A META-ANALYSIS OF CRITICAL LITERACY QUALITATIVE STUDIES ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA

BY

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AFFIDAVIT

I, Natalia Andrea Ramírez Sánchez, hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university (Article 92 Advanced Education Student Code, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana)

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3

Abstract

This meta-analysis seeks to critically examine critical literacy qualitative studies on pre-service teacher education in Colombia. In this regard, the broad interest of this study is to review and re-analyze qualitative data of the different studies found about critical literacy in pre-service teacher education in the country to determine what are the conceptions about critical literacy and the methodologies reported by them. All the studies that this meta-analysis covers have a similar research question or relate to the concept of critical literacy in the context of pre-service teacher education. Thereby, this study is interested in identifying what data collection procedures were applied, how the data was analyzed, and how these factors influence the findings and conclusions of the investigations.

The findings of this meta-analysis are showing the conceptions about critical literacy in our local contexts and the need for a critical approach in language education in Colombia. Colombian scholars and practitioners argue that there is a need to continue creating and applying an extended conceptual framework to define languages according to the social issues that emerge in our classrooms and the current literacy practices that are carried out in the country. This meta-analysis questions from a critical perspective the role of text/discourse in Colombia, and it discusses how teachers and students as active social agents need to rethink and rebuild their role in society. The findings of this meta-analysis constitute a reflection about the ways we must transform and improve learning and teaching practices in the Colombian education system.

Key words: literacy, critical literacy, pre-service teacher education, ESL education.

To my daughter Sofía,
who inspires me to build a better world and brings me a new way to read it.

Thanks to you I see the world with different eyes, you have brought new ways of reading everything that surrounds us and building a more just reality.

I also want to thank my nephews: Aleja and Samu, because they have always been an inspiration to give my best. When I see my students, I remember you and thanks to that, I empathize with their needs and interests because I take into account your world with your wonderful ideas. I also want you to grow up in a more just world, and that you have the tools to disrupt the hierarchies of power that establish unjust relationships.

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Thanks to Raúl I have been able to be part of Literacies in Second Languages Project (LSLP) at UPB where we began to build not only a research group, but also a community. For me it has meant one of the greatest transformations of my life, since it has influenced my way of perceiving teaching, learning, research, and life in general. Thanks to the opportunity I had to learn in one of the first lines of research on urban literacies of which I was part in LSLP, I was able to identify the importance that research in teaching has for me and to develop different research interests about my teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, LSLP has been one of the motivations to study the MA in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the participants and researchers of the studies analyzed in this meta-analysis. Although you do not know me and I did not have the opportunity to contact you, I appreciate the valuable information you collected in each of your contexts and the results of your analyzes. Thanks to your studies, this meta-analysis succeeded in synthesizing and presenting new conceptualizations about critical literacy in the pre-service teacher education context in Colombia. Your discussions are an important contribution in the creation of an extended framework that envisions more equitable practices in our classrooms.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One

Exploring Critical Literacy Studies on Pre-Service Teacher Education

The landscape of critical literacy in Colombia (Mora, Golovátina-Mora, Cañas, Gutiérrez-Arismendy, Ramírez & Gaviria, 2021) in the last twenty years is characterized by a growth in qualitative educational research that shows that this field can go from unexplored in the country to have some research that shows the interest in identifying critical literacy practices or applying both a critical theory and a critical literacy pedagogy in classrooms. Then, it is a conception that begins to take strength in the educational field in Colombia. Nonetheless, the studies about critical literacy in Colombia show that there is a need to continue creating and applying an extended conceptual framework to define languages according to the current literacy practices that are carried out in the school and in the city as places that create texts and, at the same time, constitute a text in themselves (Mora, Pulgarín, Ramírez & Mejía-Vélez, 2018).

According to this, Trigos-Carrillo (2019a) stated that "I argue that more research is needed in the field of literacy studies that involves the conception of literacy as a social practice in the region" (p.16). Likewise, there are some studies on how literacy operates in Latin America (Mora, 2012, 2014; Rogers, 2002; Rogers et al., 2016; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019a; Trigos-Carrillo & Rogers, 2017) that continue showing the need to expand the inquiries in this field because research remains scarce. In the case of critical literacy in Colombia (Mora, et al., 2021) there is an interest from Colombian language scholars in contributing with local knowledge to global conversations around issues of social justice in the classrooms. However, there are some areas that need expansion such as the presence of black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) scholars in the discussion of critical literacy issues in the local context.

Qualitative meta-analyses in Colombia are becoming necessary as qualitative research continues to grow, thus becoming a tool to upgrade theory and practice from existing knowledge. In the Colombian context, studies related to critical literacy have been increasing, which is why a meta-analysis would allow us to identify which are the emerging concepts in the country and how these studies could have an impact on teaching and learning practices as well as in policy making in the field of language teaching and learning.

As teachers it is important to constantly reflect on our pedagogical practice (the idea of converting research into teaching of Paulo Freire, 1970) which allows us to observe, understand and transform the knowledge, discourses, contexts and texts that our teaching embraces. Correspondingly, this study intends to continue exploring the concept of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1995) in the educational field as it seeks to review the particular area of study of critical literacy in pre-service teacher education in Colombia in order to provide a comprehensive answer about the findings and methodologies of these inquiries and the future of the field in Colombia.

Critical literacy (Luke, 2012, 2013; Morrell, 2007) is a powerful tool to discuss English education and there are few studies of it in Colombia, especially in Medellín. That is why this study focuses on the existing research on this topic to identify the ways and moments when pre-service teacher education develops a critical sense. Hence, keeping in mind the research which through critical literacy analyzed different issues and practices related to the way in which future teachers carry out their training in the Colombian context. As Mora (2014) mentions:

Conversations about critical literacy in the curriculum are a rather recent matter: After a

brief review of eight journals in the field of language education in Colombia since the

time of their first publication (ranging between the 1990s and the early 2000s), I only

found three articles discussing critical literacy (a fourth one was a translation of an article

originally published in English). (p. 16).

This study recognizes that critical literacy in the educational field generates an

opportunity to understand how texts and discourses create realities, representations, or

connections with social and economic actuality; allowing to observe texts as instruments of

power and status. Furthermore, visualizing the material or social consequences (Luke, 2012) that

texts can cause in the people who are related to them. In the case of pre-service teachers in

Colombia it is relevant to recognize the consequences of texts in their pedagogical or reflective

practices, what they could do with them and how they could impact their local contexts.

Considering that "academic literacy practices in higher education are often strongly bound to the

socio-political contexts where students live and the communities where universities are

embedded." (Trigos-Carrillo, 2019a, p.18).

Currently it is imperative for teachers to understand what is happening in our students'

reality. For this we need to comprehend what is in their minds, what they want to talk about,

which resources they use to express themselves, what they read and write, and the vehicles or

formats they use for it. Moreover, how this configures the way they approach learning and how

they read and understand the world that surrounds them. When teachers take all this into account,

classes and teaching could become a creation of meaningful learning experiences and reciprocal

conversations with students that allow a proper connection based on trust, justice and

comprehension and it serves as an appropriate basis to build useful and contextual knowledge for

society.

In this way, this qualitative meta-analysis (Ramírez, 2020; Timulak, 2014) seeks to

critically examine critical literacy qualitative studies on pre-service teacher education in

Colombia. In this regard, the broad interest of this study is to review and re-analyze qualitative data of the different studies found about critical literacy in pre-service teachers' education in the country to determine what are the conceptions about critical literacy and the methodologies reported by them. All the studies that this meta-analysis cover have a similar research question or are related to the concept of critical literacy in the context of pre-service teacher education. Thereby, this study is interested in identifying what data collection procedures were applied, how the data was analyzed, and how these factors influence the findings and conclusions of the investigations.

To address these concerns, this study proposes the following research question: What critical literacy conceptions and methodologies are reported by qualitative studies investigating pre-service teacher education in Colombia?

Conceptual Framework

In this section, I explain the concepts that work as the foundations of the understanding of critical literacy on pre-service teacher education in Colombia. In this sense, I provide a brief definition of the main pillar that is critical literacy, and the context: pre-service teacher education in Colombia and how they are connected for this study.

Critical Literacy

For this study, critical literacy is understood as a "normative analysis of the relationship between designs, shapes and features of texts and their consequences in material and social contexts" (Luke, 2013, p. 211). Therefore, this notion could be used as an analytical tool to read texts, both oral and written. It is essential to keep in mind the socio-cultural aspects of the pre-service teacher programs; as well as the social, political, economic, and cultural purposes that underlie in the texts that are part of the pre-service teacher education. Considering a broad

4

definition of literacy conceived "as a social practice that is integrally linked with ideology, culture, knowledge and power" (Rassool, 2004, p. 7).

For this research study it is essential to understand what it means to be critical in educational and social terms which is linked to the way we read and write daily, that is, the way we inhabit the world. The term critical is derived from the Greek adjective *Kriticos*, the ability to argue and judge. We can also find the roots of the concept critical in Marxism, which suggested reviewing and analyzing the relationship between power, ideas, and social classes with politics and economics relations. Then, there is also an important influence from the Frankfurt School who worked for a critical transformation of society, they "described their work as social and theoretical materialism, critical theory of society, critical social theory, and critical theory." (Willis, Montavon, Hall, Hunter, Burke & Herrera, 2008, p.17).

Additionally, there are other philosophers, sociologists and thinkers who have added to critical theory. We can highlight, for instance, Frantz Fanon's (1952) work on black consciousness; Bourdieu's (1991) discussion of power relationships, language, and symbolic violence and how power dynamics are created through language; Foucault's (1980) discussions on social history, social class and culture to understand institutions (hospitals, prisons, schools) and their power in society, or du Bois' research (1903) about the Black community and its difference from White Americans.

According to this, Freire (1970) talked about critical thinking and critical reflection as the ability to analyze and transform social, political and cultural contexts. He also discussed the importance of *concientização* (Freire, 1979) and defined it as the possibility of transforming our reality through our practice, as a fundamental basis for social change. Along these lines, one can argue that to be critical is to read and write considering the relations of power and domination, as

well as the social, cultural and political aspects of the texts. In this regard, it is not a matter of finding the truth, but of establishing viewpoints, interpretation, and significance. It is to think about the reasons and purposes, going beyond what the senses perceive, it is to carefully analyze a situation from different standpoints and look for solutions or proposals that lead to social change. As stated by Aziz, Wilder & Mora (2019),

> As students in post-colonial contexts face gender, sexual, linguistic, religious, and ethnic discrimination and violence that attempts to marginalize, disempower, and dehumanize them, critical consciousness can support how students awaken to the tools of oppression and fight injustice in their daily lives. (p. 72).

