

From a colonial research tension to decolonial research trends: Analysing 100 Colombian MEd theses and reports

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This qualitative documentary research reports a comprehensive analysis that unveils a colonial research tension and emergent decolonial research trends found in the Masters Program in Education at a Colombian private university, Universidad Externado de Colombia, during the period 2015-2023. The dataset comprised 81 theses and 19 research reports produced by in-service teachers as a graduation requirement for the program. Our study included two core moments: first, a heuristic one centred on systemising from the theses and research reports, and second, a hermeneutic moment focused on our critical analysis of data gathered from the theses and research reports. Findings brought to light the current state of in-service teachers' research practices, revealing a colonial research tension that entails a hegemony of action research. Also, results unveiled emergent decolonial research trends that are casting doubt on pervasive instrumental language skills-oriented research, illustrating an ongoing transition from descriptive to critical emancipatory research objectives, and subverting instrumental and decontextualised pedagogical interventions that reproduce and naturalise dominant cultures and knowledge. Results compel teachers to conduct research from a critical standpoint by inquiring into English language teaching (ELT) ideology, mechanisation of grammar and foreign teaching methods, instrumentalisation of research, and subordination of participants.

Introduction

As teacher educators and researchers in the postgraduate EFL teacher education program at a private Colombian university, some of our concerns entail a comprehensive critical reading of in-service teachers' research conducted during the period 2015-2023. Also, we wanted to identify what were the research tensions, the common and contrasting aspects in the way in-service teachers carried out research, and what was needed to be further explored in EFL education in socio-culturally diverse private and state-funded schools. Therefore, we sought to respond by reassessing in-service teachers' research practices, aiming to depart from an instrumental and mechanical perception towards a critical and emancipatory way of doing research in our postgraduate EFL teacher education program.

In this postgraduate teacher education program, we have tutored in-service teachers in face-to-face fortnightly sessions for 16 years. In this program, in-service EFL teachers studied the role of their own developed materials in their students' language learning, mainly vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension at a literal level. We have accumulated experience and evidenced the evolving and transformative path undergone in the teachers' research practices that involved developing EFL materials, and a transition from mainstream and standardised to critical and decolonial ways, as "commercially produced EFL textbooks turned EFL teachers' pedagogical practices repetitive and futile" (Núñez-Pardo, 2021a, p. 155).

Our present article is part of the macro institutional research project *Challenging cultural, political, and knowledge hegemony in EFL education*, carried out in this postgraduate program. Its “purpose is to raise awareness of, resist, and disrupt predominant ideology in ELT at local, rural, regional, and national levels from a decolonial strand” (Núñez-Pardo & Téllez-Téllez, 2021a, p. 17). This qualitative documentary research adds to the body of knowledge of colonial-decolonial research since, as claimed by Mosquera Pérez (2022), “few investigations have explored and analyzed both sides simultaneously so as to display not only the types of hegemonic discourses that have permeated the field but also those which have recently emerged” (p. 72). Our ultimate intention is to encourage in-service teacher researchers to ponder and question their own teaching and research practices, to unsettle the decontextualised, instrumental, and homogenising view of teaching and learning English in their local pedagogical contexts.

Contextual background

As teacher educators, we have come to realise that EFL teaching and learning may be understood from a multitude of perspectives: from students, teachers, language policy, the curriculum, materials and their sociocultural content, teaching approaches and methods, learning activities and strategies, assessment, and teaching and research practices. In this regard, several critical scholars have maintained that teachers and students, as the actors involved in EFL education, should make curricular, materials, teaching approaches, and language policy decisions to overcome their decontextualisation, uniformity, dissemination of foreign ideology and agendas, and uncritical reproduction of hegemonic cultures and teaching methods (Apple, 2004; Canagarajah, 2002; Castañeda-Trujillo, 2018; Fandiño-Parra, 2021; Giroux, 1988; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Littlejohn, 2012; Mosquera Pérez, 2022; Núñez-Pardo, 2018, 2020, 2022; Núñez-Pardo & Téllez-Téllez, 2018, 2021b). Therefore, formative research seminars and mentoring research in this postgraduate teacher education program has taken a transition path that we have walked and talked about in our emphasis.

