



## Language Pedagogies in Colombian English Classrooms: A Systematic Review of Literature from Colombian Journals

Pedagogías de las lenguas en aulas de inglés de Colombia:  
Una revisión sistemática de la literatura en revistas colombianas

Pedagogias linguísticas nas salas de aula de inglês na Colômbia:  
uma revisão sistemática da literatura de periódicos colombianos

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### Abstract

Language education has historically been characterized by a continual search for more effective ways of teaching that support student learning. In this work, we investigated empirical evidence on language pedagogies integrated into Colombian PreK-11 English classrooms between 2010 and 2021. We systematically selected and analyzed 104 refereed articles, which we examined using an analytical framework informed mainly by Hall's *Method, methods and methodology* (2016) and Thornbury's *30 language teaching methods* (2017). Our analysis showed that Colombian teachers of English as a foreign language employed a variety of language pedagogies and engaged in pedagogical practices which provided multiple opportunities for students to practice language. Teachers made substantial use of technological resources even before the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** language research, teaching methods, multilingualism, technology uses in education, pedagogy

### Resumen

La enseñanza de lenguas ha sido impulsada por la búsqueda constante de métodos efectivos para apoyar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. En este estudio, seleccionamos y analizamos evidencia empírica sobre pedagogías de enseñanza del inglés, implementadas en aulas de Colombia, desde prekínder hasta undécimo grado, durante el periodo comprendido entre 2010 y 2021. Para ello, realizamos una selección sistemática de 104 artículos revisados por pares, los cuales fueron examinados mediante un marco analítico basado en los trabajos de Hall (2016), "Method, methods and methodology", y Thornbury (2017), "30 language teaching methods". Nuestro análisis evidenció que los docentes colombianos de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) emplean una amplia variedad de enfoques y prácticas pedagógicas que brindan múltiples oportunidades para que los estudiantes practiquen el idioma, y hagan uso significativo de recursos tecnológicos, incluso antes de las restricciones impuestas por la pandemia por covid-19.

**Palabras claves:** investigación en lenguas, métodos de enseñanza, multilingüismo, uso de la tecnología en la educación, pedagogía.

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## Resumo

A educação em línguas tem sido historicamente caracterizada por uma busca contínua por métodos de ensino mais eficazes que favoreçam a aprendizagem dos alunos. Este estudo investigou evidências empíricas sobre pedagogias linguísticas integradas em salas de aula de inglês no sistema educacional colombiano (PreK-11) entre 2010 e 2021. Foram selecionados, de forma sistemática, 104 artigos revisados por pares, analisados com base em uma estrutura analítica fundamentada principalmente nas obras de Hall (2016), *Method, methods and methodology*, e de Thornbury (2017), *30 language teaching methods*. A análise revelou que os professores colombianos de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) empregaram uma ampla variedade de pedagogias linguísticas e se envolveram em práticas pedagógicas que proporcionavam múltiplas oportunidades para os alunos praticarem a língua. Os professores faziam uso substancial de recursos tecnológicos, mesmo antes das restrições da pandemia do Covid-19.

**Palavras-chave:** pesquisa linguística, métodos de ensino, multilinguismo, uso da tecnologia na educação, pedagogia

## Introduction

Language education has historically been characterized by a continual search for more meaningful and effective ways of teaching. For example, although it was the dominant English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching method in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *grammar translation* was challenged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, given its emphasis on memorization and the lack of communication-based language practice for students (Abidin, 2021; Brown & Lee, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Consequently, substantial oral practice for learners became central to debates on effective language teaching, and other changes continued to be suggested. These debates have sparked an increased interest in research on the ‘best’ ways to teach EFL.

EFL teaching research has emphasized multiple methods, approaches, techniques, and theories (Brown & Lee, 2015; Hall, 2016; Thornbury, 2017). Other terms such as *principles*, *strategies*, *procedures*, and *tactics* have also been used, often interchangeably, to describe the elements constituting language teaching/learning. As a result, and as we also noted in the literature we reviewed, one author may call an element a *method*, while another may refer to the same element as an *approach* or a *theory*<sup>5</sup>. As discussed later in the arti-

cle, this inconsistency contributed to our rationale for conceptualizing these as language pedagogies.

In his seminal work, *Approach, method, and technique*, Edward Anthony’s framework (1963) distinguished approaches, methods, and techniques in language teaching. According to Anthony, an approach is “a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith” (pp. 63-64). Anthony conceptualized a method as “an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach” (p. 65). From this perspective, an approach may comprise different methods.