Our world is full of social injustices, so it is important to find tools that serve to analyze the reality we inhabit, understand, and transform it. That is why critical literacy (Luke, 2012, 2013; Morrell, 2007) allows us to question, examine and dispute the power relations that are in texts in order to promote transformation and action. From Freire's point of view, education helps the marginalized overcome power relations and transform their lives through literacy education. In this sense, he thinks that the key to liberation is the awakening of critical consciousness (Willis, et al., 2008) and the constant process of thinking.

In this regard, critical literacy is essential in education since it helps us to read the texts that create educational policies; as well as, it establishes the role of teachers as explorers of the social effects of texts and practices in order to change educational realities, empowering students with communication tools and knowledge that support them to be involved in their daily contexts in an active way. For this research project there are two important clarifications to make, first, the distinction between critical thinking and critical literacy, for which Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2014) argued that:

Critical literacy practices encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice.... These practices are substantively different from what are commonly referred to as critical thinking approaches. Although critical thinking approaches have focused more on logic and comprehension, critical literacies have focused on identifying social practices that keep dominant ways of understanding the world and unequal power relationships in place. (p. 3)

As we define critical literacy, it is important to distinguish from related ideas such as *critical thinking* and *critical reading.* In the case of the former, critical literacy does go beyond critical thinking skills because it problematizes or inquiries into a social reality. In the case of the latter, critical reading refers to the reflection about a text whereas critical literacy entails a more in-depth process of interrogating and examining the text and its status quo to change social reality and its consequences (Ko, 2013). Besides, critical literacy is linked to the idea that literacy is about reading the word and the world in a critical way (Freire & Macedo, 1987), transcending the traditional conception of literacy to understand it as a concept that encompasses reading and writing of texts as complementary processes. Critical literacy, therefore, focuses on the different ways in which subjects and communities construct and use both oral and written texts.

Through critical literacy it is possible to analyze and comprehend different kinds of texts and the world behind the construction of these texts, it allows to identify the ways in which pre-service teachers and pre-service language teacher programs make a difference, that is, where and

7

how they criticize and transform the dominant ideologies, culture, economy, institutions or political systems. In summary, the focus will be on determining what are the conceptions about critical literacy and the methodologies reported by different studies found on critical literacy in pre-service teacher education in the country. According to Luke (2012)

> This enables teachers and students to focus on how words, grammar and discourse choices shape a version of material, natural and sociopolitical worlds. It also enables a focus on how words and grammar attempt to establish relations of power between authors and readers, speakers and addressees. Furthermore, it enables a critical engagement with the question of where texts are used, by whom, and in whose interests. (p.7)

> Critical literacy allows human beings to use texts in order to analyze socio-cultural fields, to understand the relationships that occur in them and, from there, to transform social relations and conditions. This vision enables students to be defined as active participants of the reality that surrounds them, language users, and co-constructors of their worlds. Thus, it permits them to identify that social action could transform social practices; in this way, "Education has a responsibility to develop students' sense of agency." (Janks, 2014, p.354). It must allow them to intervene positively in the decisions and causes of their environments.

> Furthermore, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) elaborated four principles to understand the tenets of critical literacy, which are:

> (1) Critical literacy challenges common assumptions and values; (2) critical literacy explores multiple perspectives, and imagines those that are absent or silenced; (3) techniques that promote critical literacy are dynamic and adapt to the contexts in which they are used; and (4) critical literacy reflects on and uses literacy practices to take action for social justice. (p. 54)

8

That is why critical literacy could be understood as a tool that helps to understand, unveil and transform the ideological and power relationships of our world. In this sense, it is relevant to keep in mind as Luke (2012) explains that there is not a specific way to incorporate this concept into the classroom because each context varies according to its characteristics. Consequently, Comber (2001) says that an approach to critical literacies "needs to be continually redefined in practice" (p. 274).

Pre-Service Teacher Education

Teachers have a great socio-political responsibility both globally and locally. The first one constantly requires them to be up to date with the needs and realities of the world, such as the current technological and digital era (Kress, 2003) in which students are immersed. In the second one, the local level, which is the primary context that teachers must attend, it is the one that corresponds to each classroom and then to each student. Teaching from a critical stance is one of the needs that our current society faces, that is to say, critical literacy is a powerful tool for contemporary society because it helps to observe, analyze and transform the reality in which one lives in a critical way, generating an impact on society as political beings. Therefore, one of the objectives of teachers in the current globalized order is to provoke social change (Mattos, 2012).

Language teacher programs need tools that allow teachers to reflect and understand the reasons and consequences of our current dynamics, and then, go further and propose a transformation in which a more reflexive education prevails. Teaching is a political act (Freire, 1970); that is why it is relevant that teachers have the possibility to criticize and transform the dominant ideologies, culture, economy, institutions or political systems that embrace their practice. This enables teachers to connect their classes with the real issues that students have to

deal with outside of school, that is, helping them develop the skills and abilities they need to understand and cope with a world characterized by social injustices and technological challenges.

Some authors (Pennycook, 1990a; Crookes, 2009) argue that language education has been influenced by linguistics and psycholinguistics, as a result, the understanding of language has been based on a positivist and instrumentalist approach. This has granted language classes to focus on the grammatical structures or linguistic aspects of the language and have little to do with the students' lives and their realities outside of the classroom. According to this, Crookes (2009) explains that language teacher education programs have concentrated in "the preparation of technicians who deliver language instruction with no other major concerns" (p. 46). Nonetheless, teachers currently need to connect their classes with the particular contexts in which they operate, in addition to providing the opportunity to cover social issues such as injustice, poverty, inequality, among others, that is, implement a critical approach to teaching language.

According to Rogers and Mosley (2014) language teachers who aspire to be critical must necessarily consider discourse analysis, cultural criticism, and social action in order to dismantle unfair practices and build autonomous narratives with their students. Then, critical literacy allows us to understand how all the reading and writing events and practices must question language, identity and social justice. In this way, analyze the relationship among language, power and identity. CL provides students and teachers with possibilities to cultivate appreciation for diversity. One of the tools to foster CL practices is the oral narration which also gives students the opportunity to apprehend multiple perspectives and interpretations of their own stories (Rogers & Mosley, 2014).

As stated by Bacon (2017),

The practices realized through critical literacies, however, are often denied to the growing

number of students who are learning English as a second or additional language

(henceforth multilingual learners). This practice is often justified by asserting that critical

engagement is beyond the capacities of those still in the process of learning a new

language. In reality, the power dynamics highlighted through critical literacies are

fundamentally entwined with English learning. (p.2)

In this regard, pre-service teacher education programs are promising contexts for the

creation of identities and for " re-imagining critical identities, making teachers more prepared to

work in global contexts, allowing them to develop professional agency, renewed pedagogical

attitudes and critical consciousness that will also lead them to pedagogic work towards

enhancing critical awareness in their students" (Mattos, 2012, p. 209). Consequently, teachers

can develop practices that empower their students to work as critical citizens, have a political

stance and generate social changes in their communities or local contexts.

From a socio-critical approach to literacy, teachers must investigate different forms of

knowledge that are related to race, class, domination and gender in order to include in the

curriculum the relationship between language and power and its consequences in people's lives.

In this way, teachers should reflect about the decisions and choices of daily educational practice

and how they positively or negatively affect students. Therefore, teachers have a great

responsibility in empowering students as social agents of change and promoting fair and

equitable communication situations.

Connecting Critical Literacy and Pre-Service Teacher Education

This qualitative meta-analysis (Timulak, 2014) seeks to critically examine critical literacy qualitative studies on pre-service teacher education in Colombia. Therefore, this study proposes a framework around the notion of critical literacy as an analytical tool to read texts, and pre-service teacher education, as the context that will be analyzed. These concepts will help to review and re-analyze qualitative data of different studies found on critical literacy in pre-service teacher education in the country to determine what are the conceptions about critical literacy and the methodologies reported by them. I believe that the combination of these concepts help to develop a better understanding of the critical literacy conceptions that are present in our pre-service teachers' contexts. Considering that these concepts will allow me to go back over the ways in which pre-service teachers negotiate critical literacies, how they can use the classroom and its texts as means for justice, how their textual creations (both oral or written) could become sites of critical inquiry and how they can use them for fostering social action.

From a critical literacy perspective, teachers could help students seek social justice both as individuals and as a community. For this reason, critical literacy is a tool for language teacher education programs that allows them to connect language learning with real issues that occur near or far from students. Some of the social problems are gender, class, race, language, ethnicity, inequality, oppression, and injustice; those could be analyzed from a local community or a global perspective. When the teachers carry out their classes from a critical position, the students become active participants since the topics developed are part of their construction as an individual. This enables students to build a different understanding of the reading and writing processes, since they would be able to use them as tools for their needs and interests, then, they become significant for their lives. Therefore, from a critical literacy point of view teachers have the possibility to connect broader political concerns within language classes, in other words, to

be active politically and to have a democratic perspective when examining their teaching and

learning practices.

Chapter Two

Reviewing the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative meta-analysis is to critically examine critical literacy (CL) qualitative studies on pre-service teacher education in Colombia. That is why, the aim of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature related to critical literacy, both CL theory and pedagogy, and the context of interest of this study: pre-service teacher education in Colombia. Literacy is a very broad concept that is being developed from multiple approaches, so it is important to define that this project will narrow it down into two specific educational contexts that are: English as a Second Language and pre-service teacher's education contexts. For this I present a historical perspective of the concept; then, I review the relevant research that has been made in the last twenty years and I choose the important elements for my study; and finally, I show how the concept has been addressed in the Colombian context.