First, we have drawn on the notion of English teachers as reflective, critical, political, knowledgeable, and transformative subjects who act as prospective educators of social justice and inclusion. Second, in the four formative research seminars that these teachers attend, we have proposed a critical vision of ELT education and research and, as advised by Granados-Beltrán (2018), we have encouraged them to adopt other epistemological and methodological perspectives. This venture entails interrogating English teachers’ vision of an aspirational, hegemonic culture that hides and silences multifaceted cultural awareness and diversity. Also, it involves raising in-service teachers’ awareness of hegemonic discourses in the Colombian bilingual education policy (Correa & González, 2016; Fandiño-Parra, 2014; Gómez-Sará, 2017; Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero, 2021; Miranda & Valencia Giraldo, 2019), which responds to capitalist and neoliberal narratives that induce human beings to pervasive consumerism, thereby normalising social injustice. Moreover, it encompasses working on teachers’ understanding of the development of EFL materials from a critical decolonial stance, which demands a “reflective, theoretical, culturally, and politically situated, and transformative undertaking carried out by teachers

otherwise who produce their materials in association with students otherwise in local contexts” (Núñez-Pardo, 2022, p. 712). The term otherwise indicates local teachers who question and confront mainstream EFL textbooks, build a critical discourse, and thus, become in charge of curricular decisions so as to create their own materials, together with their students, for their pedagogical settings.

The aftermath of this conjoint academic endeavour involves culturally situated EFL curricula and materials envisioned as “sociocultural mediations that privilege the students’ needs, realities, life experiences, and concerns within their family, school, or community contexts with the possibility to raise critical awareness of their own worlds” (Núñez-Pardo & Téllez-Téllez, 2021a, p. 20). These sociocultural mediations aim at generating participative, reflective, creative, and liberating educational acts that prepare students for independent life. Third, the four formative research seminars involved both collective and personalised mentoring sessions to track the progress of in-service teachers’ research as follows: we offered collective feedback in the seminars and three personalised sessions in the first and second semesters, and five and seven sessions during the third and fourth semesters, respectively.

Fourth, in-service teachers are expected to problematise a socio-educational reality within their own schools, build theory, propose the research and pedagogical designs, obtain a signed informed consent from the school’s principal, collect, systematise, analyse data under critical lenses, and write, submit and defend their theses or reports as a graduation requisite. Fifth, to complement the development of in-service teachers’ research and disclose results of both in-service teachers’ and teacher educators’ research, we have jointly published six research books that report in-service teachers’ and teacher educators’ research findings. Altogether, we have impelled in-service teachers to disrupt colonial research into decolonial research practices that seek to educate autonomous, and culturally aware citizens able to build dignifying life projects.

Method

This qualitative documentary study included two core moments: first, a heuristic one centred on registering and systemising data resulting from the chosen theses and research reports, contemplating aspects such as themes, pedagogical contexts, research objectives, research and pedagogical designs, findings, and conclusions. In doing so, we designed and used a comprehension matrix. As for the criteria used to select the theses and research reports, we specified that they were conducted and concluded by in-service EFL teachers as a graduation requisite for the abovesaid postgraduate program during the period 2015-2023. Regarding ethical considerations, all participants signed an informed consent. Second, a hermeneutic moment focused on the critical analysis of specific data gathered by coding, construing, and conducting an analysis in terms of themes regarding a decolonial vision of ELT education. What we did was to conduct documentary research as it offers a plethora of available textual data (Holmberg, 2006) from documents that uncover the reality being studied, which influences the nature of human dynamics (Prior, 2003). Critical analysts are able to reconstruct “information that has yielded prior results

and knowledge and thus, it modifies phenomena that is the object of reflection” (Vargas Guillen, 1988, p. 26).

