explore how cultural literacy can be better understood through interaction and dialogue, rather than treating it solely as a set of fixed knowledge or technical skills. This approach offers a more dynamic perspective on how cultural literacy can be effectively integrated into diverse educational contexts. This is why the present research considers dialogic practice as a crucial aspect in building cultural literacy in English language learning through activities that strengthen communicative skills.

The research is based on the theory of cultural literacy as a social practice, emphasizing interaction and dialogue in the educational process. The authors draw on the work of Bakhtin (1981), who emphasizes the importance of dialogue in the construction of knowledge and cultural understanding. Bakhtin argues that dialogue is fundamental to the creation of meaning and cultural interaction, supporting the idea that cultural literacy should be understood as a communicative and relational practice. This aligns well with the use of the target language in real contexts, as in the context of the school in Tunja, where the aim is to integrate the staff with the bilingual environment in a practical way, including communicative relevance.

The research of Maine et al. (2019) employs a qualitative approach based on participatory action and case studies. The authors analyze various educational practices in multicultural settings to examine how cultural literacy is implemented in practice. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of dialogue and participation in education, as well as the assessment of how these practices influence learning and cultural understanding.

The findings from Maine, Cook, and Lähdesmäki's (2019) study emphasize the significance of viewing cultural literacy as a dialogic practice, which encourages interaction and mutual understanding among participants. Their research shows that educational approaches that incorporate dialogue and active student engagement lead to a deeper comprehension of culture and the development of intercultural skills. These practices are particularly effective in fostering inclusive and reflective learning environments. Maine et al. (2019) offer a valuable theoretical and practical foundation for this thesis by supporting

the integration of cultural literacy through dialogic methods, which are essential for promoting cultural interaction in educational settings. Their work underscores the importance of pedagogical strategies that encourage dialogue, thereby reinforcing the relevance of culturally responsive training in bilingual schools.

Torres (2018) analyzes the role of cultural literacy in English language learning in Colombia. It seeks to understand how cultural literacy supports language learning in bilingual educational settings. Based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) and literacy studies (Street, 1984), the study provides a framework for understanding how cultural literacy supports language learning. Vygotsky's theories on social interaction and Street's work on literacy as a social practice offer a foundation for this research. This study highlights the importance of Vygotsky's theoretical support in the present research.

The research by Torres (2018) is conducted in bilingual schools in Colombia. This approach allows for exploring how cultural literacy is implemented and its impact on English language learning, which is highly relevant as the present research was conducted in a bilingual school in Tunja, Boyacá, Colombia. The study emphasizes the importance of cultural literacy in supporting language learning and creating inclusive educational environments. The findings highlight how cultural literacy contributes to more effective English language learning and directly support this thesis's focus on cultural literacy in language learning. It provides evidence of how cultural literacy can enhance learning in Colombian educational contexts.

Gómez (2015) aims to explore cultural literacy practices in Colombian bilingual schools. It seeks to identify how these practices support bilingualism and student participation. In terms of theoretical foundation, Gómez (2015) draws on theories of cultural literacy and bilingual education, including the work of García (2009) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000). García's research on bilingual education in diverse contexts and Skutnabb-Kangas' work on linguistic diversity and education offer perspectives on how cultural literacy practices support bilingualism. The research methodology is a case study in bilingual schools in Bogotá.

This approach provides a detailed analysis of cultural literacy practices and their impact on the specific educational environment. This study identified key cultural literacy practices that support bilingualism and student participation. The findings highlight how the integration of cultural practices enhances the educational experience in bilingual schools. As this study was conducted in Bogotá, it offers great relevance to the present research, providing practical and close examples that demonstrate how cultural literacy practices can be applied in Colombian bilingual contexts.

Portera (2008) examines the role of cultural literacy in multilingual education. It seeks to understand how cultural literacy contributes to effective multilingual education. The author combines sociocultural theory with contemporary literacy studies, drawing on the work of Gee (2014) and Bruner (1996). Gee's research on literacy practices within cultural contexts and Bruner's emphasis on cultural narratives in learning provide a framework for understanding how cultural literacy supports multilingual education. This research is ethnographic, conducted in multilingual schools in Europe. This approach

allows for a detailed exploration of how cultural literacy is implemented in diverse educational contexts and its impact on multilingual education.

The study found that cultural literacy is crucial for effective multilingual education, fostering mutual understanding and linguistic competence. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating cultural literacy into multilingual teaching practices. Therefore, this study aligns with the objective of the present research, given its focus on bilingual education and cultural literacy. It provides evidence of how cultural literacy can improve education in multilingual contexts.

3.2 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Language Learning

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is an educational approach that aims to connect the curriculum content with the cultural and contextual experiences of students, thereby promoting more meaningful and equitable learning. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), CRP is based on the premise that "effective teaching must incorporate students' cultures so that learning is relevant and meaningful" (p. 484). This approach is particularly relevant in language learning, as it allows students to make connections between their own cultural identity and the language they are learning. In the context of the research on cultural literacy in a bilingual school in Tunja, applying CRP can help administrative staff integrate their cultural experiences into the English learning process, facilitating greater participation and understanding of the language.

CRP not only focuses on integrating culture into the curriculum content but also promotes inclusive pedagogical practices that recognize and value cultural diversity. As

Gay (2010) states, "a culturally relevant pedagogy is one that adapts educational practices to reflect and value the diverse cultures of students" (p. 31). For the administrative staff in a bilingual school, implementing CRP practices can enhance the relevance of English learning by specifically addressing the cultural needs and contexts of the participants. This aligns with one of the specific objectives of the project, which is to describe the process followed by participants in their attempt to establish genuine cultural interactions within the educational environment.

Additionally, CRP is based on the idea that learning is more effective when students feel valued and understood within the educational environment. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), "culturally relevant pedagogy seeks to empower students by affirming their cultural identities, which in turn promotes deeper and more engaged learning" (p. 21). For administrative staff in a bilingual school, this approach can facilitate their integration into the school community and enhance their English competencies by valuing their cultural contributions and prior experiences. This relates to the overall goal of the research, which is to analyze the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English learning process.

Finally, CRP also promotes greater equity in the classroom by ensuring that all students have access to learning that reflects and respects their cultural contexts. As Banks (2004) notes, "inclusive and culturally relevant education promotes equity by providing all students with opportunities to learn in an environment that validates their identities and experiences" (p. 12). In the context of the research project, applying CRP in English teaching for administrative staff can help create a more equitable and enriching learning environment. This will support the specific objectives of the study, such as identifying the

challenges faced by participants and characterizing the cultural literacy practices developed during the learning process.

Recent studies have addressed the application of culturally relevant pedagogy in language learning, highlighting its impact on engagement and educational outcomes. These works examine how integrating pedagogical practices that reflect students' cultural experiences can improve engagement and learning effectiveness. In the Colombian context, research has explored how these practices can be implemented in classrooms to promote more inclusive learning adapted to local cultural realities.

Furthermore, the effects of culturally relevant pedagogy in language teaching have been evaluated, demonstrating its ability to enrich the educational process and foster a greater connection between students and course content. These studies provide a solid foundation for understanding how CRP can positively influence language learning, particularly in multicultural environments such as bilingual schools.