Abidin’s overview of paradigms in language teaching/learning (2021) highlighted four main approaches (*i.e.*, structuralism-behaviorism, structuralism-mentalism, functionalism, constructionism), with different methods (*e.g.*, direct, oral-situational, audiolingual, total physical response, suggestopedia, silent way, lexical, communicative, task-based, and community language learning methods) within them. According to Anthony (1963), each method can be implemented through a technique, *i.e.*, “a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective” (p. 66). As such, the approaches inform the numerous methods, which in turn inform the varied techniques employed in different educational contexts.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Nicholson-Nelson (1998) refers to *multiple intelligences* as a *theory*, whereas Richards and Rodgers (2001) refer to it as a *model*, and Ruiz and Taylor (2008) refer to it as a *method*.

In the Colombian context, there are over a dozen journals dedicated to publishing works in the fields of education and EFL. As a result, Colombia has a “rich, yet scattered scholarship” (Mejía-Jiménez, 2011, as cited in Rosado-Mendinueta *et al.*, 2023, p. 72). According to Rosado-Mendinueta *et al.* (2023), in 2021, scholars such as Cárdenas (2021) and Lucero and Castañeda-Londoño (2021) issued a call to analyze such scholarship. We took up this call to systematically synthesize and analyze it, providing insights into how teachers have approached EFL instruction in Colombia. Given the significant educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we also sought to position this review as a reference for educators interested in comparing pre-pandemic EFL pedagogies against those that emerged during the pandemic. To undertake this task, our review was guided by the following question: *Based on research articles published in Colombian journals, what were the pedagogies implemented by teachers of English as a foreign language in Colombian K-11 classrooms between 2010 and 2021?* We included the year 2021 to capture the most recent publications at the time we completed the literature search.

Our analysis showed that, during the pandemic, Colombian EFL teachers engaged in diverse pedagogical practices and employed a variety of language methods, approaches, techniques, and theories. They made substantial use of technological resources even before the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic arose. Given the ambiguity in labeling the ways of approaching instruction (e.g., methods, approaches, techniques) in the literature, and considering that all the terms emphasize the process from theorizing to ways of delivering instruction, we grouped these methods, approaches, techniques, and theories (MATTs) and conceptualized them as *language pedagogies*. Drawing on Richards and Schmidt’s definition of pedagogy (2013) as “theories of teaching, curriculum and instruction as well as the ways in which formal teaching and learning in institutional settings such as schools is planned and delivered” (p. 425), our conceptualization integrates

theoretical foundations and practical actions in EFL classrooms. From van Manen’s perspective (2016; see also Noddings, 2013), pedagogy must also consider teachers’ actions as they relate to professional dispositions such as an ethics of care.

## Methodology

Cárdenas (2021) discussed the challenge of publishing in highly indexed journals from the West and highlighted local journals as spaces in which the work of local educators is often disseminated. Accordingly, Cárdenas (2021) called for an “appreciation of local work” produced by classroom teachers and educators from higher education institutions (p. 42). In line with Cárdenas’ call (2021), we limited this study to Colombian journals in order to recognize and appreciate locally grounded scholarship. We recognized that other studies may have been published in highly indexed international journals and were therefore beyond our scope. To investigate what has been addressed in the selected Colombian journals, we analyzed a) the language pedagogies integrated into Colombian PreK-11 classrooms between 2010 and 2021, b) teachers’ practices and student learning, and c) the key findings and conclusions from the studies reviewed.

In Colombia, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) makes decisions on and issues English teaching policies for Colombian schools. Given the timeframe of this review, we anticipated that the MEN’s policies, guidelines, and other documents released in the 2000-2019 period informed classroom practices. The National Bilingualism Program (PNB) (MEN, 2004) provided general information regarding bilingualism and the objectives of teaching and learning English in Colombia. It also described specific standards that schools and teachers could use to achieve certain learning outcomes, as well as ways to prepare students for attaining the B1 English proficiency level according to the Common European Framework (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) by the time they graduated from high school.

*Orientaciones y principios pedagógicos* (OPPCS, 2016) was a key curriculum guide that suggested core topics (e.g., environmental education, sex education, globalization), objectives, and language teaching methods (e.g., project-based, problem-based, and task-based). In 2015, the MEN released *Colombia very well*, a public policy to promote English in Colombia and prepare students to better participate in the global community and compete in the global economy. *Colombia very well* emphasized the importance of developing English proficiency—as leveled by the CEFR—through different strategies. Although it did not suggest particular language pedagogies or content, *Colombia very well* underscored students' development of English language proficiency to make Colombia more multilingual and increase its global engagement.