Therefore, documentary research is a reliable source of “the comprehension interest and perspectives of reality” (Sandoval Casilimas, 1996, p. 138) “to attempt to read and make sense of documents that were written with the intention to communicate” (Gómez, 2011, p. 230). This method relies on the analysis of printed, visual, aural, or recorded files (Holmberg, 2006) and centres on identifying the object of analysis (all the universe of research theses and reports), determining the sample (those carried out between 2015-2023), establishing the rules for codification (the relation between the texts combined with the reading, observation, and interpretation of the analysts), reducing data, and making abductive inferences (probable conclusions) of reality understood in context (Krippendorff, 2004). Thence, in-service teachers’ research theses and reports provided relevant textual information that exposed comprehensive signs of tendencies, tensions, and commonalities and differences regarding in-service teachers’ research practices in EFL education.

A colonial research tension and emergent decolonial trends

Our investigation revealed one colonial tension and three emergent decolonial research trends, as illustrated in Figure 1.

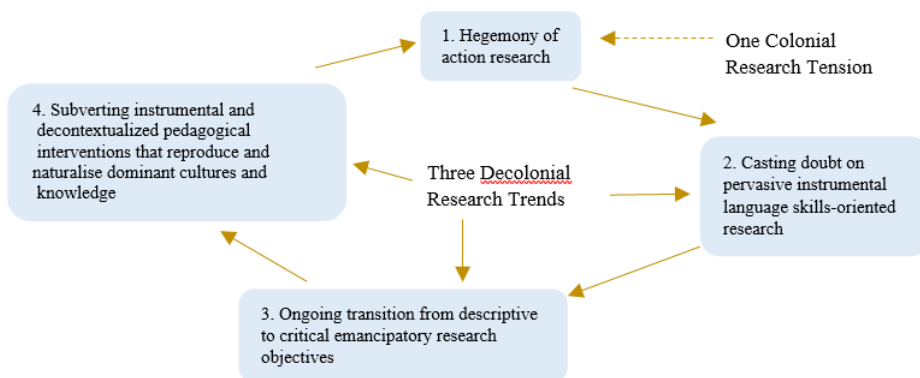


Figure 1: A colonial research tension and emergent decolonial research trends (Source: Our design)

Colonial research tension

Hegemony of action research

In the postgraduate education program in which this study was conducted, we observed that most of the in-service teachers opted for qualitative action research when selecting the type of study for their investigations. It is privileged by in-service teachers that do

research for EFL teaching (Al-Obaydi et al., 2021). As mentioned above, during more than 16 years of mentoring in-service teachers' research processes, we introduced them to the world of research and invited them to read both their institutional and pedagogical contexts with the purpose of helping them identify their true research concerns. We have also encouraged them to be more informed about qualitative types of studies such as action research, case study, and documentary and narrative research.

More recently, we have invited in-service teachers to ponder and interrogate ideology and stop enthroning culture, knowledge, and policy hegemony in ELT. Such power comprises "globalised and neoliberal discourses imposed through teaching methods, curricula, materials, testing, training, and standardised English varieties" (Núñez-Pardo, 2022, p. 702). Consequently, we have interpreted that the nature of in-service teachers' pedagogical practice and their predispositions to hold an instrumental vision of EFL teaching and learning constrain a critical reading of their pedagogical contexts. There is complexity entailed in working with other teachers to explore the realities present in their EFL pedagogical, home, and community contexts, but a focusing on language skills have led towards a tendency to choose action research in an attempt to tackle linguistic problematic issues detected in their EFL classrooms. Further reasons for in-service teachers favouring action research have arisen from the initial orientation of this postgraduate program that promoted it for more than a decade, as the type of study par excellence, or as the generic methodology, to a certain extent, for English teachers who were concerned with their students' learning of the four basic language skills in English. Unfortunately, this vision ignored profound local experiences and related English to predominating neoliberal ideals, such as individual financial progress, skill development, and competition, that serve international agendas and diminish the critical socio-political purposes of EFL education.