Chacón, (2020) conducted a study on culturally relevant pedagogy. The aim of this study is the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in Colombian classrooms. It analyzes how these practices affect student participation and learning outcomes.

Based on Ladson-Billings' (1995) model of culturally relevant pedagogy and Moll et al.'s (1992) research, the study emphasizes the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching. Ladson-Billings highlights culturally responsive pedagogy, while Moll et al. provide perspectives on funds of knowledge and their integration into the curriculum.

The research uses participatory action in urban and rural schools. This approach allows for real-time application and evaluation of culturally relevant pedagogical practices, providing a practical perspective on their effectiveness. Similarly, the research developed in this project has a participatory action research approach, leading to continuous collaboration between researchers and participants to identify and address educational problems in the classroom, adapt pedagogical strategies based on the results obtained, and reflect on the practices implemented to improve the teaching-learning process. This participatory approach ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and effective, allowing for dynamic adjustments based on direct feedback and the emerging needs of students and educational staff.

This study demonstrated the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy in improving student participation and learning outcomes. The findings highlight that integrating students' cultural experiences into teaching results in significant improvements. Thus, Chacón's (2020) study provides direct support for this research on integrating cultural literacy through culturally relevant pedagogical practices. It offers evidence that such practices can improve learning outcomes in the Colombian context.

Gay (2018) This study explores how culturally relevant pedagogy can improve language learning outcomes. It analyzes the impact of pedagogical practices that integrate students' cultural experiences, making it a key pillar in this research.

The research is theoretically based on Ladson-Billings' (1995) model of culturally relevant pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of validating and incorporating

students' cultural backgrounds into teaching practices while discussing the importance of integrating students' cultural experiences to improve academic outcomes and participation. This is relevant to this thesis's objective of culturally relevant pedagogy in English language learning for staff members at a bilingual school in Tunja.

The methodology of this study is qualitative, using case studies and ethnography. This approach provides a detailed understanding of how culturally relevant practices are implemented in language learning contexts, similar to the present research, which seeks to understand the impact of integrating cultural literacy into English language learning among school staff members.

The findings of Gay's (2018) study highlight the positive impact of culturally relevant pedagogy on language learning outcomes. The research demonstrates that when teaching practices align with students' cultural experiences, engagement and academic success increase. Therefore, this study provides evidence that culturally relevant pedagogy can enhance language learning outcomes, offering a solid basis for justifying its use in this research.

Paris's (2012) study explores the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which expands on culturally relevant pedagogy by emphasizing the importance of maintaining and valuing students' cultural identities. This study is relevant because it aligns with the thesis's objective of sustaining and validating staff members' cultural identities during the English language learning process, which, in turn, allows for a more inclusive approach.

The study is based on culturally sustaining pedagogy, proposed by Paris (2012) and Alim (2017), who advocate for teaching practices that recognize and validate students' cultural experiences. The idea is to sustain and support cultural identities while fostering academic learning. This theoretical approach aligns with the thesis's objective to ensure that cultural literacy practices consider staff members' cultural backgrounds in a bilingual school setting.

The research uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of how culturally sustaining pedagogy impacts language learning outcomes and identity preservation. This methodological approach is relevant to this research as it emphasizes the combination of qualitative analysis to explore how cultural literacy is implemented and quantitative analysis to assess its impact. Paris's (2012) study reveals that culturally sustaining pedagogy improves student engagement and supports the preservation of cultural identities in educational settings.

The findings highlight that teaching practices valuing students' cultural experiences lead to more inclusive and effective learning environments. Therefore, this study provides a foundation for justifying the integration of culturally sustaining pedagogy in this research, as it emphasizes the importance of supporting and validating staff members' cultural identities during the English language learning process.

3.3 Impact of Social Background on Language Learning

The impact of social context on language learning has been extensively discussed in theoretical literature, highlighting how social and cultural conditions influence second language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that learning is mediated by social interactions and the cultural context in which it occurs. Vygotsky (1978) argues that “cognitive development occurs in a social context through interaction and the use of language” (p. 57). This approach is crucial for understanding how the social context of administrative staff in a bilingual school can affect their English learning. Lack of exposure and cultural differences may limit the effectiveness of learning, making a detailed understanding of these factors essential for designing pedagogical strategies that address their specific needs.

Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of cultural capital offers an additional perspective on how social context impacts language learning. Bourdieu (1986) argues that “cultural capital acquired in specific social contexts affects access to and success in learning” (p. 21). In the context of bilingual schools, this cultural capital is reflected in how administrative staff relate to the target language and culture. Bourdieu’s theory highlights the need to adapt educational strategies to recognize and value prior cultural experiences, thereby facilitating more effective integration into the bilingual environment and addressing the gap between participants’ cultural contexts.

Norton (2000) also provides a comprehensive view on how social identities and power relations influence language learning. Norton (2000) argues that “learning opportunities are mediated by social identities and power relations within an educational context” (p. 106). In a bilingual school setting, the social context and position of

administrative staff can influence their opportunities to learn English and their motivation. This theory is relevant to the research objective, which seeks to analyze the impact of integrating cultural literacy into language learning, emphasizing the importance of developing pedagogical interventions that promote an inclusive and equitable environment, tailored to participants' social realities.

Several studies have explored how social context influences language learning, providing valuable insights into this dynamic. Research has examined how social and economic conditions affect the language learning process in specific educational contexts, including schools in Colombia. These studies offer a sociocultural perspective on the impact of the social environment on language acquisition, highlighting the importance of considering these factors to design effective educational interventions. This literature provides a solid foundation for understanding how the social context can affect English learning among administrative staff in a bilingual school and guiding more inclusive pedagogical strategies.

Rodríguez (2017) aims to investigate how social background influences English learning in Colombia. It seeks to understand how socioeconomic factors impact language acquisition. This aligns well with the objective of identifying the challenges that administrative staff in a bilingual school have faced in learning a second language. Based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory, the study explores how social backgrounds affect language learning. Vygotsky's theories on social interactions highlight the importance of the social context in the learning process, while Bourdieu's concept of social capital provides a perspective on how social networks

and cultural resources influence educational outcomes. These theories offer a solid foundation for understanding the impact of socioeconomic factors on language learning, which aligns well with the theoretical framework and research focus of this study, as both seek to analyze how socioeconomic and cultural conditions affect the educational process and the development of language skills among administrative staff in a bilingual school in Colombia.

The research uses mixed methods in public and private schools. This approach allows examining differences in language learning based on socioeconomic factors and provides a comprehensive view of the impact of social context. Among its findings are disparities in language learning due to socioeconomic factors, highlighting the need for culturally responsive teaching. The results indicate that social backgrounds play a crucial role in the success of language learning. Rodríguez's (2017) study supports the importance of this research by addressing the needs of staff members with diverse backgrounds. It provides evidence to justify implementing pedagogical strategies that consider socioeconomic differences in language learning.

Norton (2013) investigates how students' social backgrounds influence second language acquisition. It aims to understand how socioeconomic differences affect language learning processes, which is highly relevant to the present research where participants have diverse social backgrounds. Based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the study suggests that learning is influenced by the student's social context. Vygotsky's ideas on the Zone of Proximal Development and the role of social interactions in learning underpin the

analysis of how social backgrounds impact language acquisition. This is crucial for the theoretical foundation of the present research.