Critical Literacy

The field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has begun to consider critical approaches to second language (2L) teaching in recent years, which take into account the social, cultural, political and historical aspects and contexts of the language and its learning. Nonetheless, there is still a shortage of research about how critical literacy could study and contribute to social inequalities and injustices that currently exist in the field of teaching and learning a second language. Hyesun Cho (2018) stated that,

> Despite a growing interest and practice in the literature regarding critical literacy pedagogy, however, it is challenging to "do critical pedagogy" because it does not offer the default choices for every educational context. Critical pedagogy is challenging

because it does not entail a generic set of procedures, materials, or methods and thus cannot be presented as prepackaged and replicated in line with generalization. Each instance of critical literacy education is uniquely constructed in the local sociocultural context involving teaching and learning. (p.10)

This allows me to understand that a critical literacy approach is still under exploration given the complexity that exists for its application in a real educational context. As well as how important it is to realize that this approach should vary or change according to the context in which it is developed. In this sense, critical literacy has become a social necessity in education worldwide that allows to analyze and debate equity, justice and power relationships of society (Janks, 2014; Lau, 2012; Luke, 2012; Morrell, 2007).

Some of the studies that I found related to critical literacy in teachers and pre-service teachers show the challenges or difficulties they have at the time of applying this approach in practice. For instance, Hyesun Cho (2018) presented in her action research with bilingual pre-service teachers in Hawaii, USA, different challenges that she had to face in order to employ a critical literacy pedagogy, the most outstanding ones were: the standardization of the curriculum and the test-driven educational environment. Similarly, Curdt-Christiansen (2010) explored a group of Singaporean English language teachers' knowledge and beliefs about critical literacy and she found that the teachers involved believed that reading and writing are transactional and interactive practices. Besides, some teachers found a conflict between using time to teach critical literacy and preparing students for their exams, because critical literacy was not part of their curriculum.

Critical literacy is a concept strongly influenced by Freire's works (1970), he is one of the main sources for all who investigate this concept, and he gave a prototype of critical literacy,

stating that, when the oppressed commit to transform their world of oppression, then, all men commit themselves to permanent liberation. From his point of view, the key for liberation is the awakening of critical consciousness and the constant process of thinking. For this research project, Freire's vision of critical literacy is very important as an empowerment tool that allows us to be conscious of the social problems that surround us and the ways in which they affect education. According to this perspective, the teacher has a great responsibility to encourage students to reflect on their reality; which leads to political and social action, that is, help to transform their relationships with others and with the context in which they develop.

Accordingly, Freire and Macedo (1987) believe that critical literacy is to read both the word and the world critically which creates the possibility to transform the world that is a subject of natural and historical evolution. They explain that critical literacy views readers as active participants in the reading process, thus, they must question, examine and dispute the power relations that are in texts in order to promote transformation and action. It is one of the works that initiate discussions about the role of education in empowering humans so that they can be agents of change in a world of inequality and social injustice.

It is important, to trace the history of the concept of critical literacy, to understand that even though Freire and Macedo (1987) were who started the conversation around critical pedagogy and reading,

> It was not until 1993 that Lankshear and McLaren issued what was to become the seminal text devoted to the topic. In it, they stated that literacy is more complex than the traditionally defined skills of reading and writing… critical literacy emphasized the social construction of reading, writing and text production within political contexts of inequitable economic, cultural, political, and institutional structures. (Bishop, 2014, p.53)

16

In the same line, Janks (2014) exposes the importance of using critical literacy in a current world that is full of social injustices, as an opportunity for readers to read the words and the world in a critical way. She shows an extended classroom example that "focuses on an issue raised by a radio advertisement currently airing in South Africa" (p.350) that illustrates five moves that she thinks teachers should keep in mind and develop to do critical literacy work in classrooms, which are:

> 1. Make connections between something that is going on in the world and their students' lives, where the world can be as small as the classroom or as large as the international stage. 2. Consider what students will need to know and where they can find the information. 3. Explore how the problematic is instantiated in texts and practices by a careful examination of design choices and people's behavior. 4. Examine who benefits and who is disadvantaged by imagining the social effects of what is going on and of its representation/s. 5. Imagine possibilities for making a positive difference. (p.350)

In this regard, Janks poses critical literacy as an essential approach in education since it helps us to read the texts that create educational policies and it presents the role of teachers as explorers of the social effects of texts and practices in order to change education realities, empowering students with communication tools and knowledge to be involved in their daily contexts in an active way. Finally, the example presented allows us to identify how the educational process could motivate students to act in the reality that surrounds them and how critical literacy permits to visualize power relations.

Lau (2012) in a participatory action research shows how students engaged in critical literacy work despite their limited English proficiency. Some of the topics that students had the possibility to work about were: bullying, related to immigrants and language barriers, the top 10

greatest Canadians (where they recognized that there were no women or teachers on the list), identifying the ideological assumptions embedded in fairy tales, among others. One of the conclusions of the study was: "CL education—it is not about when EL students are capable enough to engage with CL, but rather about how we mobilize their existing linguistic, cultural, and cognitive resources to support them in gradually becoming a critical language user." (p. 329).

Likewise, Cassany and Castellá (2010) affirm in their investigations that literacy allows to acquire a critical position in education, as it is based on a complex thought that permits the person besides speaking and writing, to discuss, reflect, argue, conclude, and analyze; that is to say, it enables us to be in constant transformation and reflection of our reality. Therefore, the person has deeper and clearer understandings of the interaction and communication with others. As well as being able to produce written and oral messages with different meanings that demonstrate their skills and abilities in the language. In short, critical literacy generates complex thought processes that transcend traditional reading and writing.

Critical literacy is a theoretical and practical framework for literacy teaching and learning that copes with the conditions of the current world, in terms of globalization, multimodalities, new technologies and social injustices (Vásquez, 2017). As a result, a student, reader or citizen who is educated through a critical approach has the ability to

> circulate through visual, digital, multicultural, and critical language daily. Such education is, thus, urgent since the speed and ease of access to information, made possible by technological innovations, increase the gap between literate and illiterate individuals at an astounding pace, the latter seeing themselves more and more distant from the society to which they seek to belong. (Valério & Mattos, 2018, p. 325)

18

Consequently, critical literacy is a tool that enables teachers and students to face current education demands. It is a social imperative in today's reality; it gives us opportunities to interrogate, examine, and analyze the causes, purposes and consequences of the texts that create and re-create daily life. Furthermore, a critical approach to reading means that the places, languages, people, and experiences of the reader must be taken into account. In this sense, the word 'critical' has focused on the way people use texts to create and negotiate power, identity and capital. That is why in CL, "language assumes a liberating character, as it is from the control and critique of the meanings entrenched in discourses and from the creation of alternative meanings that the conscious citizen is expected to emerge" (Valério & Mattos, 2018, p. 318).

Another perspective of critical literacy has to do with the way of living, being, thinking, and learning (Vasquez, 2005, 2010, 2014). From this idea, it is not only oriented to teaching literacy but as a way of understanding and living in the world. From this point of view, critical literacy not only deals with the analysis and criticisms of texts, but also with creating and producing them, keeping in mind the socio-cultural and political features of texts. In this regard, meaning-making should always have as one of its objectives the construction of a more equitable social order. A person who lives from a critical perspective is conscious of his social, political and educational responsibility, which will impact his real context through the decisions and actions he takes to fight for a more just world.

Critical literacy is opposed to traditional education because it seeks to empower students so that they take ownership of their learning processes (Valério & Mattos, 2018). From this perspective, students will be more involved in the decisions and actions to be taken in their educational processes which will lead them to a critical reflection on their daily life and their

own culture. In this way, they will be able to question their conditions and those of their local context. Accordingly, Mattos (2012) states that

> Critical Literacy implies that what is being read, seen or heard has been produced according to the values and norms of the socio-historical context of the community to which the author belongs. Besides, the reader, listener or spectator is also inserted in a socio-historical and cultural context that defines how he/she constructs meaning. The act of reading becomes critical in the moment in which 'difference' is perceived and established among the writer and reader who build meanings according to the values of their own contexts and thus become critical not only of the context of the Other but also of their own context of production. The ultimate aim of critical literacy is to challenge existing power relations and to provoke social change. (p.194)

Therefore, critical literacy is not only an analytical tool to read texts but also a philosophy of life, a way to think, talk and act that allows everything that people read (advertising, the city as text, the school, a park, movies, blogs, comics, memes and other types of texts) to pass through a filter, a lens to identify the what, the how, and the why of texts. Additionally, CL "questions, examines and disputes the power relations that exist between readers and authors" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 14). That is to say, that not only the text and its writer are important, but also the position of the reader, and the power that he gives to the text in his life.

Language is an essential factor in teaching, culture and life itself. In addition, it is an aspect that could help define the differences between critical literacy and other educational approaches. That is why Lima (2006) presents in the following table (see Figure 1) the way language is conceived according to the mainstream perspective and critical literacy.

Figure 1

Notions of Language

Mainstream notion of language	Critical Literacy notion of language
- Language translates or represents reality.	- Language and reality construct each other, i.e. one does not come before the other.
- Language is a means of communication.	- Language constructs communication through negotiation. It does not simply communicate ideas and values. It creates ideas and values.
- Language is transparent and neutral.	- Language is never neutral or transparent. It is always culturally 'biased'.
- Language is fixed and defined by social norms (e.g. grammars and dictionaries).	- Language is structured, but its structures are never fixed or stable. They change dynamically according to their contexts.

According to the above, language for critical literacy is a practice that is socially constructed, where the negotiation of ideologies and values build reality and influence daily life. This perspective affirms that language, like text, is never neutral. Rather, they are created and used from a particular perspective and with predetermined intentions. In this way, the language and the text make us think and believe certain things. Therefore, our understanding of how the world works permeates the way we read and write, that is, the way we inhabit the world. Thus, CL gives us the opportunity to understand, examine, and interrogate the ideas and values that texts present us.

In the context of Latin America, the problems of class, race, language and ethnicity permeate literacy and illiteracy. That is why, critical literacy has a great potential as an approach or framework in language teaching to foster a more equitative social order in these countries. Furthermore, there are several studies that "have recently contributed a more qualitative perspective to a small but growing body of research on literacy, schooling, and social practice in Latin America." (Kalman, 2014, p.8). Nonetheless, the literature continues to demonstrate that a deeper understanding of literacy in daily life is required. Then, there is a need for more research

about indigenous people, women and other historically marginalized communities in Latin America that will provide a broader notion of literacy in this context.