In this postgraduate EFL teacher education program, we have regarded action research as a situated, reflective, innovative, and transformative inquiry practice conducted in local vulnerable pedagogical contexts, which mainly seek to solve a problematic situation or, at least, alleviate it. In this vein, action research is an educational, sociocultural, and emancipatory practice aimed at easing problems in precarious communities concerning social progress as a structural transformation of society (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Fals-Borda & Anisur Rahman, 1991). Likewise, action research in the education field explores learners' needs and allows teachers to generate change in school and local community contexts (Ali, 2020). In Colombia, action research is fundamental for students and teachers to raise consciousness of teaching practice and their role as teachers (Guerra et al., 2015). Indeed, EFL studies conducted in the emphasis of English didactics of this postgraduate educational program mainly favour qualitative inquiry and, within this research approach, a range of theses and research reports privileged action research.

This was the case for a recent study that focused on the analysis of EFL writing in Colombia from 1990 to 2020, which identified a tendency in selecting this type of study among the 63 research documents examined (Guapacha Chamorro & Chaves Varón, 2023). In addition, Granados-Beltrán (2018) reported that "action research is somehow becoming the *default* methodology for ELT due to its impact on teaching practice by

means of constant reflection about what is done in the classroom” (p. 185). This trend may be the reason for the large number of action research studies in our present review, most of which remarked on the positive effect of their proposed pedagogical interventions on their students’ learning of English and thus, on their own teaching practice. Particularly, in-service teachers were concerned with their students’ vocabulary building and learning (Montes León, 2018; Páez Grosso, 2017; Sánchez González, 2021; Sánchez Hurtado, 2021; Sarmiento Tacha, 2018), decoding for reading comprehension at a literal level (González Acosta, 2018; Jurado Arévalo, 2020; Céspedes Roncancio, 2018; Ramírez Castro, 2017), and speaking skills supported by scripts (Anteliz Gómez, 2018; Linares Linares, 2018; Vargas Pacheco, 2018), which ended up subordinating participants and instrumentalising EFL learning and research.

As a result, we have come to realise that what is problematic is not conducting action research, but generalising and doing it in uncritical, instrumental, and mechanical ways that subordinate participants, “with an emphasis on the instrumentality of both language and research ... which would usually follow a formulaic pattern: how to use X to improve Y” (Granados-Beltrán, 2018, p. 186). This instrumentalised vision of action research overlooks pertinent contextual realities regarding students and English teachers (Castañeda Trujillo, 2021, Granados-Beltrán, 2018). In sum, as research mentors of in-service teachers, we have acknowledged the need to educate knowledgeable, independent researchers capable of exploring a range of complex social phenomena, other than linguistic issues, to get a better understanding of those realities, collectively building an appropriate knowledge so as to transform them, not only through action research but also through a diversity of types of research studies.

Having discussed the colonial research tension, the next section argues the emergent decolonial trends in in-service teachers’ research practice.

Emergent decolonial research trends

We argued next about casting doubt on pervasive instrumental language skills-oriented research, the ongoing transition from descriptive to critical emancipatory research objectives and subverting instrumental and decontextualised pedagogical interventions that reproduce and naturalise prevailing cultures and knowledge.

Casting doubt on pervasive instrumental language skills-oriented research

As claimed above, the critical analysis of 100 selected theses and research reports disclosed an initial pervasiveness of language skills-oriented research, which progressively transitioned to more critical research proposals. Initially, in-service teachers carried out research to solve problems in their daily teaching practice; they based their research problems on what they perceived students require to know in terms of the language learning process and skills, replicating what other Colombian and international researchers have investigated for decades. As Castañeda-Trujillo (2021) resonated, Colombian ELT research mainly centres on linguistic and pedagogical skills.