The research employs a comparative analysis methodology between different socioeconomic groups in urban schools. This approach allows examining how disparities in social backgrounds affect language learning outcomes. Findings include significant disparities in language learning results based on social background, emphasizing the need for culturally responsive pedagogy. The data suggest that socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in the success of language learning. Therefore, Norton's (2013) study is relevant to this research by supporting the objective of identifying the needs of staff members with diverse backgrounds. It provides a basis for justifying the implementation of pedagogical strategies that consider socioeconomic differences in language learning.

3.4 Bilingual Education and Cultural Identity

Bilingual education not only focuses on acquiring language skills in two languages but also on the relationship between language learning and students' cultural identity. In the context of a bilingual school, recognizing and respecting each participant's cultural identity is crucial for creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. Cummins (2001) argues that "cultural identity plays a fundamental role in academic success, as students must feel valued and understood to achieve full participation in learning" (p. 177). In a bilingual school, it is essential that participants, including administrative staff, view their cultural identities as assets in the educational process rather than obstacles. Integrating

pedagogical practices that respect and celebrate cultural diversity can enhance individuals' confidence and self-esteem, thereby facilitating their second language learning.

Furthermore, recognizing and valuing participants' cultural identities helps prevent shame and exclusion in the classroom. García (2009) notes that “an educational environment that validates students’ cultural identities fosters greater confidence and participation in learning” (p. 45). For administrative staff in a bilingual school, this means that pedagogical strategies should be designed to integrate their cultural and personal backgrounds, allowing them to feel respected and valued. This approach not only supports the development of language skills but also strengthens participants' self-esteem and self-efficacy, aligning with the research objectives of promoting effective cultural integration in the English learning process.

Various studies have addressed the relationship between bilingual education and cultural identity, offering valuable perspectives on how bilingualism influences identity formation and academic success. These studies have explored how learning in two languages can affect the perception of cultural identity in the Colombian educational context and the crucial role it plays in students' self-esteem and participation.

The literature suggests that an educational approach that integrates and respects individual cultural identities not only promotes greater inclusion but also contributes to academic success by strengthening participants' confidence and sense of belonging. This research provides a basis for understanding how bilingual education can be used to support cultural identity and personal development in multicultural educational settings.

Sánchez (2019) aims to examine the impact of bilingual education on Colombian students' cultural identity. It focuses on how bilingualism affects cultural identity formation and language learning. The study is based on Erikson's (1968) theory of identity and Grosjean's (2010) work on bilingualism, exploring how bilingual education influences cultural identity. Erikson's theory on identity development and Grosjean's work on bilingualism provide a framework for understanding this relationship.

The research methodology is qualitative, using interviews and focus groups. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how bilingual education impacts cultural identity and language learning. Sánchez's (2019) study utilizes data collection instruments that are also used in the present research.

Sánchez found that bilingual education enhances cultural identity and supports language learning. The results highlight how bilingualism contributes to the development of a strong cultural identity and academic success. Therefore, this study on bilingualism and cultural identity in Colombian education aligns with the focus of the present research on cultural literacy and bilingualism. It provides evidence on how bilingual education can positively influence cultural identity and learning outcomes.

The study by García and Wei (2014) examines how bilingual education impacts students' cultural identity. It focuses on how bilingualism influences cultural identity formation and, in turn, supports academic and language success.

The study is based on sociocultural theory and identity formation, particularly drawing on the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Erikson (1968). Erikson's theory on identity

development explores how cultural and social contexts influence identity formation, including bilingual education, while Vygotsky's theory argues that social interaction plays a crucial role in cognitive development. Therefore, the present research also draws on Vygotsky's theoretical foundations to justify social interaction as an important element in building cultural literacy.

Regarding methodology, García and Wei's (2014) research is longitudinal and uses mixed methods, including interviews and surveys. This approach allows examining how bilingual education affects cultural identity over time and in different contexts. Although the present research uses a purely qualitative methodology, it serves as a reference for establishing the impact of cultural identity on second language learning.

Bilingual education fosters a strong cultural identity, which in turn supports language learning and academic success. The results show that students participating in bilingual programs develop a greater awareness and appreciation of their own cultures. Thus, this research becomes a crucial reference by providing evidence on the importance of considering cultural backgrounds in bilingual contexts, which is directly applicable to the present study. It highlights the need to integrate cultural identity into bilingual education programs.

Chapter 4. Methodological Framework

In this chapter, the approach, method, and paradigm of the research are defined considering the proposals of Jorge A. Rodríguez (2014) and the statements of Fals Borda (1987).

4.1 Research Approach

According to Rodríguez (2014), an approach is understood as the "choice of a certain class of procedures, techniques, and instruments for the observation of facts and the collection of data, as well as certain ways of processing them." In this sense, approaches allow for "the materialization of paradigms in empirical research contexts"(p. 31).

Rodríguez (2014) asserts that the qualitative approach aims to understand the actions of subjects in terms of praxis, challenging the notion that human behavior is governed by general laws. This approach acknowledges that "reality is dynamic, multiple, and holistic" (p. 32), and focuses on describing, understanding, and interpreting the meanings that individuals attribute to their own actions. Participant observation techniques and in-depth analysis from a subjective and particularistic perspective are essential in this approach, and the data collection instruments are typically flexible, "little or not structured, and freely defined" (p. 34), such as observation guides, open and in-depth interviews, discussion groups, and workshops.

Therefore, the approach in this research is qualitative, utilizing research techniques such as focus groups, interviews, and observations, along with data collection instruments

including videos, audio recordings, exams, texts, journals, formats, and performances. Furthermore, in developing the pedagogical strategy, the needs and interests of the participants and continuous reflection were considered.

Ethical considerations such as the school's consent for the development of the research and the implementation of the pedagogical strategy for administrative staff were also taken into account (see Appendix D). Additionally, informed consents from the parents of the students who participated and interacted with the participants in this research were received (see Appendix E). The opinions of the children who interacted in different activities with the participants were also considered. To ensure their voluntary participation, the children were presented with a sign featuring "Yes" and "No" options. This was explained to them in a playful and engaging manner. All the children placed their hands on the "Yes" side, indicating their consent to be part of the research.

4.2 Research Method

To determine the research method, it is necessary to define action research and its most recognized forms. As Rodríguez (2014) articulates, action research is not merely a methodological choice; it is a "reflective-active process that requires the individual and collective involvement of the subjects who develop it" (p. 38). This approach aims to understand how literacy is built by analyzing individual needs and creating spaces for interaction with other participants, thereby "dynamically linking reflection for knowledge generation, transformative action, and the formation of the actors involved" (p. 38). This

interconnection is vital because it encourages participants to not only reflect on their experiences but also to become active agents of change within their educational contexts.

This method aims at "social and educational transformation and change, through the continuous improvement of social action efficacy" and includes the most widespread forms of action research, such as participatory, critical, and cooperative action research (Rodríguez, 2014, p. 38).

Participatory action research "seeks the active participation of research subjects in the knowledge generation process, with the aim of promoting social changes and improving the living conditions of the community" (Fals Borda, 1987). Participants take an active role throughout the process, from identifying the problem to implementing solutions and evaluating results. The research is conducted in collaboration with the community, and knowledge is generated through collective action.