These three documents establish the MEN's objectives and expectations, and they provide context for the teaching of English in Colombia. As can be seen in this overview, some of these documents provide more detailed information than others, but, together, they highlight standards, expected learning outcomes, strategies, activities, and topics for EFL teachers. As analyzed by Mosquera (2021), "the material provided by the MEN contains a large number of methodological strategies, activities to address the four language skills, and techniques for the use of materials" (p. 114). Teachers can draw on these documents to expand their repertoires of language pedagogies and support student learning within their contexts.

The data for this study were gleaned from the following 14 Colombian journals in the fields of education and EFL, selected from a list of 277 publications

recognized by the Colombian Ministry of Science (MinCiencias, 2020): *Actualidades Pedagógicas*, *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, *Educación y Educadores*, *Enletawa Journal*, *Enunciación*, *Folios*, *GIST Education and Learning Research Journal*, *HOW Journal*, *Íkala – Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, *Lenguaje*, *Matices en Lenguas Extranjeras*, *Profile Journal*, and *Revista Colombiana de Educación*.

In conducting the literature search, we used an Excel spreadsheet to document, among other components, the titles, abstracts, and keywords of all the articles published between 2010 and 2021 in the 14 journals. We found 2773 articles. We established inclusion/exclusion criteria for title, abstract, and keywords screening. Through this screening, we identified 289 studies for full-text review, as illustrated on Table 1.

During the full-text review stage, we included studies that provided information on language pedagogies, and we captured practices related to teachers' pedagogies and student learning, in addition to the key findings and conclusions of the studies. At this point in the process, we excluded 185 articles because they failed to provide essential data. Naturally, we documented the reasons for this exclusion (Figure 1). We included 104 relevant articles.

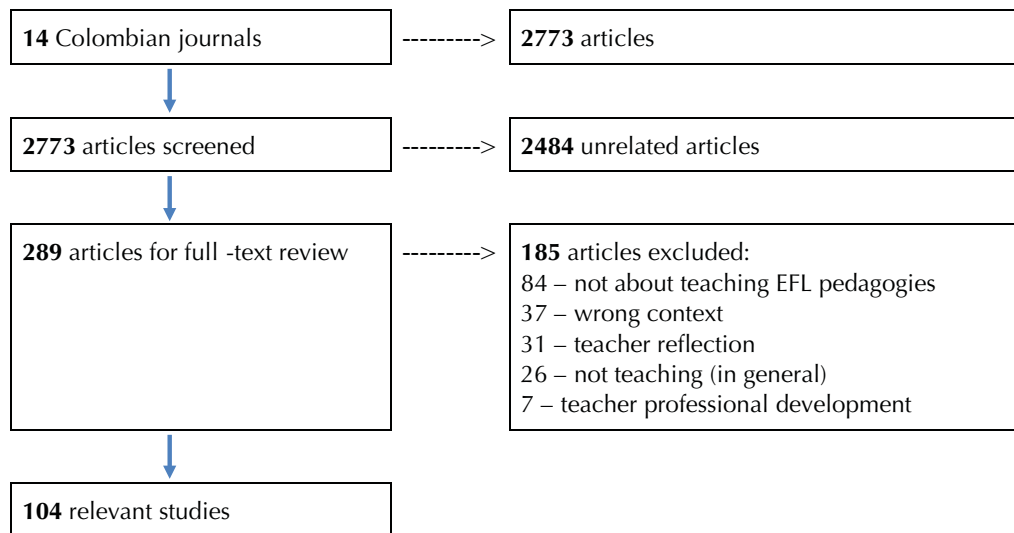
To extract data, we designed the template of an analytical framework informed by Hall (2016) and Thornbury (2017), who provide more complete lists of language pedagogies. To analyze these data, we first used color codes (Saldaña, 2016) to highlight the language pedagogies

**Table 1**

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Colombian PreK-11 context	Not Colombian PreK-11 context
English teaching/learning	English teaching/learning (university-context only)
Published: 2010-2021	Published before 2010
Pre-service teachers' work in PreK-11	Not addressing English language teaching (ELT)
Published in English or Spanish	Published in a language other than English/Spanish

**Figure 1**  
*Inclusion and exclusion flowchart*



(e.g., methods, approaches). Next, we identified and coded information related to teachers' practices, student learning, the topics explored, and the key findings and conclusions of all studies. Lastly, we identified categories from said codes, and then overarching themes from categories, as illustrated in [Table 2](#).

## Analysis and discussion

In this section, the findings are presented thematically. First, we focus on the two major themes identified: a) language pedagogies and b) teachers' practices and student learning. Next, we synthesize the findings and conclusions of the analyzed studies.