The influence of Freire in Latin America has been enormous. He brought into educational discussions the notion of reading and writing through a socio-cultural and political perspective (Kalman, 2008). Furthermore, in the last decades some scholars (López-Bonilla & Pérez, 2009) in Latin America have conceptualized literacy from a socio-cultural and critical approach, going beyond the traditional definitions of reading and writing in order to understand how texts are created and interpreted. Additionally, López-Bonilla and Pérez (2013) have also analyzed the conception and differentiation of the following terms in Latin America: "alfabetización", "literacy", "cultura escrita" y "literacidad". They have studied how local culture in the Latin America reality could be understood through a more critical perspective in education.

Other scholars (Mora, 2011, 2012, 2014; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019a) have discussed the importance of understanding the relationship between language and power in the educational curriculum. Therefore, recognizing English teaching repercussions in the local culture and identity. In terms of indigenous and intercultural education, Trigos-Carrillo and Rogers (2017) state that

> Latin American scholars have addressed a variety of sociopolitical factors involved in indigenous, bilingual, and intercultural education, such as policy critique and advocacy, gender and social identities, power ideologies, indigenous/intercultural teacher practice, racism, migration, intercultural bilingual programs, and technology use. (p. 380).

Additionally, through the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and practice in education some scholars have added other dimensions to the pedagogy of multiliteracies (Trigos-Carrillo & Rogers, 2017). Other studies (Mattos, 2012; Valério & Mattos, 2018) describe the

relevance of a critical approach in Latin America in order to develop a critical consciousness in both teachers and students as an opportunity to understand local knowledge and provoke social justice. Finally, it could be stated that in the last decades, literacy in Latin America "has been seen as a step towards the labor market and at the same time as part of the road to liberation. It has been promoted as a means of cultural assimilation as well as the means for preserving local cultures." (Kalman, 2014, p. 23).

To summarize, critical literacy is rooted in the principles of critical theory from the Frankfurt school from the 1920s. They worked from the theories of Marxism and analyzed the class struggle in society. Then, critical theories of literacy originated from critical social theory, both sharing the analysis on how society remains in the search for power and knowledge, to obtain material resources and a social status. Another association with the roots of CL is Freire (1973) who focused his work on critical consciousness and critical pedagogy in adult education. Also, there are some antecedents from the early twentieth century about African-American community education in the United States (Luke, 2014). Then, some of the most notable CL work can be found in South Africa (Janks, 2010; Janks, Dixon, Ferreira, Granville & Newfield, 2013), United States (Lewison et al., 2014; Vasquez, 2001) and Australia (Comber, 2016; Luke, 2000). More recently, as stated by Vasquez (2017) "Critical literacy is also being used in state jurisdictions such as Ontario in Canada and Queensland in Australia, where governments have endorsed its use in school curricula." (p. 4).

In conclusion, critical literacy is a very broad concept that can be approached from different perspectives or positions. However, there are some principles that have been described in the literature and they could change depending on the CL orientation. Some of them are related to the way we understand the language as a social practice and the world as a text that we

could and should read. CL understands that texts are never neutral because they have a social and political purpose. The position of the creators and writers of the texts and their readers are not neutral either, they are always influenced by their life experiences and the perspective from which they live. The work in CL focuses on social issues such as race, class, gender, power relations, control, domination, oppression, justice, to name a few. CL allows people to create transforming practices that contribute to changing unfair ways of living; therefore, people through CL could make better decisions since they have the necessary information about the dynamics of power in order to operate from a democratic perspective and to act ethically. CL is not a subject or topic to be covered in education, on the contrary, it is a framework or a perspective to teach and live. (Janks, 2010; Luke, 2014; Vasquez, 2017).

Critical Literacy in the Colombian Context

In this part I present the studies found in the book chapter 'Colombia: Criticality and meaning-making ingrained in our local realities', about critical literacy in Colombia (Mora, et al., 2021). In the last fifteen years, critical literacy has begun to be a topic of research interest in relation to language teaching in Colombia. Some Colombian scholars (Mora, 2014, 2015, 2016; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019a, b.) have discussed the need of a critical orientation in Colombian education as a way to understand literacy as a social practice and foster social justice. According to the reading and analysis of the different investigations of the book chapter previously mentioned, it can be said that one of the emerging definitions of critical literacy in the country is related to the use of CL as a reflective and analytical ability to read texts understanding the relation of power, domination and working ideologies to then promote social justice and transformation.

In the context of graduate education, a study focused on issues of gender in language education concludes how gender is an essential factor in teaching as it gives teachers tools for reflection from a broader social perspective (Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017). A second study (Mora, 2014) in this context carried out an analysis of textbooks through critical literacy as an analytical tool. Some of the final and protruding reflections of the students include: "(a) breaking the attachment to the textbooks as a precursor to critical literacy, (b) developing a more critical consciousness, (c) questioning the status quo in the textbooks, and (d) viewing themselves as advocates." (p.17).

In elementary education, there is one study (Cañas, Ocampo, Rodríguez, López-Ladino & Mora, 2018) that introduces a pedagogical framework to engage with literacy practices in early childhood contexts. This establishes the importance of beginning to implement with the young students, in the Colombian curriculum, practices of critical and multimodal literacy with texts, as a way to give learners voice and representation during their learning process. Furthermore, this framework provides an understanding of the relation between multiliteracies, multimodality, children's personal literacies and critical literacy to generate ways in which young students could learn to challenge the context in which they operate.

In high school, a study (Benavides Buitrago, 2017) focused on gender, social identities, and students' discourses shows the importance of creating spaces where students could develop reflection, respect and start accepting diversity, thus, developing a critical consciousness about the different problems and issues that surround them in terms of gender topics. Another study (Contreras León & Chapetón Castro, 2016) addresses the issue of social justice through a dialogical and cooperative perspective where classes focused on students' realities. Furthermore, there is a pedagogical intervention (Lara-Páez, 2017) based on critical media literacy as a tool for

critical consciousness in language teaching education where students reflected on the role of advertising in their context and how it relates to their identity construction process.

Additionally, in a high school context there is a study (Ortega, 2019) related to social justice and translanguaging pedagogy that shows how based on students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds it is possible to value students' language repertoires in order to learn a new language and address relevant issues of their communities. Also there is a research (Rincón & Clavijo-Olarte, 2016) that discusses classroom inquiry, local knowledge and critical pedagogy; that establishes the importance of addressing the problems that students bring to class as a way to connect the school with the real needs of society. In addition, in this way students are given the opportunity to have a voice and power in their learning practices, hence, their own realities outside school.

In Colombian higher education, there is a study (Arce, 2013) focused on critical reading as a way to foster critical understanding of text meaning. This study reflects on the importance of analyzing how texts represent local, cultural and ideological knowledge, so students will be able to develop a critical stance towards text comprehension. Similarly, another study (Giraldo, 2018) addresses critical reading from a critical literacy approach. This concludes that students need tools and strategies that allow them to read texts from a critical position in order to understand the socio-cultural contexts that they promote, as well as to identify how their daily reading practice is influenced by their culture and political perspective. Finally, in this context there is another study (Vargas Franco, 2015) related to critical reading and its connection with new literacy studies and multimodality. This study also establishes the importance for current education to link digital literacies with critical literacy as a way to foster an emancipatory critical literacy education in Colombia.

26

In after-school programs there is a study (Chaves Barrera & Chapetón, 2019) that shares some of the principles of critical literacy in the search of criticality in language use. From a critical literacy approach this study shows how students could go beyond concerns about the grammatical and linguistic aspects of the foreign language to focus on meaning-making. Another study (Mojica, 2007) explores the intersections of culture and critical literacy in schools. This study analyzed the importance of allowing students to bring their perspectives from the world, the problems they live in reality and the way they affect them to connect it with learning a foreign language.

In the context of policy analysis there is one study (Calle Díaz, 2017) that discusses the importance of developing a critical consciousness in relation to the way we are citizens of the world, therefore, we have a social and democratic responsibility. This study exposes the potential of language teaching in Colombia as a space for students to develop the necessary skills to be citizens of a globalized world from a critical approach. In this way, the study proposes a revision of EFL Colombian standards to develop and include ways of engaging students with social topics such as diversity, equity, social justice and citizenship.

Afro Communities (Zárate, González Serrano & Flórez Romero, 2015) is another context aligned with the purposes and ideas of critical literacy in terms of minority populations. This study shows how this community has articulated a diversity group of literacies, that they name as: aesthetics, community organization, administrative and legal organization, and school literacy. In addition, they recognize how through the identification of their reading and writing practices they build their identity, as well as their literacy practices function as tools that empower them to denounce the situations of inequity and violence that they have experienced as a community.

There are two other studies oriented to critical literacy: one in the context of a conversation club and a critical literature review. The first one (Gómez Rodríguez, 2017) intersects with critical media literacy and the concern of helping L2 learners use the language to talk about social justice and global issues. One of its conclusions evidences that students "were working towards developing global literacy by constructing new cultural and updated knowledge about ideological positions on AIDS in different countries." (p. 318). The second study (Moncada Linares, 2016) is focused on the concern for social justice and the calls against "othering". This study shows how classrooms are potential spaces for "breaking down unjust binary oppositions as well as disrupting biased and incomplete representations of othering." (p.140). Also, it reflects about Othering as a way to engage with power relations, resistance and agency.

In the context of graduate education, there are 16 MA theses that focus their work on critical literacy and 1 PhD Dissertation. There are 7 studies from the MA in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (Castrillón Ángel, 2020; Díaz Gamarra, 2020; Giraldo Montoya, et.al. 2019; López Ladino, 2017; Rodríguez Martínez, 2017; Gutiérrez Arismendy, 2016; Isaza Velásquez, 2016). There are 6 studies from the Master's in Applied Linguistics to TEFL from Universidad Distrital (Calderón Peña, 2018; Cárdenas Cruz, 2018; Castillo Guasca, 2014; Debal Santafé, 2018; Gil Cipagauta, 2018; Ruiz Sarmiento, 2015). There are 2 studies from the Master's in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning from Universidad de Antioquia (Rojas Escobar, 2019; Arias Patiño, 2017). There is one study from the MA in Foreign Language Teaching from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (Acero Hincapié, 2015). There is one study from the PhD in Education from Universidad del Quindío (Acosta Rubiano, 2017).

