Editorial

Critical and Multicultural Changing Times: Colombian Applied Linguistics Authorship Challenging Dominant Views and Proposing Alternatives

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The current state of applied linguistics reveals a critical transformational moment in which dominant views are being challenged, and alternatives that value diversity and multiculturalism are emerging. Focusing on linguistic and cultural diversity is fundamental to addressing the inequalities and injustices that have pervaded Colombian society. Research and publications in this field aim not only to make visible the realities of historically marginalized groups and communities but also to foster significant social change.

Neglecting diversity has rendered the realities of cultural and linguistic groups and individuals invisible, contributing to social practices that lack democracy, participation, and equality. In recent research the predominance of English and other powerful languages has been challenged, advocating for an egalitarian view of other languages and cultures (Cruz-Arcila *et al*, 2022; Miranda *et al*., in press). Dominant discourses are being contested, positioning multilingual and multicultural practices in response to concerns that monolingual and monocultural understandings have disregarded difference and diversity (Kubota & Lin, 2006; Garcia *et al*., 2023). This critical perspective informing this body of work has sought to illuminate other realities that have been obscured by the unilateral perspective of having one national or global language (De Wit, 2019).

In this context, discussions highlight how policies instill global awareness of a historical debt owed to certain individuals and groups, aiming to balance inequality and, within this framework, underscore how practices reflect a need to embrace difference and inclusion, recognizing multiple linguistic and cultural perspectives (Piller, 2017). An example of this can be seen in UNESCO research and investment lines supporting projects and programs that promote the participation of multiple languages and their cultures in the global sphere (Petrova, 2024). Similarly, significant international events, such as the inauguration of the Olympic Games in Paris 2024, overtly represented diversity and equality as symbols of the union of nations and the necessity for peace and solidarity in overcoming historical inequality.

Critical applied linguistics aims to analyze situated language practices in connection to social issues, understanding how language connects individuals' lives and how we construct realities through it, intersecting our beliefs and practices (Pennycook, 2021). In light of this, in contemporary times, an inclusive perspective becomes central to problematizing various fields. The field of education, in particular, has been illuminated by critical applied linguistics, which interrogates language use not only in terms of content and functions, but also its social, political, and cultural implications at micro (individual's practice), meso (social practice), and macro levels (macro-discourses such as the ones installed in policies). Reflections derived from these interrogations have spurred significant interest in shaping new educational practices to fight injustice and promote social change.

Considering Colombia as a country where injustice, insecurity, and violence have perpetuated social practices over the years (Cruz-Arcila, 2017), understanding language in a social context of diversity and difference, situated in a historical context, is crucial for educational research and teaching practices. For instance, studies like that of Sanchez-Moreno (2023) on linguistic policies in Colombia reflect a commitment to pluralism and diversity, showing the degree of scholarly engagement with this cause, which is both reflected and fueled by academic publications.

Despite the impact of Eurocentric, whiteness centered, and exclusionary practices on publishing (Bonilla-Medina & Samacá, 2023), the Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal has been a valuable space in which to resist hegemonic powers, providing opportunities for the academic community to showcase "other," perhaps "peripheral," realities. Authors in the journal demonstrate an awareness of the social commitment to language, proposing alternatives for change and transformation. They use English to communicate local perspectives on language education, offering valuable insights into the educational actors' experiences and emotions in their particular contexts. This approach contrasts with the superficial idea of publishing

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in English merely to "fit" standards and fight neoliberal forces that prioritize productivity over substance (Cardenas, 2016).

Using English to express local realities is a significant step towards inclusion and representing diverse voices. However, we have encouraged researchers to express their ideas in Spanish also and even to use translanguaging; thus, inclusion through the work the *CALJ* does can be perceived both in medium and content. This demonstrates how language can be a powerful vehicle for social transformation and the construction of a more equitable future. Reflections on a given subject, research reports, pedagogical innovations, and book reviews have served as platforms for authors to contribute to the journal's social commitment to language.

As editors, we emphasize that although publishing is a challenging task, it is essential to continue highlighting the voices of authors who can contribute novel ideas and perspectives to the field. These ideas have supplied tools to address society's challenges while shaping the identities of other authors and researchers (Largo Rodriguez, 2022). Beyond rankings and visibility, there is a social commitment encouraged by the journal.

In this issue, we feature several significant contributions: by analyzing the English teaching context as a whole, Becerra Posada stands strongly against the neoliberal forces that have surrounded English as a source of economic and cultural power. She discusses how different communities and groups, even influential ones such as the government, have endorsed those ideas to the detriment of an ecological understanding of English. As an alternative, she introduces 'Pluriversal literacies' as a decolonial framework with important elements that can enrich practices in English language teaching by valuing other knowledges, in this case, indigenous methodologies, with the ambition of adopting practices focused on non-dominant views.

Ortiz García and López-Urbina suggest that challenges and critical situations are always present in educational practices. From that standpoint, they propose that those challenges can be taken as a form of learning which can inform efforts to improve educational practice. In this same line of thought, Ramirez and Hernández Gaviria propose that students be encouraged to explicitly identify learning strategies so they can enrich their own learning. They conclude that a sequential stage is key to obtaining a successful learning experience, but they also emphasize that comprehension of those strategies and their levels of difficulty are central if learners are to approach them more advantageously.

Restrepo Rodas engages directly with current language teaching practices but maintains a critical perspective, questioning the use of language tests as a requirement in tertiary education. He affirms that despite claims that tests identify communicative and intercultural skills, not enough attention has been given to the socio-cognitive dimensions of language. He sees the practice of testing as a paradox needing to be resolved within the field, specifically in Colombia. Within this context, Villamizar-Castrillón, Herreño-Contreras, and Mendieta-Ramírez explain the complexity of syllabus design by sharing their experience balancing institutional aims and pedagogical theories, determining careful analysis and organization to be key elements for encouraging successful syllabus design. In turn, Calle Alvarez conducts a study to analyze the inferential reading strategies learners use and concludes that enhancing inferential reading skills among Spanish speaking students necessitates the implementation of pre-reading strategies that contribute to both situational and linguistic understanding of a given text.

Cárcamo Morales takes another perspective and explores more contemporary challenges in language education, analyzing the perplexing situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced teachers to adopt new strategies and skills. By carefully observing teachers' interaction in virtual sessions and identifying key features of teacher behavior in the virtual classroom, he highlights the need for the establishment of better teacher-student relationships. In doing so, he determines that affective factors are necessary to carefully address feelings of isolation, which may facilitate the laying of crucial foundations for the development of strong emotional teacher-student relationships. Agurto, Cisterna, and Parra also make important contributions to discussion of contemporary challenges posed by virtual education by analyzing the usefulness of a virtual app to support spoken interactions between tourist learners and actors who roleplay as interlocutors in a professional setting. Using those tools, they highlight the importance of other dimensions of communication in improving future pedagogical practices and approaches to teaching educators.

Finally, Bickner delves into the role of teacher identity in relation to textbook usage within disadvantaged settings. While he shares a common focus on teacher identity with other scholars, Bickner offers a unique perspective by examining how teachers interact with textbooks, particularly in vulnerable contexts. His work highlights the significance of understanding how teachers navigate and balance these influences as they shape their own identities.

It is inspiring to see how the academic community, through platforms like the *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*,

resists exclusionary practices and proposes new understandings of language use. By doing so, they enrich academic discussions, construct identities, and provide tools to address social challenges. These contributions demonstrate that teaching language is inherently linked to social commitment, and we hope that future inputs continue to enrich the views and practices of language education actors. The *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal* is a good example of how academia can contribute to social justice and inclusion.

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