## Language pedagogies in Colombian English classrooms

Between 2010 and 2021, Colombian EFL PreK-11 students benefited from a variety of language pedagogies. Most of these pedagogies were clearly stated in studies as MATTs. We referred to this context as an *explicit* mention of pedagogies. A few studies that met the inclusion criteria did not explicitly refer to language pedagogies but offered sufficient descriptions. For example, if an author described that the class *played Simon says* or *performed a Simon says activity*, we inferred from the description that they referred to the total physical response (TPR). In this case, as we did in a similar systematic review ([Kaya et al., 2022](#)), we categorized these pedagogies as *implicit*.

**Table 2**  
*Examples of codes, categories, and a theme*

Code	Category	Theme
Teaching through songs	Use of resources	Teachers' practices and student learning
Teaching vocabulary through games		
Teaching the simple past of irregular verbs	Explicit instruction	



In other words, we labeled pedagogies as *implicit* when they were not clearly stated in the studies, but we identified them from descriptions of classroom practices and/or activities. Tables 3 to 6 show explicit and implicit mentions of language pedagogies, abiding by the terminology of the analytical framework (*i.e.*, MATT) and/or the authors' conceptualizations in the literature reviewed. Table 3 presents the methods as identified in the review—although, as indicated above, other scholars may label them differently.

As shown in Table 4, technology in language teaching prevailed as a method ( $n=28$ ), followed by collaborative language learning ( $n=20$ ). We found that most studies were conducted in urban areas, which could explain the high use of technology in English classrooms even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this finding, we renewed the

call to provide rural schools with technological support and engage all teachers in technology-related professional development. We noted that, while the frequency of *method* integration ranged from 1 to 28, the most widely implemented *approach* was mentioned in eleven studies.

Writing instruction was the most popular approach ( $n=11$ ), followed by project-based learning ( $n=8$ ). On the one hand, the wide variety of approaches used with low frequency could indicate teachers' knowledge and use of multiple approaches, and their awareness that learners have different learning styles. On the other hand, the high frequency observed for writing instruction could be promising since, although many learning assessments and academic tasks involve writing, it often receives little attention in classrooms (Nunes *et al.*, 2022; Wu & Albert, 2022; Yate & Gómez, 2013).

**Table 3**

*Language methods*

Method	Explicit	Implicit	Studies
Technology in language teaching	21	7	28
Collaborative language learning	19	1	20
Task-based language learning	15	1	16
Oral approach	6	8	14
Communicative language learning	8	6	14
Bilingual education	6	2	8
Content and language integrated learning	7	0	7
Community language learning	3	2	5
Total physical response	4	0	4
Eclecticism	2	2	4
Grammar translation method	3	0	3
Language and culture teaching	1	1	2
Competency-based language learning	0	2	2
Sheltered instruction observation protocol	2	0	2
Text-based instruction	1	1	2
Audiolingual method	1	0	1
Blended learning	1	0	1
Multiple intelligences	1	0	1
Self-directed learning	1	0	1
Silent way	1	0	1
Total immersion	1	0	1
Two-way bilingual education method	1	0	1
Total	104	33	138*

Note: \* = the total number of methods is higher because some studies integrated two or more methods

**Table 4**  
*Language approaches*

Approach	Explicit	Implicit	Studies
Writing instruction	11	0	11
Project-based learning	7	1	8
Metacognitive strategies	3	0	3
Cognitive approach	2	0	2
Genre-based approach	2	0	2
Lexical approach	1	1	2
Phonics instruction	1	1	2
Daily 5 approach	1	0	1
Differentiated instruction	1	0	1
Directed reading-thinking approach	1	0	1
Interactive model of reading	1	0	1
Process-genre approach	1	0	1
Process-based approach	1	0	1
Station teaching model	1	0	1
Social justice approach	1	0	1
Social learning approach	0	1	1
Reading to learn (R2L)	1	0	1
Total	36	4	40

Writing is a crucial component of students' academic and overall success. Project-based learning, the second most prominent approach, may suggest alignment with MEN guidelines (OPPCS, 2016). We also noted the low frequency of language techniques.

Songs were the most frequently integrated into pedagogies (n=14). They have served multiple purposes in the classroom as a resource, an approach, and a technique for decades. Teaching

through songs has the potential to enhance learners' vocabulary and grammar, improve comprehension, and increase students' motivation to use English (Quintero, 2023). On the benefits of songs, Gelvez (2023) argued that they can enhance lexical and communicative competencies. Songs also provide opportunities for cultural and intercultural analysis, in addition to practicing language skills—including speaking and writing. Next, we turn to language theories, as illustrated on Table 5 to 6.