The qualitative research method for this study is based on the principles established by Orlando Fals Borda of Participatory Action Research (PAR). This method allows active and collaborative participation of the workers of a private bilingual school in Tunja, who previously did not have access to English training, and whose work in the educational institution was strictly related to their job tasks, without any possibility of interaction with the bilingual academic community. According to Fals Borda (1987), PAR seeks to empower the involved communities, promoting active participation and social transformation through knowledge and collective action. In this context, workers are not merely subjects of study but essential collaborators in the research process.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) not only generates academic knowledge but also has a tangible impact on the community of workers at the bilingual school. In this sense, the participation of the workers in all stages of the research—from identifying needs to implementing and evaluating teaching strategies—is crucial to ensure that the interventions are relevant and effective. By incorporating interaction and context into the learning process, and by empowering workers to be active agents in their own training process, this research aims to contribute to the construction and development of their cultural literacy through a pedagogical strategy focused on learning English. This integrative method ensures that the research results are applicable and sustainable, fostering a collaborative and continuous learning environment.

4.3 Research Paradigm

Regarding the paradigm of this educational research, "various proposals, trends, and methods coexist" that are framed within different paradigms. Among those considered to have greater validity, diffusion, and legitimacy are the positivist, naturalist, and sociocritical paradigms (Rodríguez, 2014).

The sociocritical paradigm seeks not only to understand social reality but also to transform it (Freire, 1970). This paradigm emerged to overcome the reductionism of the positivist paradigm and the conservatism of the naturalist paradigm, "proposing the possibility of a social science that is neither purely empirical nor solely interpretative" (Rodríguez, 2014, p. 29). Thus, it does not fall within the naturalist paradigm due to its marked interest in social change and its participatory nature. The critical paradigm focuses

"on emancipation and social change, questioning power structures and promoting critical awareness among participants" (Habermas, 1984, p. 45).

Considering the above aspects, this research is framed within the sociocritical paradigm, as it allows not only to understand the experiences and needs of the participants but also to work actively with them to transform their skills and opportunities, building literacy and promoting greater social justice and equity in their work and educational context.

4.4 Participants Profile

The study focuses on 27 staff members at a private bilingual school in Tunja, Colombia, ranging in age from 25 to 63 years. This group holds a variety of roles, including teacher assistants, general service assistants, kitchen assistants, maintenance assistants, school shop assistants, receptionists, accountants, architects, quality manager, human resources manager, and drivers. Teacher assistants are aides in preschool grades who help with the care of children aged 1 to 5 years in all daily activities that take place.

The participants include individuals who have not finished their high school education. Some of those who graduated pursued technical careers but were unable to complete them due to financial difficulties or personal circumstances. Additionally, several participants are single mothers, navigating both work and family responsibilities. They are integral to the daily operations of the school but have previously had limited access to English language training.

Their socioeconomic backgrounds vary, with many facing challenges such as time constraints, financial limitations, and a lack of prior English education. Despite their crucial roles within the school community, these staff members often occupy positions with low visibility, which affects their opportunities for cultural and linguistic integration.

It is important to note that, as part of the development of cultural literacy in this research, various individuals from the bilingual environment of the school were involved, although they are not direct participants in the study. For example, during class activities, the participants had the opportunity to interact with foreign students who were part of the exchange program and were enrolled at the school at that time. This international and multicultural interaction allowed the participants to engage in several meaningful activities for their learning.

Furthermore, teaching assistants interacted with children aged 1 to 5 in the target language, creating artifacts that demonstrated the applicability of the English classes to their immediate environment. Moreover, in some activities, the 33 individuals who took the initial diagnostic exam and attended different English courses also participated.

The study aims to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities in learning English and integrating into the bilingual environment of the school, focusing on the 27 participants involved in this research.

4.5 Setting

This study is conducted in a private bilingual school located in Tunja, Colombia, which serves over 830 students. The institution emphasizes bilingual education across various subjects, primarily using English in the classroom. The school is perceived as a high-quality educational environment with well-maintained facilities, highly qualified professionals, and active parental involvement. However, the bilingual philosophy of the school has not fully permeated all levels of staff, particularly those in less visible roles.

The setting provides a unique opportunity to examine the integration of cultural literacy within a bilingual context, focusing on how staff members navigate and adapt to this environment. The research explores the gap between the perceived and actual integration of the bilingual philosophy among different staff members and aims to address the disparities in English language proficiency and cultural engagement.

4.6 Instruments for Data Collection

4.6.1 Teacher's Journal

The teacher's journal is a reflective tool maintained by the researcher to document observations and insights related to the participants' interactions and progress. Reflective journals are highly regarded in educational research for capturing observations and reflections on teaching practices (Moon, 2006). The primary objective of using a teacher's journal (Appendix F) in this study is to capture qualitative data on the participants' engagement with the English language learning process and their integration into the bilingual environment.

4.6.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups are structured group discussions designed to gather participants' perspectives on their experiences with English language learning and cultural integration. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), focus groups are instrumental in exploring collective insights and shared experiences. This method is essential for understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by participants in adapting to the bilingual setting. The goal of focus groups (See Appendix G) in this study is to explore these collective insights and experiences, providing a comprehensive view of the participants' adaptation process.

4.6.3 Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews involve one-on-one interactions with participants, using a flexible set of questions to explore their individual experiences and perceptions. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) highlight the effectiveness of semi-structured interviews in gaining an in-depth understanding of personal challenges, motivations, and experiences. The objective of this interview (See Appendix H) in this study is to delve deeper into the personal challenges and motivations related to English language learning and cultural literacy.

4.6.4 Participants' Artifacts

Participants' artifacts include materials created during the learning process, such as written reflections, language tests, performances, workshops and completed assignments. Charmaz (2014) emphasizes that analyzing various forms of data, including participant

artifacts, can aid in building and interpreting grounded theory. In this study, the objective of analyzing these artifacts is to evaluate evidence of integrating cultural literacy content in the English learning process.

4.6.5 Language test

A language proficiency test, designed by the school's language department, was administered to assess the participants' English level before beginning classes. The test was divided into two parts: an oral section aimed at evaluating verbal production and comprehension, and a written section focused on grammar, vocabulary, and contextual language use (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). This diagnostic assessment was essential for identifying the participants' initial language skills and adjusting the course design to meet their needs.

4.7 Data Analysis

Content-based analysis will be employed to systematically analyze the data collected from the instruments. This methodology involves identifying and categorizing themes and patterns within the qualitative data to generate meaningful insights. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a method for analyzing text data to identify recurring themes and patterns, which allows for a comprehensive understanding of the data.

The unit of analysis in this study will be the voices of the participants, focusing on their experiences, perceptions, and interactions as they relate to the integration of cultural literacy and English language learning. This approach will facilitate the extraction of

relevant themes and categories that align with the research objectives, providing a nuanced understanding of the impact of cultural literacy on their language learning process.

Chapter 5. Findings

This chapter presents the findings that constitute the answer to the research question that guided this research. It focused on the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English language learning process among a group of staff members of a bilingual school in Tunja. In that account the results are discussed and structured around the research objectives that guided the process.

The first one concerns the challenges that the staff members of a bilingual school have faced when communicating with community members in the target language. The second focuses on the process followed by the participants in their attempt to establish genuine cultural interaction with community members in the target language in specific social situations. The last one seeks to characterize the cultural literacy practices built by the participants within the school community throughout their English learning process.