Critical Literacy in Pre-Service Teacher Education in Colombia

In this part I also considered the studies presented in the book chapter 'Colombia: Criticality and meaning-making ingrained in our local realities' (Mora, et al., 2021). There are three studies that were carried out in pre-service teacher education that directly use the concept of critical literacy. The first one (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019) suggests that from a critical approach, students could realize their role as agents of social change in their reality. One of the salient conclusions of the study is the importance of teachers being aware of the difficulties that could be encountered when implementing a critical approach due to the emphasis that language teaching and learning processes have had on grammar; thus, the study suggests that it is a process that requires time and effort. Another conclusion of the study states that

> if higher education institutions and policy makers aim at educating citizens who are social and change agents, then the curriculum should reconsider and transform the roles that teachers and learners have traditionally adopted in the classroom. If such transformation occurs, more opportunities for students to construct knowledge from their experiences as well as unveil and question power messages infused in our society are provided. (p. 103)

In the second study (Esteban, 2015) students were involved in a process of self-recognition and identity exploration through critical literacy. This research concludes that "Dialectical notebooks or double entry journals are useful to guide students into more reflective and analytical reading processes where they are able to confront their own realities with the texts they read" (p.23). The pre-service teachers of this study had the opportunity to question gender, race and identity in the texts they worked with, also they reflected upon the socio-cultural issues that were implicit in the texts and connected them to their daily life.

29

Likewise, the third study (Gutiérrez, 2015) aims to use critical literacy to read the world that is behind the construction of texts. The pre-service teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and reflections were transformed around the importance of critical theories in language teaching. Nonetheless, they struggled when moving from theory to practice because it was a new process for them, as they were used to a more linguistic approach to teaching. In this regard, this study establishes the need for applying a more critical approach in education in Colombia as a path to understand, analyze and change the realities of our country for ones that generate a more equitable and fair life.

Other studies in pre-service teacher education that do not describe their work as critical literacy per se, but whose aim is closely aligned with the purposes and ideas of CL are related to critical media literacy (Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín, 2011) reflecting about power relationships, stereotypes, gender, individuality, and resistance through the analysis of movies. A salient conclusion of this study affirms that "many pre-service teachers will eventually need to fight against unjust policies to improve students' learning opportunities in school." (p. 187). Another study related to critical media literacy analysis of signs in the city (Dominguez, 2019) argues that the analysis and reflection "about social transformative actions taken by people locally and in other parts of the globe helped pre-service teachers to envision possible actions that could be taken in their own communities and, then, to make informed choices of action" (p.48).

Considering the importance of critical pedagogy in critical literacy, there are two studies that show the relevance of adopting a political stance and recognizing the hidden agendas in the teaching process. Accordingly, Kern (2017) exposes how social and political awareness as well as cultural capital is increased through content-based instruction. Likewise, Samacá (2012)

reflects on the role of awareness-raising in today's classrooms and the position of teachers as transformative intellectuals. She proposes critical pedagogy as a way to give our students a voice and to understand both teachers and students as cognitive subjects to develop a critical understanding of society.

Some studies have also demonstrated the need for a critical approach to language teaching and learning in Colombia. Additionally, Echeverri Sucerquia and Pérez Restrepo, (2014) developed the following characteristics of a critical language teacher

•Rejects the notion of teachers as content deliverers, as implied in an instrumentalist/ technical orientation to language education and L2 teacher education. •Privileges local context and teacher practice to imagine new possibilities and produce locally situated knowledge. •Entails helping teachers to develop the conceptual, political, and ideological clarity necessary to understand and transform practice. •Focuses on theory that enables teachers to develop self-awareness, to critically read the world, and problematize their practice. (p. 175)

In this regard, a language teacher that focuses his work on critical literacy would be able to constantly interrogate his practice in order to make adjustments and improvements. Likewise, Piñeros Pedraza and Quintero Polo (2006) share the vision of a teacher educator who "conceives language curriculum as the set of school life experiences in which both teachers and students find opportunities to share, activate, and build new understandings of the world." (p.174). In conclusion, both studies (Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo, 2014; Piñeros Pedraza & Quintero Polo, 2006) agree on the positive impact that a critical focus would have on pre-service teacher education and in language teaching as a way to foster community empowerment. A

critical approach understands both students and teachers as critical intellectuals who fight against injustices.

Another research about critical literacy is related to the perspective of community-based pedagogies (Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020) focusing on agency development. They show that pre-service teachers developed agency in their teaching process through narratively inquiring into socio-cultural resources of their community. From this perspective, they would be able to build pedagogical practices in order to generate critical social action. The last study taken into account refers to critical reflexivity in the research process (Granados-Beltrán, 2018) this affirms how important it is for language teacher programs to be more conscious about the role of research teachers as intellectuals that must connect their teaching practices with the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of their contexts. Thus, they could critique and evaluate how daily life is mediated by power relations which are socially constructed.

English language teaching in the Colombian context also seems to focus mostly on linguistic aspects where, as Pennycook (1990b) points out "fails to make central the most fundamental pedagogical questions regarding student empowerment" (p. 304). Nonetheless, some scholars (Mora, 2014, 2015, 2016; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019a, b.) discuss the need of introducing critical literacy pedagogy into language teaching as a way to promote social justice in Colombia. That is, to recognize the hidden agendas and purposes of the educational policies related to language teaching, as well as to give students tools that allow them to use their learning in a practical and functional way in the real world.

A study related to teacher training in Colombia (Valbuena & Conde, 2018) concludes that graduates maintain repetitive and traditional practices that show how much it costs them to

reflect in the classroom and innovate within their work. Accordingly, in order to implement a socio-critical approach to education, teachers must move away from traditional practices in which English teaching is based on a structuralist approach, which does not allow students to develop critical thinking and identify English as a tool to connect the world with their local context. By understanding this, teachers would realize that "the principles of critical literacy fundamentally relate to the teaching and learning of English, particularly in contexts where English acts as a language of power, prestige, or basic educational access" (Bacon, 2017, p.4).

Likewise, in a diagnostic study on the training of teachers in Colombia (Calvo, Rendón, & Rojas, 2004), the importance of profiling teachers as researchers of their practice is established, so that they can improve their processes through the reflective and analytical exercise of research. This study concludes that the innovation processes in the training of teachers are related to the articulation of the practices to the contexts, that is to say, to understand the contexts of teaching as objects of research, thus empowering teachers as reflective practitioners and researchers.

In this sense, research is one of the ways for language teachers to develop their teaching on a critical approach in order to transcend the focus on the cognitive, linguistic and non-social aspects of language learning. Rather, an approach that helps students improve their critical thinking skills and sense of agency. Thus, teachers could encourage critical literacy practices and creative learning, develop a democratic culture, and include socio-cultural issues in second language teaching. Therefore, "ELT and critical literacy become mutually reinforcing endeavors to broaden the ways in which students read both the word (languages) and the world (critical literacy)." (Bacon, 2017, p.5).

According to this, Gutiérrez (2015) affirms that there is a need for a more critical approach to pre-service teacher education in Colombia, thus, language teaching programs would identify the language as a social construction that has socio-cultural repercussions in the students' lives. One of her observations suggests that,

> This understanding would lead language teaching programs to educate teachers who are aware of their students' realities but most important who care and are committed to allowing students to transform those realities. Additionally, teacher education programs would need to acknowledge that reflecting on the importance of language teaching as a social practice cannot be relegated to a single course. (p. 191)

Hence, the relevance of critical literacy theories in the teaching practice is one of the topics that should be reinforced in language teaching programs in Colombia. Those who apply a critical approach to teaching English understand education as a political exercise; therefore, they do not understand teaching English based solely on language skills or to achieve a communicative ability. Rather, a critical approach establishes a relationship between language learning and social change. From this perspective, language is not only a means to communicate, but also a social practice influenced and built by the understanding that the student generates. As well as being a practice that covers the socio-cultural, political, historical context, and the creation of language learners' meanings.

Another study that suggests the need for teacher education programs in Colombia to develop a critical approach in language teaching states that language programs need "to facilitate opportunities for professional development that allow teachers and teacher-educators to become critically aware of the linguistic landscape themselves and to learn how to help students develop such critical awareness." (Domínguez, 2017, p.51). From this idea, in order for students to

develop a critical consciousness of the world around them, it is necessary that teachers also become conscious and can, through their experiences, be guides for the empowerment of their students as agents of change.

According to this, Echeverri Sucerquia and Pérez Restrepo (2014) expose the need that teacher education programs in Colombia have in order to enable pre-service teachers to use their voices to make meaning about critical pedagogy theory and practice. In this regard, they show how to teach language from a critical perspective is a current demand of the globalized world we inhabit. This study also talks about the importance of promoting bilingual education in Colombia based on real local characteristics, such as: social inequalities, violence, and poverty. In this way, teachers would be able to apply a critical approach to their teaching based on their real context. Similarly, Domínguez (2019) states

> the need for ELT teacher education programs to incorporate critical approaches to language education in the curriculum and to facilitate teacher educators' access to professional development opportunities. In fact, teacher educators may need the opportunity to develop critical awareness of media themselves and to examine multiple ways to help students develop such critical awareness. (p.48)

Teacher education programs in Colombia have not included enough the marginalized communities in the country, Therefore, "Most teacher education programs in Colombia continue to advocate for communicative language teaching approaches that favour English-only policies, given that this is what is expected by government and institutional authorities" (Ortega, 2019, p. 166). That is why, there is a need for a more socially-just oriented pedagogy that accepts and includes our own cultural and linguistic practices while learning other languages and cultures.

Then, students would develop a critical consciousness of their own culture and other cultures which will allow them to value and understand different ways of perceiving the world.

Lau and Stille (2014) point out the importance of understanding and working against power structures to create different and varying positions of expertise in the university environment, which will endorse learning communities to promote transformative practices. Likewise, teachers and pre-service teachers need to develop activities that enhance students' literacy from a social, fair and just perspective. Therefore, applying socio-critical approaches to literacy in pre-service teacher education in Colombia will allow that "teachers and students work together to counter different social injustices. In order to change this reality, we need to first understand how texts and discourses create realities, representations and connections within economic and social systems" (Ramírez, 2020a).