**Table 5**  
*Language techniques*

Technique	Explicit	Implicit	Studies
Songs	14	0	14
Storytelling	2	0	2
Video-mediated learning	2	0	2
Drama	1	0	1
Sight word strategy	1	0	1
Digital storytelling	1	0	1
Dictionary use	1	0	1
Rhymes	1	0	1
Total	23	0	23

**Table 6**  
*Language theories*

Theory	Explicit	Implicit	Studies
Translanguaging	1	3	4
Critical pedagogy	4	0	4
Transactional theory	2	1	3
Plurilingual pedagogy	1	0	1
Total	8	4	12

Unlike other theories explicitly stated in the reviewed studies, translanguaging was used implicitly. This could mean that teachers may have integrated translanguaging into their practices, but that researchers did not refer to it as such. Translanguaging challenges monolingual ideologies and refers to the process by which bilingual students perform bilingually to use their full linguistic repertoires (Sánchez & García, 2022). Contexts such as Ireland have contended to the potential of translanguaging (Batardière *et al.*, 2023). Ávila-Mendoza *et al.* (2024) argued that, in Latin America, translanguaging practices have emerged as a form of resistance to advance inclusive pedagogies rooted in local knowledge and linguistic diversity. Regarding the Colombian context, Archila *et al.* (2024) found that only a small fraction of students felt comfortable with an English-only pedagogy. Bettney Heidt's analysis (2023) shows that, although educators in Colombia demonstrate

a recognition of Spanish and a shift away from English-only pedagogies, colonial ideologies and policies persist which valorize English over Spanish and other local languages. Such policies may hinder teachers' opportunities to capitalize on students' full linguistic repertoires (Table 7).

### Teachers' practices and student learning

To support students in developing their competencies in English, teachers engaged in a variety of pedagogical practices to facilitate different activities.

These findings demonstrate how Colombian EFL teachers substantially employed digital technologies and innovative approaches even before the pandemic. In their practices, teachers used explicit instruction to teach grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading strategies or other learning strategies (Álvarez *et al.*, 2018; Devia & García, 2017; Izquierdo & Jiménez, 2014; Murcia, 2015; Rodríguez, 2017), and metaphors and similes (Hernández, 2017). Explicit instruction has been the subject of contradicting perspectives, but it can be particularly valued in EFL contexts, as students do not have exposure to natural L2 language. Explicit instruction can help students to better understand and effectively use literal and figurative language. This kind of practice may be essential in discussing memorization in addition to language and culture intertwining.

**Table 7**  
*Pedagogies*

Pedagogy / strategy	Source Authors
Totalphysical response	Carvajal (2012); Jaraba and Arrieta (2012); Mosquera (2021); Rojas and Rueda (2019)
Communicative approach	Carvajal (2012); Vaca and Gómez (2017)
Content-based learning	Castillo and Rojas (2014); García-Herreros (2018); Padilla (2016)
SIOP model	Bueno (2012); Rátiva (2013)
Integration of digital technologies	Aldana <i>et al.</i> (2012); Cruz (2018); González (2020)
Exploration of printed texts	Gamboa (2017); Insuasty and Jaime (2020); Porras (2010)
Use of digital platforms	Diverface (Aldana <i>et al.</i> , 2012); Schoology (Rodríguez and Vargas, 2020); Daily 5 (Cadena <i>et al.</i> , 2019)
Gamification and image analysis	Dueñas (2013); Martínez (2011); Pérez and Alvira (2017)



Teachers drew from a variety of resources to facilitate instruction (Table 8). The effective facilitation of instruction is critical in supporting student learning (Wei *et al.*, 2022). Although these practices are arguably common to language educators, we found it necessary to highlight them in order to contextualize student learning within the scope of this study.