5.1 Identifying Challenges in Communicating in English

Identifying the challenges faced by staff members of a bilingual school when communicating with other members of the educational community in English was crucial for understanding and acknowledging each participant's cultural background. This understanding facilitated the development of a cultural literacy program through the English language. Initially, a focus group, a semi-structured interview and a language test were administered to gather information on participants' English language learning experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and difficulties.

Several key challenges emerged from it. First, participants reported a lack of financial resources as a significant barrier. For instance, one participant stated, *The lack of financial resources has prevented me from learning English and pursuing higher education* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 1). Second, family responsibilities were noted as a constraint, with one participant mentioning, *I have to take care of my family and cannot dedicate time to learning English* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 2). Third, time constraints were frequently mentioned. One participant noted, *Time constraints and my focus on my children have hindered my ability to learn English* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 3), while another added, *Due to work commitments, I could not access English courses* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 4).

These challenges align with Street's (1984) sociocultural theory of literacy, which posits that literacy is not merely a technical skill but a socially and culturally constructed practice shaped by context and interaction. Fourth, some participants expressed that, given their socioeconomic conditions and family environment, they did not initially perceive the importance of English for their immediate future. One participant shared that, *In the past, I did not see it as important for my life* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 5), while another admitted, *Due to embarrassment and laziness, I had not made the effort to learn English* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 6). Fifth, experiences in school were described as tedious. One participant noted, *English classes at school were very boring, and the teacher was ineffective* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 7).

Finally, despite these obstacles, all participants conveyed a strong desire to learn English to enhance their life prospects and achieve personal goals. One participant

emphasized, *Learning English is very important personally and professionally for being someone in life* (Semi-structured interview, Participant 8). Understanding this cultural diversity was pivotal in designing the pedagogical strategy for building each participant's cultural literacy. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy values students' cultural identities and integrates these into the educational process. In this instance, acknowledging participants' backgrounds enabled the creation of culturally inclusive lessons that resonated with their lived experiences.

Identifying the challenges, fears, beliefs, and emotions surrounding the learning of the English language was extremely important to approach the classes with great empathy and care for others. Some viewed those who spoke English as superior, leading them to feel less valued, inadequate, or perhaps defeated by the educational system or their personal issues.

Understanding their perspective on the English language allowed for a specific focus on their desires, needs, their cultures, and what they wanted to learn, ensuring that activities were designed to avoid making participants feel bad or ridiculed for their lack of proficiency in English. Many of them did not complete their high school education, so it was crucial to create a flexible, pleasant, and interactive learning environment. This was undoubtedly a challenge worth pursuing. As Freire (1970) emphasizes, "An education that does not take into account the reality of the learner cannot be considered as such" (p. 80).

5.2 Describing the Process of Cultural Interaction in English

The second objective focused on describing the process followed by the participants in their attempt to establish genuine cultural interaction with community members in English. Empowering participants by recognizing their roles within the educational community through role-playing activities in which they represented their duties in English was key to building confidence and language competence. Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of social interaction in the construction of knowledge, emphasizing that learning occurs in a social context and through collaboration. Recent research supports this view, indicating that meaningful, interactive learning experiences are crucial for language acquisition (Gee, 2014; Canagarajah, 2013).

One example was the spelling bee contest organized with non-participating teachers. Regardless of their roles as kitchen or maintenance assistants, teacher assistants, or general services staff, all participants rehearsed the English alphabet during breaks and challenged each other to spell words. This aligns with Cummins' (2000) Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), which suggests that early language proficiency in everyday communication allows learners to participate effectively in social interactions. Participants described the spelling bee as a valuable opportunity for engagement: *The spelling bee was a wonderful chance to interact with other workers and teachers. The competitive atmosphere was exciting, and having the principal and vice-principal present was unforgettable* (Final focus Group, Participant 1). This finding reflects the current understanding of how interactive and engaging activities enhance language learning and community building (Durán, 2008).

Additionally, classroom activities, games, and dynamics were crucial in sustaining participation after long workdays. To enhance student motivation and participation, the school administration approved a personalized agenda for each student, featuring their names and letterhead pages to encourage note-taking during classes. Moreover, a voucher, administered by the teacher, was awarded to students who excelled in certain activities and could be redeemed for food at the school cafeteria. These initiatives were designed to foster engagement and enthusiasm in the classroom by providing tangible incentives and creating a sense of personal investment in their educational experience.

Competitions between groups with rewards for the winners motivated the staff. *I really enjoyed the Battleship game for practicing the present simple. I had never played it this way; it was very exciting* (Teacher's Journal 13). Similarly, some participants expressed that staying late was worthwhile due to the engaging activities. *The game of focusing on instructions and quickly grabbing the Matryoshka when a word was mentioned was very fun. It encouraged me to stay for classes after work* (Teacher's Journal 20). This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1991) about how engaging educational experiences can enhance participation and motivation. Additionally, Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation, which can be fostered through activities that are both enjoyable and rewarding, ultimately leading to increased engagement and persistence in learning.

Some participants were concerned about leaving their children outside the classroom while they attended classes. Guidance was provided that their children were also welcome. *My daughter has learned a lot and I'm very happy because she reviews topics*

she has seen, which has been very helpful for her English classes at school (Teacher's Journal 10). This highlights the importance of accommodating learners' personal circumstances to support their educational engagement (Sleeter, 2011).

Including exchange students in English classes allowed participants to learn about their cultures and exchange knowledge about food, music, habits, places to visit, beliefs, and languages. *I felt good learning about other cultures. Listening to students speak in English, even though I almost didn't understand things, with the images they showed on slides helped me to understand. I would like to travel to those countries* (Final focus Group, Participant 2). This reflects Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition is facilitated by comprehensible input, particularly when it is accompanied by visual aids that make the content more accessible.

5.3 Characterizing Cultural Literacy Practices

The third objective focused on characterizing the cultural literacy practices that participants developed within the school community. Activities such as the spelling bee and interactions with students and international exchange members became pivotal moments for constructing cultural literacy through shared experiences. According to Cummins (2000), developing cultural literacy involves more than language acquisition; it requires engaging learners in meaningful, context-based interactions that respect and reflect their cultural identities.

The inclusion of international exchange students in daily interactions further contributed to building cultural literacy. Participants gained confidence in using English

through informal conversations, which aligns with Cummins' (2000) theory on how Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) are crucial for early language development. For instance, one kitchen assistant expressed pride in using English to communicate with international students during lunch, acquiring vocabulary related to food and cooking. *The classes have helped me to learn vocabulary. The exchange students do not speak Spanish very well, and being able to ask them what they want in English has been very exciting for me* (Final Focus Group, Participant 3). Another kitchen staff member noted, *being able to ask the children in English what type of meat and juice they want, and having them respond in English, has been very significant for me* (Final Focus Group, Participant 4). These examples illustrate how learning culturally relevant language not only boosts confidence but also strengthens the social integration of learners in multicultural settings (Kramsch, 2013; García y Wei, 2014).