In due course, the most recent objects of study the in-service teacher problematise comprise compound realities like nurturing students' social, moral, self-concept, and coexistence values (Quiroga-Cabra, 2018; Ramírez Alzate, 2020) promoting inclusion of blind students in the EFL classroom (Suárez-Chávez, 2015; Campo Sánchez, 2021); fostering students' culture and intercultural awareness (Ciprián Castillo, 2018; Rodríguez Rojas, 2022); raising students' social skills (Camacho Vargas, 2020) and social awareness (Cáceres-Flórez, 2023); constructing students' critical intercultural awareness through diversity issues like race, gender, and social class to identify intersectionality in an attempt to defy colonialism in EFL textbooks (Aguirre-Arbeláez, 2022); cultivating students' socioemotional skills (Garcés-Mora, 2023); developing students' inferential reading and critical reading skills (Cruz-Sanabria, 2023; Díaz Beltrán, 2020; Hernández-Caicedo, 2023; Huérfano-Beltrán, 2023); fostering students' critical listening skills (Oliveros-Betancourt, 2020; Pedroza Bello, 2021); building students' critical thinking skills (Yadira Jaimes, 2023; Morales Henao, 2023); improving students' argumentation and argumentative writing (Díaz Granados Sánchez, 2018; Dimaté Rueda, 2022); developing students' inquiry skills (Sánchez Beltrán, 2018); cultivating students' composition skills on daily life dilemmas (Díaz López, 2020); nurturing students' oral communication in the rural context (Munévar-Jeréz, 2017); and students' perceptions of EFL remote classes during the covid pandemic (Quiñones Ardila, 2023). Most of the former studies were conceived from a socio-critical stance in vulnerable local contexts from where both in-service teachers otherwise and students otherwise conjointly develop their own EFL materials otherwise.

Acknowledging that teachers “have different ways of understanding the world ..., and those understandings could become a source of improving ELTE in Colombia” (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2018, p. 159) and “the knowledge gotten in previous personal and social struggles also comprises the teachers' knowledge” (Castañeda-Londoño, 2021, p. 7), they should be heard. In this view, in-service teachers “become EFL teachers otherwise, who are enabled to co-construct pertinent knowledge otherwise, with their students otherwise and from loci otherwise that were formerly silenced and concealed (Núñez-Pardo & Téllez-Téllez, 2022, para. 9), “so that subaltern communities are considered as the locus for other epistemologies” (Núñez-Pardo, 2020, p. 123). Thence, teachers' numerous ways of knowing, learning, and teaching may contest ELT ideology, embrace sociocultural diversity, and contribute to quality and inclusive education in their local settings.

Concerning other educational phenomena, in-service teachers have started to explore local cultural representations, for example a state-funded school micro curriculum (Sáchica Peláez, 2023); critical content analysis of the official Colombian EFL textbook *Way to go 1* from the perspective of critical thought (Alcalá-Carillo, 2023); critical thematic analysis of the textbook series *English please 9th and 11th* from the theory of critical intercultural awareness (Jiménez Silva, 2023); critical content analysis of a mathematics textbook (Contento-León, 2023), and evaluation of teacher-developed materials (Bautista Moyano, 2019). Furthermore, in-service teachers have researched pre-service English teachers' awareness about gender equity (Vásquez-Guarnizo, 2022); self-contained teachers' knowledges (Pabón Rodríguez, 2023); formative teachers' assessment practices (Herrera-Gómez, 2022); and teachers' voices on critical interculturality (Meza Cortés, 2023).