**Table 8***Resources for EFL instruction*

Resources	Source a uthors
Written letters	Peñaloza and Rallón, 2019
Printed texts	Cruz, 2018
Digital books	Aldana <i>et al.</i> , 2012
Compact discs	Valbuena, 2014
Audios	Villareal <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Videos	Jiménez, 2012; Losada and Suaza, 2018
Television	Castañeda, 2012
DVDs	Abad, 2013
Ask multiple kinds of questions	Caicedo, 2016
Led discussions	Mesa and León, 2014
Encourage participation	Herazo and Sagre, 2016
Guide students' inquiries	Gómez, 2018
Present topics	Rojas and Rueda, 2019
Read-alouds	Martínez, 2011
Story telling	González, 2020

Teachers provided students with opportunities to practice language and work on projects. They helped students practice their pronunciation (Contreras *et al.*, 2016; Duarte *et al.*, 2012; Valbuena, 2014), learn vocabulary (Pérez & Alvira, 2017), and use language in multiple ways (Agudelo & Morales, 2019; Devia & García, 2017; Gómez, 2018). Students practiced pronunciation and speaking by recording their own videos, performing free or scripted dialogues, responding to questions, using web pages, and singing rhymes. Teachers taught pronunciation either inductively or deductively (Buitrago, 2013; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2020, Vaca & Gómez, 2017). In Duarte *et al.* (2012), for

instance, students listened to songs which students found helpful to enhance pronunciation.

Teachers taught vocabulary through various approaches and multiple resources. The list presented in Table 9 is by no means exhaustive, but it showed the approaches used by teachers to help students develop their vocabulary.

**Table 9***Approaches to teaching vocabulary*

Vocabulary development strategy	Source authors
Using dictionaries to understand content	Aristizábal-Jiménez (2020); Becerra (2013)
Identifying unknown words	Parra and Fonseca (2010)
Exploring synonyms and antonyms	Álvarez <i>et al.</i> (2018)
Using games and digital materials	Ochoa and Medina (2014)

Teachers also facilitated instruction by asking students to complete multiple tasks either individually, in pairs, or in groups, with the aim of developing their language skills. These tasks emphasized involvement in a variety of activities.

These activities and skills-related tasks provided students with opportunities to use language and develop receptive and productive skills. In addition, teachers created context in order for students to produce multimodal texts (Aldana *et al.*, 2012), translate texts (Vaca & Gómez, 2017), use their first language (*i.e.*, Spanish) in English classrooms (Salmona, 2014), and perform code switching (*e.g.*, Ramos *et al.*, 2013). Students also conducted individual or collaborative inquiries and projects (Bolaños *et al.*, 2018; Bonilla-Salazar, 2019) and/or research on school-related issues (Gómez, 2018; Monsalve, 2012). They also raised funds to purchase food for unhoused citizens (Ortega, 2020), presented findings to communities (Contreras & Chapetón, 2016; Monsalve, 2012), or expressed their voices (Villarreal *et al.*, 2016). Since they were provided with opportunities to explore topics and conduct projects, students developed skills beyond linguistic competence (Table 10).

**Table 10***Skills-related tasks*

Type of tasks	Authors
Providing descriptions	Lizarazo (2012); Tolosa <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Filling in blanks	Monsalve (2012)
Completing charts	Cadena <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Using graphic organizers	Aristizabal-Jiménez (2020); Sánchez and López (2019)
Filling out questionnaires	Becerra <i>et al.</i> (2018); Rátiva <i>et al.</i> (2012)
Completing matching exercises	Dueñas (2013)
Providing peer feedback	Salinas (2020); Tolosa <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Enhancing listening skills	Herazo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Murcia (2015)
Enhancing reading skills	Becerra <i>et al.</i> (2018); Pedraza-Hernández and Castiblanco-Gil (2017); Rincón (2013)
Enhancing writing skills	Gómez (2018); Rincón and Clavijo (2016)
Enhancing speaking skills	González (2020); Ruiz (2013)

**Key themes from the reviewed literature**

The studies we reviewed reported findings and conclusions on a) the benefits and impacts of certain pedagogies, b) the power or effectiveness of specific pedagogies and/or tasks, c) the importance of distinct activities or practices, and d) student development in numerous areas. Studies such as those by Contreras *et al.* (2016) and González (2020) found that engaging in action research and collaborative language learning and employing writing strategies had multiple benefits, as these pedagogies empowered students, strengthened their multiliteracies learning and reading performance, and helped them reflect on their own behaviors.

Different studies highlighted the benefits of allowing code-switching in writing (Ramos Holguín *et al.*, 2013), integrating songs and encouraging interactions (Buitrago, 2016; Hernández, 2011), and drawing on short stories to enhance writing (Monsalve, 2012). Herazo *et al.* (2021) highlighted the potential of reading to learn pedagogy in developing students' metalinguistic knowledge, and Arteaga-Lara (2018) emphasized the impact of the process-genre approach in fostering student writing. Other studies advocated for the impacts of using different language pedagogies, including the impact of technology and project-based learning on students' self-realization of their active roles in

learning (Agudelo & Morales, 2019; Celis, 2017; Ochoa & Medina, 2014; Tolosa *et al.*, 2017), inquiry as a path to reading students' worlds (Rincón & Clavijo, 2016), and cooperative work as key to enhancing student participation and oral language development (Buitrago, 2016; Monsalve, 2012). Integrating multimodal resources into pedagogies may foster students' engagement and contribute to their language development.