Another particularly impactful moment was when participants engaged in the school's cultural events, such as the Golden Christmas Festival. For the first time, workers from various departments participated not as service providers but as integral members of the educational community. This inclusion reflects the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, which link learning to students' lives and promote cultural competence and critical consciousness, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and engagement within the educational setting (Ladson-Billings, 2014). *This had never been seen in the school, where we interacted with all the other staff members, especially with the teachers and administrative staff. We were never considered for these types of events, except for cleaning and logistical preparation* (Final Focus Group, Participant 5).

Additionally, teacher assistants were guided to interact in English with the students they supervised, which shifted their roles from passive observers to active educators. This newfound recognition and empowerment motivated participants to continue developing their English skills. This shift aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, which highlights the role of interaction and social context in learning. One participant commented, *It makes me proud to speak English to these little ones, have them understand me, and see me as a reference for the language. Before, I felt like a shadow in the classroom; today, I feel like a useful part of them* (Final Focus Group, Participant 6).

Teacher assistants were also able to give short classes, develop basic topics with the children they cared for, and learn all the basic vocabulary surrounding their tasks. This hands-on experience in teaching aligns with recent research on experiential learning and its benefits in language acquisition (Kolb, 2014). *I am studying at university to become a preschool teacher. The English classes have helped me to loosen up, to trust myself more, to practice my role as a future teacher, and at the same time, I have been able to achieve good grades in my English classes at the university* (Final Focus Group, Participant 7).

In summary, the efforts to characterize cultural literacy practices within the school community revealed the profound impact of integrating cultural interactions and experiences into the English learning process. The activities, such as the spelling bee and engagement with international exchange students, not only enhanced participants' English proficiency but also fostered a deeper sense of cultural understanding and integration. This aligns with Cummins' (2000) notion that effective cultural literacy goes beyond mere

language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of context-based and identity-respecting interactions.

The involvement of staff members in cultural events, as illustrated by their active participation in the Golden Christmas Festival, demonstrated a shift from passive roles to active contributors within the educational community, resonating with Ladson-Billings' (2014) principles of culturally relevant pedagogy. Furthermore, the pedagogical assistants' role transition from observers to active educators highlighted Vygotsky's (1978) theory on the critical role of social interaction in learning. Overall, these findings underscore the significance of creating meaningful, contextually relevant learning experiences that empower participants, enrich their cultural literacy, and foster a sense of belonging within a multicultural educational environment.

These significant findings, analyzed through the three central axes of the specific objectives, make it clear that the construction of cultural literacy in the English learning process among the staff members of a private school in Tunja was achieved through identifying their needs and appropriately planning the content of English lessons to utilize their prior knowledge, backgrounds, and connect it with their immediate environment.

Their low profile and seemingly low worth within the educational institution became a driving force for transformation, as each participant began to recognize and value their own skills and contributions. This process not only strengthened their self-esteem and confidence in using the language, but also positioned cultural literacy as a bridge that

enabled staff members to actively participate in the bilingual environment, enriching their personal development.

Chapter 6. Conclusions

In light of the research conducted, the conclusions drawn offer a comprehensive understanding of the impact of integrating cultural literacy into the English language learning process for staff members at a bilingual school in Tunja. The study reveals how culturally relevant pedagogy, coupled with practical language activities, enhances both language proficiency and cultural awareness among participants. By analyzing the challenges faced, the processes of cultural interaction, and the practices developed throughout the English learning journey, the findings underscore the importance of recognizing and incorporating participants' cultural backgrounds into the educational framework.

These conclusions not only reflect the effectiveness of the implemented strategies but also provide valuable insights into the broader implications for language education in multicultural settings. The following sections synthesize the key outcomes of the study and discuss their relevance for future educational practices and research.

6.1 Impact of Cultural Literacy on English Learning: Integrating cultural literacy into the English learning process has proven to be fundamental in enhancing the language and cultural competencies of the staff at the bilingual school in Tunja. Including culturally relevant elements in the English curriculum facilitated greater motivation and engagement among staff members, promoting a more meaningful and contextualized learning experience.

6.2 Identified Challenges and Barriers: The study revealed several challenges faced by participants, including financial constraints, family responsibilities, and time limitations. These factors significantly impacted participants' ability to engage with English learning. Identifying these challenges is crucial for designing more effective intervention strategies that address the specific barriers faced by workers in similar contexts.

6.3 Process of Cultural Interaction: Participation in activities such as spelling bee contests and interactions with exchange students provided valuable opportunities for developing cultural literacy. These experiences helped participants improve their confidence in using English and strengthened their social integration within the educational community. Contextualized, meaningful interactions promoted deeper and more relevant learning.

6.4 Recognition and Empowerment of Staff: Empowering participants through recognition of their roles and inclusion in school cultural events led to greater integration and appreciation within the educational community. The opportunity to interact and teach in English not only improved language skills but also contributed to increased satisfaction and a sense of belonging among staff members.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Interventions: Based on the findings, it is recommended to implement training programs that address the specific limitations and challenges faced by staff. Additionally, designing learning activities that incorporate cultural and social components will make learning more relevant and motivating.

Continuous support and additional resources should be provided to facilitate staff participation in professional development activities.

6.6 Contribution to Educational Practice: This study contributes to the understanding of how cultural literacy can be effectively integrated into English learning in bilingual educational contexts. The findings highlight the importance of considering learners' cultural and social contexts to ensure a more inclusive and equitable education. The recommended practices can serve as a model for other educational institutions seeking to promote culturally relevant English instruction.

6.7 Study Limitations and Areas for Future Research: While the study provides valuable insights into integrating cultural literacy, there are limitations such as the size and composition of the sample. Future research is recommended to be conducted in different contexts and with larger samples to validate and expand upon the obtained results. Additionally, future studies could explore how cultural literacy approaches impact other areas of professional development for educational staff.

6.8 Inclusive and Supportive Learning Environment

It is essential to create an inclusive, flexible, understanding, and supportive environment in the language learning process, particularly when individuals face insecurities and contend with internal fears or socioeconomic conditions that may impede their professional development. Furthermore, the empathy exhibited by the instructor towards the group is vital in the context of fostering cultural literacy. Such empathy naturally emerges when key elements are present, including trust, a sense of comfort, the

absence of ridicule, and opportunities for mutual learning that respect both differences and similarities. Additionally, it is important for learners to engage with content that aligns with their desires and immediate needs. This study offers valuable insights into how a deep understanding and characterization of learning communities can lead to positive educational outcomes.

Chapter 7. Pedagogical implications and further research

This study highlights the often-overlooked role of staff members within educational institutions, providing a framework for recognizing their contributions to the overall school community. By focusing on the integration of cultural literacy in English language learning, this research opens up avenues for broader inquiries into bilingual contexts in schools. Future research could expand upon these findings by investigating similar processes in other bilingual institutions or within larger educational systems, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of language learning as a social and cultural practice.

Cultural literacy should not be narrowly defined as the ability to read and write; rather, it represents a rich cultural exchange and an integral, dynamic social practice. This thesis underscores the importance of viewing literacy as an interactive process, one that involves the sharing of cultural knowledge and experiences, particularly within a bilingual framework. By promoting this perspective, the research encourages educators to adopt more holistic approaches to language teaching that acknowledge and incorporate the diverse cultural backgrounds of all participants.