Our assertions about the social phenomena explored by in-service teachers let us affirm that, as critical researchers, they have challenged their pedagogical practices, assumed a critical approach to ELT that privileges the sociocultural function of language, and regards the particulars of rural and urban school, home, and community contexts, as spaces for the social construction of knowledge. That is to say, in-service teachers are posing other research concerns regarding other realities (Granados-Beltrán, 2018), advocating social reflection, interrogation, discussion, and transformation to contest ELT canonical knowledge and hegemonic cultures.

Ongoing transition from descriptive to critical emancipatory research objectives

In-service teachers have started a gradual move from studying traditional language-based problems to exploring compound social phenomena, stating emancipatory research objectives to unsettle and disrupt generic and standardised EFL curricula, methods, materials, and pedagogical practices. It is an urgent need, requiring teacher researchers to be especially aware of “the historical imbalance in research and knowledge production that favours the ‘elite’ and disadvantages ... others” (Noel, 2016, p. 457). Since local studies carried out by in-service teachers “represent knowledge from the bottom up; ... in opposition to positivistic scholarly discourses which are elitist in their specialized and abstract nature, ... [in-service teachers’] narratives represent concrete forms of knowledge that are open to further interpretation” (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 327). This let us construe that becoming aware of a centralised knowledge production practice has empowered in-service teacher researchers to build a critical discourse that contests predetermined Eurocentric knowledge. It invigorated our commitment as teacher educators to cultivate in-service teachers’ disruptive beliefs of ELT hegemony, that reshapes the field of English language teaching and learning, as we stated in Núñez-Pardo and Téllez-Téllez (2022):

Results unveiled a deep-seated change in teachers’ identity as critical educators, researchers, and materials developers, resulting from their beliefs about their self, school context, content pedagogical knowledge, educational purposes, and students’ experiential culture. Also, they reported a change in their beliefs regarding subverting ways of creating localised ELT mediations otherwise, which have the potential to build and raise their own and their students’ critical sociocultural awareness. Finally, English teachers recognised that proposing their own context responsive language pedagogies to underpin their situated EFL materials otherwise for the pedagogical intervention of their studies let them gain experiential, empirical, critical pedagogy, and critical knowledges. (Para. 6)

Subverting in-service teachers’ structure of beliefs on their conventional pedagogical practice has encouraged them to generate other forms of knowledge situated in their local context.

Second, the problematisation of educational realities that emerge from students’ intricate experiential culture world has led in-service teachers to question mainstream ways of developing EFL materials (see the most recent objects of study above). These realities include the development of their students’ inquiry skills, critical thinking (lower and higher order-thinking skills), critical thought, argumentative writing, composition skills on students’ daily life dilemmas, social, moral and coexistence values, and inclusion in the

EFL classroom. Other studies have explored the construction of culture and intercultural awareness, critical intercultural awareness through diversity issues like race, gender, and social class, to identify intersectionality in an attempt to challenge colonialism in EFL textbooks. Moreover, in-service teachers have investigated social phenomena like socioemotional competences, socioemotional skills, and critical reading and listening skills, among others. Most of these studies have promoted the conscious use of cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies, and the use of ICTs like social networks, podcasts, web pages, blogs, video clips in the contextualised and decolonised EFL materials (workshop, worksheets, booklets, modules, lessons, and activities) and virtual learning platforms designed by in-service teachers.

Third, withstanding pre-established hegemonic knowledge involves the argumentation of a body of knowledge related to the theoretical underpinnings of their studies, that leads them to their own theorisations portrayed in their local research. In this regard, we have motivated in-service teachers to publish the results of their studies in a series of research books from this postgraduate teacher education program that embody their construction of local knowledge. As claimed by Granados-Beltrán (2021), “Their recent publications [the series of research books] disseminate the results of their intention to produce localised research about the development of context-responsive materials for the teaching and learning of English that contests cultural, political, and knowledge supremacy in ELT” (p. 13). Both the study of multifaceted phenomena in their pedagogical contexts and their effort to generate local knowledge in the institutionalised research publications, have also inspired them to opt for emancipatory research objectives. These objectives enable in-service teachers to challenge their educational practice and enhance their students’ critical sociocultural awareness to transform their mindsets and realities.