In conclusion, currently there are different characteristics that make Colombian teachers have to change their practices in order to understand the post-conflict era in which we are living and how the recent peace agreements in the country are also a critical topic for students to engage with. These concerns provide opportunities for teachers and students "to start thinking about the possible ways in which sociocultural values can be reborn in our society." (Benavides Buitrago, 2017, p.12). Then, pre-service teacher education programs should include reflection and analysis about our current context characteristics so teachers could be prepared to understand, analyze, and reflect upon the reality that surrounds them and, from this perspective, they could include these issues in their classes as a way to promote fairer, more respectful, and more equitable practices with students.

Ethical Considerations

As a research teacher it is very important for me to take pedagogical practice through constant reflection that allows me to analyze, understand and transform daily experiences, consequently, meaningful teaching and learning processes can be built. In this sense, I commit myself to be ethical in all the stages of research, I guarantee to be honest when reporting data collection and results. Finally, I assure that the findings and analysis presented are based on the real context I have studied.

<center>**Chapter Three**</center>

<center>**A Qualitative Meta-Analysis of Critical Literacy: Methodology**</center>

This chapter details how I carried out the meta-analysis. I will present the methodological characteristics of this study, the research question, sub-questions and the approach used. I will explain why I chose to design a qualitative meta-analysis, the different criteria for article selection, and the data analysis procedures.

Methodology

This exploration about critical literacy on preservice teacher education is a qualitative meta-analysis (Finfgeld, 2003; Ramírez, 2020; Thorne et al., 2004; Timulak, 2014). It is qualitative because it seeks to re-analyze and review the complexity of studies on preservice teacher programs, its conceptions and methodologies; that is to say, it is oriented to the understanding of a social phenomenon. In addition, it is a meta-analysis because it helps "(1) to provide a concise and comprehensive picture of findings across those studies; and (2) to examine and evaluate the impact of methodological influences in the original studies on their findings" (Timulak, 2014, p. 481). There are two types of meta-analysis: integrative and interpretive studies. This will be an interpretive study because it "leads to the development of new interpretations from the analysis of multiple field studies" (Schreiber, 2008, p. 507). The idea is to interpret data again and not to aggregate it.

Research Question

What critical literacy conceptions and methodologies are reported by qualitative studies investigating pre-service teacher education in Colombia?

Sub questions

-What data collection procedures were applied by qualitative studies investigating pre-service teacher education in Colombia?

-How was the data analyzed by qualitative studies investigating pre-service teacher education in Colombia?

-How do these factors (data collection procedures and data analysis) influence the findings and conclusions of the investigations?

Why a Qualitative Meta-Analysis?

Qualitative meta-analyses are becoming necessary as qualitative research continues to grow, thus becoming a tool to upgrade theory and practice from existing knowledge. In the Colombian context, studies related to critical literacy have been increasing, which is why a meta-analysis would allow us to identify which are the emerging concepts in the country and how these studies could have an impact on teaching and learning practices as well as in policy making in the field of language teaching.

A Meta-Ethnography Approach

As stated by Timulak (2014) this approach refers to "translating primary studies one into another and looking for similarities and dissimilarities in their findings." (pp.2-3). Furthermore, for the meta-ethnography process, it is very relevant to read the studies in an intense and constant way, bearing in mind that each time the reading can have different purposes such as identifying, organizing or verifying the data (Lee et al., 2015). A meta-ethnography approach would allow me to understand the discussions that Colombian authors have developed around language use in relation to social justice and the creation of more equitable frameworks for language learning and teaching in Colombia.

I conducted the study in the following steps: (a) literature search, (b) selection of eligible studies for meta-analysis, (c) developing and applying a coding scheme for meta-analysis, and (d) data analysis.

Literature Search

I searched for articles related to critical literacy in ELT, covering the context of pre-service teacher education in Colombia. This meta-analysis includes peer-reviewed articles, theses and studies that addressed critical literacy directly as a topic of inquiry. To locate studies for inclusion in the meta-analysis, I used the following keywords: critical literacy, literacidad crítica, and pre-service teacher education. I searched in databases around ELT and TESOL Journals in Latin America such as Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, Ikala, Education and Learning Research Journal, Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, Enletawa Journal, Journal of Media Literacy Education, Matices en Lenguas Extranjeras, and How Journal. For the Spanish search I used SciELO and Redalyc. Besides, I conducted Google Scholar searches. The chosen studies also correspond to the studies in the context of pre-service teacher education found in the book chapter 'Colombia: Criticality and meaning-making ingrained in our local realities' (Mora, et al., 2021), they all met the criteria established for this analysis. For this reason, this meta-analysis presents a more in-depth analysis, but taking into account what is presented in this chapter.

Criteria for Study Selection

Once the articles were selected, I revised the titles, abstracts and references, then I read the complete articles to determine if they met the established criteria. All the studies that this meta-analysis covered are qualitative studies, they have a similar research question or are related to the concept of critical literacy and they are focused on the context of pre-service teacher

education in Colombia. In this meta-analysis the publication year was not a limitation because I want to cover all the qualitative critical literacy studies in the context of pre-service teacher education in Colombia. I selected studies that addressed critical literacy directly through their framework, and studies that had objectives which closely aligned with the purposes and ideas of critical literacy.

Furthermore, I took into account the two core facets of quality for inclusion in meta-ethnography that Toye et al. (2013) suggested "(1) Conceptual clarity (how clearly has the author articulated a concept that facilitates theoretical insight), and (2) Interpretive rigour (what is the context of interpretation; how inductive are the findings; has the interpretation been challenged?)" (p.4).

Developing and Applying a Coding Scheme for Meta-Analysis

The 11 studies that met the criteria were coded to identify their important features such as aim of the study, context, description of participants, conceptions about critical literacy, methodology (data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and theoretical/conceptual framework used), findings and conclusions. The coding scheme was intended to describe the critical aspects of the eligible studies as well as to identify the similarities, differences, and gaps in the literature. Additionally, it allowed explaining the variations observed in the results of some of the studies regarding the application of a critical approach in pre-service teacher education in Colombia.

The first coding table aimed to analyze the information related to the study methodology and its influence and impact on the results. This generated, apart from the type of methodology, data collection, data analysis and the theoretical/conceptual framework, the category of critical literacy in our local contexts and critical literacy conceptions according to the studies, which will

41

be explained later in the chapter of findings. The second coding table aimed to analyze the information related to the findings and conclusions of the studies. This generated different categories: Understanding the context of Colombia; critical education as a form of emancipation and three sub-categories: role of text/discourse in CL in Colombia, teacher role in CL in Colombia, and students voices: language and power. The last category: The need for a critical approach in language education in Colombia, in which a cycle for social transformation (see Figure 3) is explained, made up of five steps: student empowerment, awareness, agency, critical consciousness, and social transformation.

The studies were organized in alphabetical order (see Table 1) according to their reference citation.

Table 1

Studies Chosen for Meta-Analysis

Number	Study
1	Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín (2011)
2	Domínguez (2019)
3	Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo (2014)
4	Esteban (2015)
5	Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez (2019)

6	Granados-Beltrán (2018)
7	Gutiérrez (2015)
8	Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez (2020)
9	Kern (2017)
10	Piñeros Pedraza & Quintero Polo (2006)
11	Samacá Bohórquez (2012)

Participants and Context

The participants of the different studies analyzed were language pre-service teachers, there were women and men from different ages ranging from 18 to 30 years old; they were students from different public and private universities in Colombia. Some of the participants already had previous teaching experience and others had no experience. All of them had the opportunity to teach or learn English from a critical perspective and addressed social issues in the classroom during the research study. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate, and the researchers gave them anonymity to protect their identity. All studies were conducted in English, including the data collected and discussions held during the research.

Despite the fact that the universities where the studies were carried out are located in large cities in Colombia, some of the participants came from different regions of the country, a factor that was taken into account in the analysis of the data because some of them were able to

analyze specific aspects of their communities (advertising, social problems, needs, current situation in social terms). The participants' behaviors, contexts, needs, interests, histories and voices were taken into account in the data analysis as relevant and influencing aspects for the understanding and application of a critical approach in language teaching in Colombia.

Data Analysis

The analysis started from the moment that the data collection began (Woods, P. 1993). I was permanently collecting data from the studies, writing interpretative notes, and recording my preliminary ideas and findings. Also, I used color coding to compare and classify the information collected. Finally, I reduced the data to charts that included the categories, so I had a panoramic view of the research. In this phase of the meta-analysis I read in detail each study several times in order to organize the studies into groups, code themes, identify categories, find common and recurring concepts, list summary of findings, identify key concepts and relationships between them, consider similarities and differences, and compare themes while reading each study (Lee, et al., 2015).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher or research team is an important source of interpretation in qualitative research (Berger, 2015) because the researcher´ characteristics and contexts could help to understand the findings or interpretations of the study. In this meta-analysis I was responsible for selecting, exploring, reading in detail, relating, translating, analyzing and synthesizing the data, that is, the qualitative studies. In this process, I identified metaphors for each study, coded themes, identified categories and checked coding permanently. Throughout the process I was reflective which allows me to understand the relationships between concepts and studies, and to answer the research question that led this study.

Trustworthiness

      This qualitative meta-analysis respected the chosen studies, their participants and ideas. The original results and methodological choices of the studies supported the findings and discussions. Furthermore, this meta-analysis followed Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven-step process for conducting the meta-ethnography which include: identification of the eligible studies, deciding what is relevant for the purpose of the meta-analysis, reading in detail, relating all the studies, translating, synthesizing and expressing. Throughout the process there was a constant review of the coding process and I made sure to always follow the original terms and concepts presented by the studies.

Chapter Four

The Need for a Critical Approach in Language Education in Colombia: Lessons from

Eleven Critical Literacy Studies on Pre-Service Teacher education.

In this section, I present the patterns, categories, and metaphors I noticed after analyzing data. The studies, used as data, show what is the conception about critical literacy that exists in the country, especially in relation to pre-service teacher education, and they discuss the need for the implementation of a more equitable framework for language learning and teaching in Colombia. Furthermore, from identifying the type of method, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, theoretical/conceptual framework, and the previous conceptualization about critical literacy of the studies, this meta-analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the findings and conclusions of the original studies and their methodological influences.