Moreover, advancing similar projects on a larger scale, particularly within bilingual institutions, would provide valuable insights into the broader context of language learning and cultural exchange. This could further pave the way for continued research on critical literacy, especially among vulnerable populations or other staff members within educational institutions. Such research would not only deepen our understanding of the

complexities of bilingual education but also highlight the significant role that cultural literacy plays in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Finally, this thesis offers a reflection on the importance of recognizing humanity in all individuals within educational settings. It emphasizes the need to value each person's role, understanding that every member of the institution contributes to the collective success of the educational community. By elevating the significance of each labor, we can ensure that all members are given the respect and recognition they deserve, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone involved.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent form for participants

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS
MAESTRIA EN PEDAGOGÍA
CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Estimado participante, en el desarrollo de la Maestría en Pedagogía de la Universidad Santo Tomás, yo Yerson Fabián Soler Parra estoy desarrollando un proyecto investigativo cuyo objetivo general es establecer cómo se da la interacción en una comunidad de práctica de lengua extranjera inglés entre estudiantes de un colegio privado, el personal administrativo, profesores y auxiliares de apoyo docente que laboran en la institución.

El proceso de la investigación requiere la recolección y análisis de datos que serán posteriormente utilizados en la escritura de informes, publicaciones y ponencias. En tal sentido, su participación en la recopilación de esta información en este proyecto es de vital importancia y es de carácter voluntario. Los datos se van a recolectar a través de fotografías, videos, asentimientos informados, talleres y entrevistas.

Como padre de familia se le garantizará:

- El uso de nombres ficticios para mantener el anonimato de su hijo/a.
- Uso de los datos estrictamente para la el objetivo del proyecto.
- Uso de la información únicamente con fines académicos.

- Socialización de los resultados del proyecto.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para contar con su participación en este proyecto.

Cordialmente,

Yerson Fabian Soler Parra

Estudiante Maestría en Pedagogía.

Firma del participante: _____

Appendix B: Language test

Section 1. Oral

1-) What's your name?

2-) How old are you?

3-) Where do you live?

4-) What is your current job?

5-) Tell me something about your likes and dislikes

6-) Tell me about the members of your family

7-) Where did you go on your last vacation?

8-) Do you have some regrets?

9-) Have you ever seen a ghost?

10-) What are your plans for the next year?

Section 2

Grammar

Complete the following sentences with the correct answer

- I have English class
 - At Fridays
 - On Fridays
 - In Fridays
 - To Fridays
- Where _____?
 - lives your uncle
 - does your uncle live
 - your uncle lives
 - does live your uncle
- I _____ in Tunja for 3 years and I'm very happy here.
 - have lived
 - lived
 - am living
 - live
- This is the town _____ I was born
 - When
 - Whose
 - Where
 - In that
- If the weather hadn't been so bad we would have _____ for a walk
 - Gone
 - Been
 - Went
 - Go
- The more _____ we walk the longer it will take us to get home.
 - Slowly
 - Slower
 - Slowest
 - Slow
- This house was _____ by my grandfather
 - Build
 - Built
 - ~~Builded~~
 - 's built
- Despite the fact that it had not been well cared for in a lot of years, it looked _____ it had once been a nice little boat.
 - Like
 - As if
 - Though
 - As
- Outside the conference room everybody talked to each other as if they've known _____ another for years instead of just 2 hours.
 - The
 - All
 - Each
 - One

Section 3

Vocabulary

Complete each sentence with the correct word.

1. tired -> exhausted
small -> tiny
angry -> _____
A. Irritated
B. Furious
C. Vexed
D. Annoyed
2. I'm sorry we don't have your size.
A. What a pity!
B. I'll take it
C. I hope so
D. I think so
3. What time is it? It's 6:15
It's a _____ past six.
A. Quarter
B. Half
C. Fifteen
D. Fourth
4. He's a waiter; she's a _____.
A. Waiter
B. Waitress
C. Waitress
D. ~~Waitree~~
5. Who is your mom's sister?
A. Niece
B. Daughter
C. Aunt
D. Wife
6. I do not _____ going out tonight
A. Feel like
B. Like
C. Have mood to
D. Want to
7. They never argue and they enjoy spending time together.
They _____
A. Relate very well
B. Get on very well
C. Relationship very good
D. Like themselves very much
8. Apartment > flat
Elevator > lift
Gasoline > _____
A. Petrol
B. Coal
C. Fuel
D. Oil
9. What size do you need: small, medium or _____?
A. Large
B. Giant
C. Huge
D. Big
10. You can't smoke here, please _____ your cigarette.
A. Put up with
B. Put away
C. Put down
D. Put out
11. Organize the following instructions to replace a light bulb.
A. Turn off the electricity.
B. Turn the electricity on and switch on the light
C. Then, screw in the new light bulb.
D. Remove the light bulb.
First, _____. Second, _____. Third, _____. Finally, _____.

Section 4

A. Translate the following sentences into English.

1. No te cueles en la fila.
2. Hagan una fila.
3. No te comas los mocos.
4. Siéntate bien.
5. Colorea el perrito de rojo.
6. Haz una cabra con la plastilina.
7. Guarda el celular.
8. Saca una hoja y contesta las siguientes preguntas.
9. Toma una servilleta.
10. Usa las tijeras para cortar esa figura.
11. Guarda tu cartuchera.
12. Lávense las manos antes de almorzar.
13. ¿Qué hiciste el fin de semana?

14. Ponte la chaqueta.
15. Vístete la camisa.
16. Recoge esa hoja.
17. Amárrate los zapatos.
18. Bótalo a la basura.
19. La estudiante se cayó y se raspó el codo.
20. ¿Quieres pollo o carne?

B. Write a short paragraph introducing yourself.

Appendix C: Interactive reflection wall

Poster prompts

- What I have learned...
- What I liked
- What I didn't like
- My suggestions

Appendix D: Image of the school consent form

Tunja, 31 de julio de 2022

PADRE

Fredy Hernando Contreras Moreno

RECTOR COLEGIO SAN VIATOR TUNJA



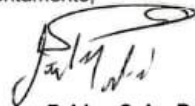
Cordial saludo.

Mediante la presente me dirijo a usted respetuosamente para solicitar su consentimiento a fin de adelantar mi trabajo de investigación de la Maestría en Pedagogía que estoy adelantado con la Universidad Santo Tomás con el personal que labora en el colegio. Mi intención investigativa tiene que ver sobre cómo una comunidad que labora en un colegio bilingüe construye literacidad a través de un programa de inglés especialmente dirigido a ellos. El personal objetivo de mi trabajo investigativo labora en áreas como administración, cocina, mantenimiento, auxiliares pedagógicas, servicios generales y docentes interesados.

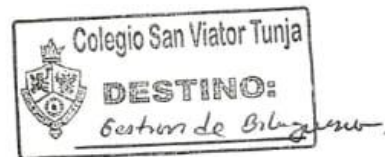
Agradezco de antemano la atención prestada a esta solicitud y quedo a su disposición para proporcionar cualquier información adicional que sea necesaria para la autorización de este proyecto. Estoy convencido de que esta investigación contribuirá significativamente al desarrollo profesional del personal del colegio y al fortalecimiento de nuestra comunidad educativa.

Sin más por el momento, me despido atentamente y quedo a la espera de su pronta y favorable respuesta.