Subverting instrumental and decontextualised pedagogical interventions that reproduce and naturalise dominant cultures and knowledge

Undeniably, in-service EFL teachers come to this postgraduate program influenced by canonical pre-eminent knowledges from the North and West to the extent of idealising and worshipping ELT ideology. This is so, due to “discourses and practices present in government decrees and regulations [that] move between subordinating policies and subjectivating practices” (Fandiño-Parra, 2021, p.167). Indeed, language policy subordinates and objectifies in-service teachers to the uncritical reproduction of foreign teaching methods, grammar structures, and mainstream EFL textbooks, that routinised and homogenised both their pedagogical practice and their students’ learning processes. In other words, in-service teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical and research practices are shaped and restricted as they “are asked to comply with guidelines and mechanisms that circumscribe their teaching work, their professional life, and their research itineraries” (Fandiño-Parra, 2021, p.167). To withstand ELT hegemony, in-service teachers started by pondering their pedagogical work, understanding the need for intercultural EFL curriculum and materials that help both students and teachers to recognise and value their own culture and respect others’ cultures, and thus, become aware of practices that reproduce and legitimise supremacy of cultures and pre-established knowledge.

Immersed in the reflective, academic, and emancipating experience offered in the research seminars of this postgraduate EFL teacher education program, in-service teachers also reoriented the pedagogical interventions of their studies towards “producing useful knowledges that resist domination and oppression while engaging in activities involving freeing oneself” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 61). Accordingly, “by resisting the use of decontextualized and standardized materials, teachers become producers, not consumers” (Núñez-Pardo & Téllez-Téllez, 2018, p. 83). Thus, they have debunked the idea of being “teachers as consumers of knowledge without voice and action” (Núñez-Pardo, 2022, p. 706). Constructing knowledge “requires openness to disobedient perspectives and undisciplined alternatives that allow the decolonization of ELT” (Fandiño-Parra, 2021, p. 167). This “might render the possibility to broaden horizons in localised EFL curriculum, materials, methodologies, and pedagogical practices to stop perpetuating asymmetry in cultural representation” (Núñez-Pardo & Téllez-Téllez, 2021a, p. 29), thereby generating pertinent local knowledge.

Our critical analysis of the theses and research reports evinced that they moved from a descriptive and instrumental way of conducting research, to a more critical social and political standpoint, and more recently, arriving at a decolonial stance (see studies of the former trend). We have come to realise that our in-service teacher “researchers implemented pedagogical strategies... to assume their role as language teachers based not only on the theory about language teaching and learning but on a critical analysis of each educational context’s realities” (Castañeda Trujillo, 2021, p. 66). The critical reading of their pedagogical context enabled in-service teachers to become “knowledge generators [who] can dismantle the hegemony of a unique discourse to make room for reflection, transformation, and the construction of alternative knowledge” (Núñez-Pardo, 2018a, p. 239). In-service teachers have started to detect and ponder their research concerns from a wide and complex sociocultural and political posture that empowers them to do local research “from the perspective of critical interculturality to reconcile differences between the local and the foreign in harmony with universal culture” (Núñez-Pardo, 2018b, p. 3), instead of reproducing and legitimising orthodox knowledge and biased reductionist visions of culture.

After analysing the emerging decolonial trends in in-service teachers’ research practice, next, we draw our conclusions.

Concluding remarks

This qualitative documentary research unveiled a colonial research tension and emergent decolonial research trends. The former comprises chronic prevalence of urban context-oriented studies and hegemony of action research and the latter encompasses casting doubt on pervasive instrumental language skills-oriented research, ongoing transition from descriptive to critical emancipatory research objectives, and subverting instrumental and decontextualised pedagogical interventions that replicate and naturalise dominant cultures and knowledge.