Method Types

In terms of the research methods used, the 11 studies were qualitative; there were 3 case studies and 3 literature reviews, the rest of the studies were action research, deductive approach, narrative inquiry, a pedagogical proposal, and a study group. In terms of data collection procedures, 7 of the 11 studies used the students' artifacts (essays, written reflections, videos and journals) as a data collection tool; five of the eleven studies used the interviews; four studies used focus groups; three studies used questionnaires; three studies used observations and field notes; and, one study used a series of workshops. In terms of data analysis procedures, two studies used grounded theory; one study used theoretical sampling; four studies used coding; four studies used triangulation; and one study used analysis of narratives.

Table 2

Articles by Method Type

Method type	Count
Case study	3
Action research method	1
Deductive approach	1
Narrative inquiry	1
Pedagogical proposal	1
Literature review	3
Study group	1

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Six of the eleven studies addressed critical literacy as a main concept in the conceptual framework; six studies addressed critical theory and critical pedagogy as main concepts; one study addressed teachers' beliefs in its conceptual framework; one study addressed the concepts of culture and identity; one study addressed critical media literacy; one study addressed the concept of agency; one study addressed narrative inquiry as a phenomenon in the conceptual framework; one study addressed the concept of community-based pedagogy; one study considered pre-service teachers and the role of reflection; one study considered the films in the EFL classroom and their role in promoting reflection; one study considered content-based

instruction; one study considered cultural capital; two studies considered awareness-raising in their conceptual framework; and, one study considered change and knowledge.

Accordingly, as shown in Figure 2, the main concepts that conceptually and theoretically build a more equitable framework for language learning and teaching in Colombia around the concept of critical literacy.

Figure 2

From the Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks of the Studies
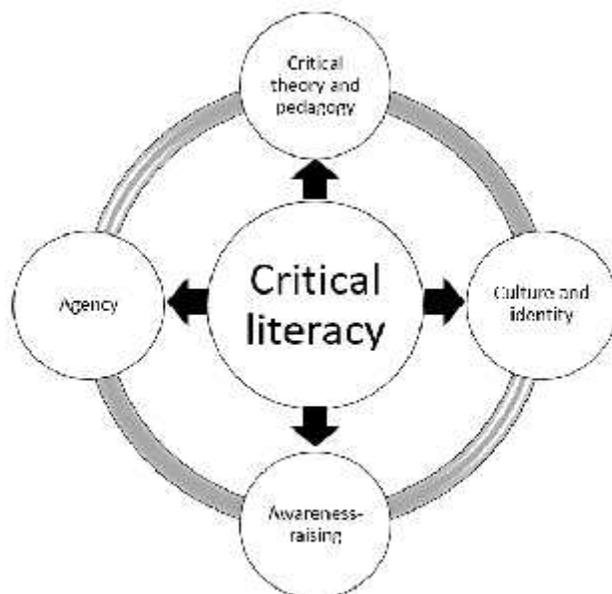
These concepts appeared in a transversal way in most of the analyzed studies, these open the critical questioning about the sustainability of a socio-critical approach to literacy in a conservative and traditional educational environment, where language teaching has been mainly focused on the linguistic aspects of the language, and has paid little attention to the social, cultural and political aspects of learning. Understanding literacy from a socially situated discourse/text presupposes challenges in terms of the constant sociocultural redefinition of the

country, including new forms of economic and political exclusion, thus generating renewed ways of marginalizing and oppressing.

To understand this diagram, it is necessary to comprehend the concept of critical literacy from a socio-critical approach to literacy that goes beyond the school or educational environment, to connect as an approach applied to life, the way in which each individual inhabited reality; allowing to make a critical reading of the relations of the discourse/text with the power, the ideology and the different forms of marginalization that exist. From this understanding, the other concepts arise from a mutual and reciprocal dialogic relationship, that is, an egalitarian dialogue between them, a concept can only exist as a consequence of the other and to function it must constantly maintain this relationship with the other concepts.

For example, to apply a critical approach to education based on the previous conceptual framework presented, one must first understand from critical pedagogy and critical theory the existing forms of marginalization, the different ways in which other scholars have brought critical literacy practices to the classroom, and the results of these applications, among other different aspects. Likewise, for teachers and students to be able to develop the concept of agency in their daily lives, it is necessary that they understand all the aspects related to their culture and identity and develop awareness of the different situations of social injustice that they experience or observe, thus developing critical consciousness according to Freire's conscientização that deals with creating spaces for learners' empowerment where they can discuss issues of power dynamics, gender, inequity, and race.

Critical Literacy in our Local Contexts

In the analysis of the methodology part of the studies I found a pattern in eight of the eleven studies that indicates that the participants (pre-service teachers and teachers) of the

49

studies were exposed first to critical literacy theory and literature in order to develop

understanding about this concept. This fact reveals that CL was a new approach for pre-service

teachers in Colombia, then, it was necessary for all the studies to explore the concept and to

develop understanding towards the texts. The following excerpts illustrates this finding:

> The first phase consisted of the exploration of Critical Literacy approaches to education
>
> and participants were exposed to texts that portrayed the ways different scholars have
>
> taken Critical Literacy to the classroom. (Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 183.)
>
> In the awareness stage, teachers lead students to observe and make connections between
>
> the texts they interact with in their lives and broader social issues. This stage aims at
>
> initiating students in critical inquiry and exploration. (Domínguez, 2019, p.36)
>
> We argue that making sense of critical pedagogy, as part of a process of professional
>
> development, implies spaces and situations of personal confrontation with theory and
>
> support in collaborative learning through dialogue. (Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez
>
> Restrepo, 2014, p.171)
>
> In order to provide students with opportunities to analyze, reflect and assume critical
>
> positions towards the texts we had for the literature class, I decided to suggest them
>
> to keep a double entry journal or dialectical notebook. The purpose of this tool was to ask
>
> students to select one quotation, excerpt or line from the texts. These quotations
>
> were selected because they considered they were touched, confused or intrigued with the
>
> words of the author. (Esteban, 2015, p. 28)
>
> Based on these results, it is possible to conclude that the research professors had to

explain the concept of critical literacy or it was understood through the theory that exists about

the topic, that is, the participants have no prior knowledge of critical literacy, critical pedagogy

or about a critical approach to second language teaching.

Another pattern that I found related to the methodology in most of the studies refers to

the importance of putting into practice what has been learned about critical literacy, that is, that

pre-service teachers have the possibility of preparing lessons from a critical approach. When

teachers were faced with the task of planning their classes based on critical literacy and critical

pedagogy, they realized the importance of keeping in mind the specific teaching context. From

this practical exercise, teachers were able to visualize what are the difficulties, positive aspects,

contradictions and other situations that may arise in the implementation of this approach. The

following excerpts outlines this finding:

> During the second phase, pre-service teachers prepared Critical Literacy oriented lessons,
>
> taking into account their specific contexts and school curricula. (Gutiérrez, 2015, p.183)
>
> These protocols provided sufficient information to understand how students' participation
>
> in critical lessons impacted their language learning, what they and their teacher gained
>
> from this experience, their struggles, and overall, the implications of incorporating
>
> critical literacy principles in this particular context. (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019,
>
> p. 95)

To understand how some processes of reflection, questioning and analysis were carried

out on the different texts (films, written academic texts, advertising, classrooms, and

communities) analyzed in the studies, the following summary (see Table 3) is presented, which

allows visualizing some of the critical questions that guided said processes.

Table 3

Summary of Critical Literacy Questions Used in Some Studies

Study	CL Questions
Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín (2011)	Questions to activate students' previous knowledge: · Discuss the kind of environment you grew up in. Was it educationally conducive? · What role did your parents play in your education? · What values did your parents instill in you regarding education and other issues, such as sex, race and class? · Was there peer pressure to succeed or fail in your school? If so, how did it come about? · How have your past school experiences affected your views on education today? · Discuss race, class, and gender relationships in your past educational experiences. · What was the role of your teachers when you were in school? Based on your answer, what do you think your primary role as a future teacher will be? Questions for discussion in each movie: · What kind of interaction took place in the classes? · What kind of questions did the teachers ask? · To what extent was the teacher at the center of the teaching-learning processes? · How does a school district policy affect teachers and students? · How does a teacher cope with budgetary issues at school? · What kind of communication problems did the

teacher have?

·   To what extent did society consider the teacher's academic practices right or wrong?

·   To what extent did society consider the teacher's personal actions right or wrong?

·   What was the role of children, teachers, society, mass media, citizens, and life conditions in the learning process?

·   How similar or different is the Colombian school system to the one seen in the movie?

·   How do the words perseverance, tenacity and commitment relate to the movie?

·   How did children in the school come to find meaningful learning?

·   How far can you go as a teacher in a situation similar to the movie?

·   How do students' anxieties affect learning?

·   What kind of approach or methodology does the teacher follow to teach his class?

·   How does the teacher deal with testing, evaluation and assessment?

·   How do the characters in the movie (the principal, the teacher, the students, the teachers' roommates, or others) represent Maslow's (1973) hierarchy of needs?

·   Based on the movie, can you provide some examples of the roles of the interactive teacher as described by Brown? (The teacher as the controller, director, manager, facilitator, and resource.)

·   Are there gender stereotypes represented in the movie? If so, which ones? How are they represented and why?

· To what extent are authority and power relationships apparent in the movie?

· Music was the main motivation for the teacher to teach his classes in this movie. What would be your reason to change the curriculum in a rural or city school in Boyacá?

· How is the teacher reskilled in the movie?

· How does the teacher reskill the students?

· What methods exist for you to undercut negative forms of competition?

· How does the teacher's view of teaching minorities differ from the principal's view?

· How would you handle ideological differences among yourself, other teachers and the principal?

· In what ways do teachers empower their students?

· In what ways were the teachers in the movies empowered?

· What are some of the challenges that these teachers face?

· How is "difference" portrayed in this movie?

· How do you view yourself as a teacher compared to the teachers in these movies?

· Is there a hidden curriculum that these teachers employed? If so, what does it mean?