Other works highlighted the impact of differentiated instruction through virtual learning in fostering autonomous learning and confidence (Vargas-Parra *et al.*, 2018); the impact of autonomous work and communicative group tasks and the use of ICT in improving speaking skills and expanding vocabulary (Carrero, 2016; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2020); the impact of contextualizing learning to engage students and help them reflect on their learning processes (Trujillo *et al.*, 2015); and the impact of raising students' intercultural awareness through text-experience connections (Castañeda, 2012). Other studies highlighted the impacts of implementing Schoology and/or other digital resources in improving students' vocabulary, writing, and engagement (Jiménez, 2012; Rodríguez & Vargas, 2020; Tolosa *et al.*, 2015); using games in developing speaking skills (Urrutia & Vega, 2010); and using literary text-based activities to motivate learners (Rodríguez, 2017). While these studies

demonstrate innovative uses of digital technologies and pedagogical practices to enhance language learning, structural issues such as unequal access to technology appear to be overlooked.

Additional literature underscored the power of explicitly teaching students the use of reading and cognitive and/or metacognitive strategies in facilitating their learning processes and improving comprehension (Ballesteros & Tutistar, 2014; Bueno, 2012; Camargo & Orbegoza, 2010; Echeverri & McNulty, 2010; Padilla, 2016; Rodríguez, 2017); the power of integrating cooperative learning in fostering reading and writing skills, developing abilities for teamwork, and reducing anxiety and shyness (Caicedo, 2016; D'Olivares, 2013; Lemos, 2012; Robayo, 2016); and the power of conducting local inquiries and engaging learners in music-related tasks to increase their participation, expand their vocabulary, and enhance their comprehension (Bonilla-Salazar, 2019; Duarte *et al.*, 2012; Ladino *et al.*, 2020; Rincón & Clavijo, 2016). A few studies advocated for the effectiveness of pedagogies such as the transactional approach to reading (Gómez & Leal, 2015) or memorization and translation (Cruz, 2018), as well as authentic oral-production tasks (Chaves & Fernandez, 2016; Ramírez & Artunduaga, 2018) and interest centers (Dueñas, 2013). Contradictory findings also emerged: Cuartas (2014; see also Rativa, 2013) suggested reducing the use of L1 for better L2 practice, while Salmona (2014) underscored consideration of L1 as a resource in L2 classrooms. These findings call for more research to further investigate the use and outcomes of L1 in L2 classrooms.

Some studies emphasized the importance of activities such as using blogs to provide students with exposure to L2 (Amado, 2015; Lizarazo, 2012), facilitating instruction in ways that help students portray their social identities (Collazos & Gomez, 2019; Jiménez, 2012), use their prior knowledge (Becerra, 2013; Marengo, 2018) and funds of knowledge (Bonilla-Salazar, 2019; Pinto, 2019), or any pedagogies that seemed effective. We found that only a few studies highlighted

the ineffectiveness of pedagogies (Herazo, 2010; Tolosa *et al.*, 2015); most of the pedagogies integrated into classrooms were reported to be effective in enhancing students' language development. This highly positive portrayal of pedagogical interventions raises critical concerns about the degree of reflexivity in the field. It suggests the need for more nuanced and critical research which accounts not only for opportunities, but also for the complexities, limitations, and unintended consequences of certain language pedagogies in Colombian classrooms.

Many studies reported that students improved their oral/communicative skills and self-confidence (Barón, 2010; Castro & Navarro, 2014; Cortés *et al.*, 2019; Dueñas *et al.*, 2015; Palacios & Chapetón, 2014b; Vaca & Gómez, 2017), their fluency (Cadena *et al.*, 2019; Devia & García, 2017; Marengo, 2018), their pronunciation (Contreras *et al.*, 2016; Martínez, 2011; Valbuena, 2014), their vocabulary (Álvarez *et al.*, 2018; Buitrago, 2016; Pérez & Alvira, 2017; Rojas & Rueda, 2019), their writing (Guzmán & Moreno, 2019; Peñaloza & Rallón, 2019; Salinas, 2020), their reading comprehension (Echeverri & McNulty, 2010; Mendieta *et al.*, 2015; Quintana *et al.*, 2019), their grammar (Murcia, 2015), and their critical thinking (Mesa & León, 2014). Historically, EFL instruction has centered on building students' vocabulary, strengthening grammatical knowledge, and enhancing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. This may justify why teachers prioritize these methods.