Our review is grounded upon an accumulated body of knowledge, derived from the critical manner in which in-service teachers' local research has sought better understandings of complex social phenomena in their pedagogical contexts. Moreover, in-service teachers seek to make a deep sense of students' compound realities and concerns through the development and implementation of contextualised and decolonised EFL materials that withstand ELT foreign ideology. This cultural, political, and knowledge hegemony in EFL education associates English with capitalist and neoliberal values like work, exploitation, productivity, competition, proficient skill development, and individual economic success at the service of powerful hidden agendas that dilute the sociocultural, political, academic, historic, and aesthetic function of EFL materials and education. Foreign ideology also aims at marketising education and enslaving individuals to rampant consumerism that legitimises social injustice.

The formative research seminars that in-service teachers attended led them to re-signify research and position themselves from other ontological and epistemological viewpoints. They perceived and assumed research from a critical viewpoint inquiring into multiple realities seen in diverse ways such as mechanisation of grammar, foreign teaching methods, and supremacy of global culture in EFL textbooks, as well as instrumentalisation of research, and subordination of participants. To oppose positivistic academic discourses, in-service teachers first learn about the close relationship between language and culture; second, they become aware of the pertinence of being cultural subjects capable of reading, identifying, pondering, interrogating, valuing, making visible, and fostering awareness of their students' complex sociocultural worlds that unsettle and confront essentialist visions of culture. Third, they start to build their critical discourse and agency to oppose, challenge, and defy ELT ideology.

In relation to the major theoretical contributions made by in-service teachers' local research, an evolution in the theoretical referents, conceptualisation, and pedagogical postulates that inform our study, and the pedagogical interventions is evinced. Initially, they held to a conventional perspective of EFL teaching and learning (2015-2017) and gradually transited to a theoretical and pedagogical vision that privileges the critical sociocultural and political dimensions of the language (2018-023). This shift derived from a critical appropriation of developing contextualised and decolonised EFL materials that have the power to raise in-service teachers' and students' critical sociocultural and political consciousness to change their adverse circumstances into strengths, thereby disarticulating homogenisation, instrumentalisation, and standardisation of conservative and decontextualised EFL textbooks.

A contribution of in-service teachers' local research, derived from the appropriation of contextualised and decolonised ways of conceiving their own EFL materials, entails their proposition of context-sensitive language pedagogies, underpinned by criteria of critical, revolutionary, and transformative pedagogies. To mention some, in-service teachers built their proposals on the pedagogies of the question (Freire, 1985), the post-method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2016), resistance (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985), possibility (Giroux, 1988; Simon, 1987); border (Giroux & McLaren, 1994), oppressed (Freire, 2005), autonomy (Freire, 1998), critical and transformative work (Pennycook, 1998), critical

education (Apple, 2000), love (Maturana, 2003), community (Sharkey, 2012), decoloniality (Walsh, 2014), and social justice (Hahn Tapper, 2013). This thoughtful, academic, and pedagogical endeavour endorses in-service teachers as intellectuals, subjects of change within the family, school and community rural and urban contexts, and potential educators of social justice and inclusion.

There are numerous related topics for further exploration, for example language policy hegemony; inclusion of diverse capacities; heteronormativity in sexual orientation and gender identity; racial, social, and gender deconstruction; essentialist versus profound visions of culture; marginalisation of ethnic diversity and social classes; critical socio-political and ethnic identity; rural education; argumentative competence; children rights; native languages; remote online education; environmental awareness; other ways to generate knowledge; other research methodologies; and impacts of technology. We recommend that the research agenda for in-service teachers should deepen into national, regional, and local urban and rural EFL education, and be conducted from a critical sociocultural and political posture. Thus, the selection of research concerns cannot be left to in-service teachers' free choices, hunches, or particular interests, but rather be proposed from students' critical reading of oppressive home, school, and community problems.

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