Atentamente,



Yerson Fabian Soler Parra



Docente de InglésEstudiante de la Maestría en Pedagogía Universidad Santo Tomás

Appendix E: Consent form from parents

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMÁS MAESTRIA EN PEDAGOGÍA

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Estimado padre de familia, en el desarrollo de la Maestría en Pedagogía de la Universidad Santo Tomás, yo Yerson Fabián Soler Parra estoy desarrollando un proyecto investigativo cuyo objetivo general es establecer cómo se da la interacción en una comunidad de práctica de lengua extranjera inglés entre estudiantes de un colegio privado, el personal administrativo, profesores y auxiliares de apoyo docente que laboran en la institución.

El proceso de la investigación requiere la recolección y análisis de datos que serán posteriormente utilizados en la escritura de informes, publicaciones y ponencias. En tal sentido, la participación de sus hijos en la recopilación de esta información en este proyecto es de vital importancia y es de carácter voluntario. Los datos se van a recolectar a través de fotografías, videos, asentimientos informados, talleres y entrevistas.

Como padre de familia se le garantizará:

- El uso de nombres ficticios para mantener el anonimato de su hijo/a.
- Uso de los datos estrictamente para la el objetivo del proyecto.
- Uso de la información únicamente con fines académicos.
- Socialización de los resultados del proyecto.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para contar con la participación de su hijo/a en este proyecto.

Cordialmente,

Yerson Fabian Soler Parra

Estudiante Maestría en Pedagogía.

Firma del padre de familia

Nombre del estudiante

Grado

Appendix F: Sample of the teacher's journal

English Class	13	Date: August 24th
Purpose	Express simple sentences about daily activities at home and school by using simple present tense taking into account third person rules	Assistants: 24
Resources	TV Set, Alexa, Copies, Slides, Whiteboard, Images, music	
Content	Simple present rules	
Activities	Description	Analysis
Cultural aspect	The class begins with the phrase: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." The teacher asks who knows the meaning of this phrase. Since no one knows, the teacher starts asking about familiar words in the phrase. Most students recognize that "apple" means "manzana" in Spanish, as well as "doctor" and "day." The teacher then shows images that might help them discover the meaning of the phrase, such as people taking care of their health through diet and sick people going to the doctor. One student says, "mas vale prevenir que curar," and is congratulated. The teacher explains how proverbs may vary in their expression in different languages, but their underlying message remains understandable and clear. All participants take note of the proverb in the "Sayings and Cultural Aspects" section of their agendas	The use of daily phrases, proverbs, or sayings in the classes has helped students acquire vocabulary and see the applicability of the language in everyday life. It also makes them think about how learning a language involves starting to think differently, learning a new way of thinking and viewing things that can challenge existing concepts of logic and reality. Incorporating daily phrases, proverbs, or sayings into language lessons not only aids in vocabulary acquisition but also enhances students' understanding of how language functions within cultural contexts. This approach supports Gee's (2015) concept of cultural literacy, which posits that literacy involves more than just technical skills; it encompasses the ability to engage with and interpret cultural practices through language. By exploring these cultural

		expressions, students develop a deeper appreciation for the language's role in shaping and reflecting cultural norms, thereby bridging the gap between linguistic skills and cultural understanding.
Explain theory	The rules for the present simple tense for the third person singular are then explained through slides and examples	The students took notes; some asked for more explanations as they did not understand the rationale behind the grammatical rule. The vast majority grasped the topic. Some students who understood well explained it to others in their own words. Here, having the support and explanation from a peer was crucial for some to understand. This situation reflects Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and peer support in learning (Vygotsky, 1978)
Game Battleship	The students are given sheets with a printed grid. On the left column are pronouns, and at the top are phrases with a verb. They are instructed on how to play Battleship. They need to draw 4 ships on the grid: one 2-cell ship, one 3-cell ship, one 4-cell ship, and one 5-cell ship. The ships can be placed either vertically or horizontally. Once their grids are ready, they must find a partner to play with but should not reveal the ships they have drawn. To take a shot in Battleship, a participant must say a pronoun and a sentence from the top section. The other participant must determine if the verb in the sentence follows the rules just explained when pronouncing it. The shooter's partner listens and decides if the shot hit or missed. If it hit a ship, they say "hit"; if not, they say "miss." If a ship is sunk, they say	At first, not all students understood, so it was necessary to explain again. Once they understood, all participants were very attentive in marking their successes and failures on their sheets. Some were very excited. The teacher went around to all the competing pairs, clarifying doubts and repeating the correct pronunciation of the sentences. Some students did not apply the rules just studied, so it was necessary to remind them. It was a quite exciting class, and all participants were very enthusiastic. Some had never played Battleship before. One participant said: "I

	"sunk." Winning participants receive a voucher to redeem at the school cafeteria	really enjoyed the Battleship game for practicing the present simple. I had never played it this way; it was very exciting." The playful activity through the game helped them understand the topic while enjoying and practicing with each move. The playful activity through the game helped them understand the topic while enjoying and practicing with each move. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which suggests that learners benefit from activities that challenge their current level of understanding while being supported by the teacher. The game facilitated active engagement and provided immediate feedback, which is crucial for effective learning and cognitive development.
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Appendix G: Questions for focus groups

Initial focus group questions

Objective: To identify the participants' perceptions of the adoption of a bilingual policy in their workplace and the implications it has for their social interactions with members of the school community.

1. When you arrived at the school this year, did you have the idea of learning English?
2. What is your opinion on the adoption of a bilingual education model at your workplace?
3. In your role as a kitchen assistant, pedagogical assistant, maintenance assistant, general services assistant, administrative staff, and driver, what would you like to know in English to communicate with the students you interact with daily at the institution?
4. What challenges do you foresee in the process of communicating in a foreign language like English at your educational institution?
5. How would the ability to communicate with other members of the educational community in a foreign language like English impact your life?

6. How has your experience with the bilingual policy influenced your attitude towards learning English and other languages?
7. In what ways do you think the bilingual policy affects your sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community?
8. Do you feel that the bilingual policy has created new opportunities for you within the school? If so, what are they?

Final focus group questions

Objective: To examine how participants engaged in cultural interactions with members of the academic community using the target language within specific social contexts, and to identify the cultural literacy practices they developed throughout their English learning journey within the school environment.

1. How would you describe your interaction with students after taking the English classes?
2. Do you believe that your participation in the English classes has been beneficial for your personal and professional life?
3. Have you been able to use English to interact with people outside of the school environment as a result of your participation in the English classes?

4. In what ways has your understanding of cultural diversity within the school community changed as a result of participating in the English classes?
5. Can you describe any specific instances where your improved English skills have directly affected your interactions with students or colleagues?
6. What activities did you enjoy the most in class?
7. Do you think that activities such as the spelling bee, interaction with exchange students, and participation in the Golden Christmas Festival were significant for your cultural interaction and learning? Do you believe these activities contributed to your English language acquisition?
8. What recommendations would you have for continuing an English language program for the school staff?

Appendix H: Questions for semi-structured interview

1. What factors do you believe have prevented you from learning English in your life?

2. Has your perspective on English changed since you arrived at the school?

Please explain.

3. Do you think learning English is important for your life?

4. How would you like to learn English?

5. Do you like the way the English classes are currently organized?

6. Do you have any recommendations or observations to make?