In addition to the above, studies reported that students developed inquiry skills (Rincón & Clavijo, 2016), phonemic awareness and reliance on graphophonic cues (Valbuena, 2014), and autonomy (Agudelo & Morales, 2019; Rojas & Rueda, 2019; Suárez & Rodríguez, 2018). They increased their self-confidence (Cortés *et al.*, 2019; Marengo, 2018; Quintana *et al.*, 2019), their interest in local social issues and history (Flórez, 2018; Mesa & León, 2014), and their willingness to interact in class (Becerra *et al.*, 2018; Ramírez & Artunduaga, 2018; Ruiz, 2013). Studies such

as that by [Ortega \(2020\)](#) also highlighted the influence of language classes on social transformation. Regardless of the reported effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the reviewed practices, this work provided insights into language pedagogies in Colombian classrooms. It is encouraging to observe how teachers' actual pedagogical practices extend beyond teaching specific language aspects or implementing traditionally established pedagogies.

Not acknowledging the benefits, impacts, importance, or effectiveness of any language pedagogy and its related tasks and activities would mean ignoring its strengths, as different pedagogies may serve different purposes or priorities. The study by [Robat et al. \(2021\)](#) on effective methods concluded that "as long as specific methods fit certain contexts ... those methods are the 'best methods'" (p. 225). Note that different studies highlighted the effectiveness of different pedagogies in supporting learners' language development. Therefore, perhaps more effort should be directed towards understanding learners, the teaching/learning context, and the (un)availability of resources, as language learning is a complex process influenced by context, resources, style preferences, and other aspects. These aspects can justify the need for different pedagogies to make language learning more engaging and meet students' needs. We concur that there is no 'best' method or pedagogy given contextual variations.

## Limitations

This systematic review has two interrelated limitations. The first is related to its scope, as we only included studies published nationally, and we excluded those conducted in Colombian language classrooms but published abroad. The second limitation has to do with the contexts of the literature reviewed. Although this study aimed to analyze language pedagogies across Colombia, the findings predominantly reflect perspectives on English language pedagogies in urban areas, particularly in Bogotá. This urban-centric focus stems from the

concentration of academic production and research activities in major cities. Together, these two limitations mean that the findings may have failed to capture some pedagogical practices. Future studies should consider a more inclusive and regionally diverse design to address these limitations.

## Conclusions

Much of the literature on language teaching research has used terms such as MATTs interchangeably. Said labeling may not directly impact teaching, but this may be an area in which language educators need a shared understanding to minimize confusion for teachers who must learn and apply these terms in their practice. In this work, we grouped these MATTs and other terms that describe elements of language teaching and learning (e.g., principles, strategies) and conceptualized them as *language pedagogies*.

In investigating language pedagogies in Colombian PreK-11 classrooms, we contributed to language teaching research. We highlighted teacher practices which guided student learning, and we synthesized key findings and conclusions from the reviewed studies. As shown, most language pedagogies were argued to be effective in supporting student learning and language development. Perhaps this is an indication and/or a reminder that language educators need to develop awareness of the differentness and multiple purposes of language pedagogies. Teachers with such awareness could focus on integration of pedagogies, as allowed by their context, in order to tend to the needs of students, without the pressure of trying to adopt certain language pedagogies because they are popular in other settings.

As shown in the findings, the implementation of a wide repertoire of pedagogies may attest to teachers' care in promoting meaningful and effective learning, either explicitly or implicitly ([Noddings, 2013](#); [Van Manen, 2016](#)). At the same time, the predominantly positive depiction of pedagogies calls the level of reflexivity in EFL



scholarship into question. Future research may consider more nuanced perspectives that underscore the complexities of integrating diverse language pedagogies into EFL classrooms in specific contexts.

In the Colombian context, teachers substantially drew on technological resources to enrich their practices. Therefore, we highlight the importance of supporting language teachers with the necessary professional development to increase their effective use of technology. Our analysis also showed that teachers created opportunities for students to engage in activities that helped them develop their language abilities and skills in other domains, and, in some cases, students engaged in inquiry and/or became producers of texts. These practices are vital and align with language and literacy educators who have taken the critical literacy lens and continue to underscore the empowerment of learners and their role as producers of multimodal texts (e.g., Alford, 2021). Beyond technology-related innovations, we noted the need to address structural issues such as unequal access to technology. Further research may explore technology-related barriers, especially in rural or under-resourced areas, to ensure inclusive digital literacy practices in EFL classrooms.

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