· Do you identify with the teacher? Why?

· How are the teachers in the movie portrayed?

· Is there a sense of autonomy and/or control in the teachers' lives at the school?

· Do the teachers challenge already established views?

	· If you were in these situations, what tools would you use to help alleviate the conflicts these teachers face?
Dominguez (2019)	· What messages about socio-cultural, political, historical, or economic issues are portrayed by this text?
	· Who is talking to whom in this text?
	· What do the author(s) want to say?
	· What hidden messages could the text convey? What does the text say about community issues?
	· What type of media is being used (e.g. billboard, flyer, window display)? What possible reasons do you think the author(s) had to choose this media?
	· What is the purpose of this text?
	· Who does the text target? Who is not targeted? Why?
	· How does this text target some audiences and exclude others?
	· Why could those audiences be addressed?
	· Why are certain groups of people excluded?
	· How would this impact human interrelations in your community?
	· Which groups of people are being represented in this text? Which are not? What could be some possible reasons or consequences of such representations?
	· How are those people being represented or misrepresented?
	· How could those representations affect people

	in your community?
	· What does the text say about power relations and injustices? (Luke, 2000; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Morrel, 2014).
	· What impact do you think these texts in the public space have on people in general?
	· What impact do they have on the people from your community?
Esteban (2015)	· Questioning the who, what, why, and how of textual creation and eventual interpretation.
Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez (2019)	· Whose viewpoint is expressed?
	· What does the author want us to think of?
	· How might alternative perspectives be presented?
	· What action might you take on the basis of what you have read/viewed?
	· Have you been in a situation in which a person is being discriminated or being mistreated and you haven't done anything about it?

In general, one of the similarities found in the critical questions used by some of the studies refers to the questioning of the social, cultural and political aspects that make up the texts they read. Those critical literacy questions helped pre-service teachers to interrogate the different power relations and ideologies that the texts present implicitly and explicitly. In addition, they were able to reflect on the impacts and material and socio-cultural consequences that the texts have on their lives and their communities. The questions guided the pre-service teachers to

recognize different identities presented in the texts, the positionalities they create, the representations, and their different purposes.

Critical Literacy Conceptions According to the Studies

All the studies developed a conception about critical literacy in relation to language learning and teaching as a tool to unveil power dynamics and hidden agendas of education and social life, as well as other contexts that are outside the school such as advertising, films and socio-cultural and political texts/discourses. The analysis indicates that critical literacy is a powerful tool that empowers teachers and students to raise awareness about the oppressive relations that society has constructed and the critical way in which people could generate social change according to their possibilities, context and roles in society. The following quote supports this definition,

> Critical literacy is also a way of interaction with information that goes beyond the decoding of letters and words. It encourages learners to question the information they receive and read in order to identify the social context, purpose, and possible effects that those texts have on their lives. (Esteban, 2015, p. 26)

Furthermore, studies show that there are a number of taken-for-granted truths that are difficult to question and examine because people have believed and acted on them for many years (Dominguez, 2019; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015; Hernández Varona, & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020). Which means that before being able to reach social action, therefore, social transformation, we must begin by understanding, analyzing and criticizing the ways in which we live, the ways in which we are conditioned by society and the state, because if our actions do not belong to us but are the result of different imposed ideologies and

manipulations created through the media, education systems, politics, among others; then, before thinking about freedom, a recognition of all these limitations is needed.

One of the reflections that the analysis shows as a common point of the studies is the need for pre-service teacher education programs to generate spaces so that students can develop understanding about other approaches to language teaching that not only include linguistic aspects, but also focus on socio-cultural and political aspects. If teachers have the possibility to criticize, analyze and re-evaluate ideologies about teaching, then they will be able to bring this type of practice more consciously to their real teaching contexts, their experiences will serve as an example so that their students can undertake the journey towards freedom based on reflective, critical and analytical thinking. As stated by Piñeros Pedraza and Quintero Polo (2006),

> McLaren (2003) points out that educators need to have an agenda for an equal education through a Freirean pedagogy which is more participatory, critical, values-oriented, multicultural, student-centered, experiential, research-minded, and interdisciplinary. This pedagogy focuses on the equality of the activity rather than the equality of the skills or facts memorized. Therefore, he suggests dialogue teaching to reduce students' withdrawal and teacher talk in the classroom, critical literacy to provoke critical awareness and desocialization in all the subjects, giving a more important role to reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and listening to others in order to produce self-inquiry about the society and the subject under study. Critical literacy invites teachers and students to reflect deeply on all subjects of study. McLaren invites educators to consider "situated pedagogy" as a way to situate learning in students' culture and lives. In this sense, learning is more experiential and knowledge is seen as something real and tangible.

Change Agency makes sense to us because educators need to study the community where they will be agents of change and the consequences it might bring. (p.184)

Another highlight according to the analysis of the studies is the understanding of critical literacy not only from the possibility of analyzing and criticizing texts, but also from the meaning-making processes. Consequently, it recognizes the importance of pre-service teachers constructing critical meaning as they interact with texts and according to their experiences both as students and as teachers. Meaning-making is a way of transcending reading and theory, to put into practice the creation of meaning based on a real context which redefines society and fights for social justice from a critical perspective.

One of the conceptions about critical literacy analyzed in the studies refers to the importance of connecting the school with the community so that the teacher and the students serve as social leaders who understand the problems that the community lives and propose solutions in the short and long terms that allow continuous improvement in everyday exchange. In this case, the school should be opened as a space in which social problems are discussed to make them visible to the entire community, as well as at national or international level, asking not only for help through economic resources or infrastructure, but also support from different areas such as psychology, historiography, sociology, among others.

In the Colombian context, critical literacy in and out of classrooms could function as a tool that provides possibilities for analyzing and understanding the past history and current reality around the armed conflict and violence that the country has suffered, especially, the farmers, indigenous people and people of African descent. By analyzing all these social factors from a critical perspective, one could go from the point of understanding to the participation of social action (Dominguez, 2019).

Understanding the Context of Colombia

The analysis of the different studies presented the need of generating spaces in pre-service teacher programs for reflection and discussion about the socio-political and educational context of Colombia. In this way, teachers would have a broad sense of the different realities that could be approached through a socio-critical perspective in language learning and teaching. The studies suggest understanding the characteristics of the past as well as the current situation of the country and its consequences in the educational field.

In summary, the studies highlighted the following characteristics about Colombia. According to economic standards Colombia is a developing country which has experienced throughout history social problems such as poverty, social exclusion, marginalization, and vulnerability in different ethnic groups and minorities such as indigenous communities, afro-descendants, roma or gypsies, among others. The National Administrative Department of Statistics (Dane, 2020, Índice de Pobreza Multidimensional) of Colombia reported that by 2019, 17.5% of the country's population lived in a situation of multidimensional poverty, that is, they did not have access to public services, housing, health, education and other factors. The official language is Spanish, however, thanks to the different indigenous communities, Colombia has around 65 indigenous languages, as well as English in San Andrés and Providencia and Palenquero in San Basilio de Palenque.

In terms of the educational system, Colombia has public and private education, as well as rural and urban education which present different challenges depending on the economic, cultural, political, and physical resources that each context has, that is, each region. Education in Colombia, as well as other social factors, has been affected due to the internal armed conflict and the history of violence that the country has experienced. Nonetheless, the Peace Accord signed in

November of 2016 with the guerrillas has brought different challenges for the construction of a more just and equitable country, in which minorities can have a voice and vote. Including minorities in the conversations and creation of educational, social and political strategies is a key point in the construction of social justice in the country.

Another aspect that can be questioned and evaluated to understand the reality of the country is the murder of different social leaders who have fought in defense of the human rights of the poorest and minorities, as well as in the defense of territories and against techniques such as fracking. According to the report of homicides against social leaders and human rights defenders (2019) between January, 2016 and December, 2018 (including the update of figures/numbers/data until July 9, 2019) 289 cases of homicide were reported by social leaders and human rights defenders. However, the report clarifies that there are currently cases of homicides in the process of verification, so the death toll may be higher. Cauca and Antioquia were the Colombian departments with the greatest number of murders. Additionally, data shows that the majority of social leaders killed in Colombia are men.

When analyzing the murder of social leaders in the country, pre-service teachers could question the reasons why they are killed, understand which Colombian departments have the highest number of deaths and why, question the human rights that these leaders defended, the social and material consequences of their deaths, among other aspects. These questions can be theoretically guided by the statements made in the essay 'Can the subaltern speak?' by Spivak (1985), where the structural silencing created by global capitalism through the different ideologies that build power relations and injustices preventing the subaltern from speaking is discussed. Then, the subaltern's speech is not part of an egalitarian dialogue, his ideas are not important since he does not have a power status in society. From this perspective, one could

analyze how the murder of social leaders is a way of silencing the fight for human rights and equality in Colombia.

In accordance with the reflections raised in the studies, this analysis proposes some questions that could guide pre-service teachers in understanding their own reality. The questions are: how understanding the socio-cultural past of the country can help people understand the social problems that have been experienced, their causes and consequences? How understanding the country according to international news can help build the image of the country internationally? What are the consequences and implications of the country's international image? How are indigenous languages included in the country's language teaching policies? Which people benefited from the internal armed conflict in the country? How did they benefit and why? What are the most salient differences between private and public education? What are the consequences of these differences? How has the history of violence and inequality in the country been studied and analyzed in schools or educational and cultural institutions?

Critical Education as a Form of Emancipation

Understanding how dangerous it is to generalize an educational approach from one country or region to another, due to the socio-cultural and political characteristics of each context, the analysis of the studies does not pretend to be an extension of what has been done in other countries such as United States, Australia, and South Africa, but it establishes the relevance to understand the theory and practice of other scholars from the points of convergence according to the socio-cultural, educational and literacy practices of the country.

Research suggests that applying a critical approach in second language teaching in Colombia is a great challenge due to our traditional vision of teaching, therefore, teachers could

62

present difficulties and resistance to this approach (Gutiérrez, 2015). This idea is supported by the following excerpts,

> ...both of them believed they would encounter some limitations when trying to take this approach to their classrooms, such as students' age and parental pressure. (Gutiérrez, 2015, p.185)
>
> In spite of her optimism, Carolina acknowledged that planning with this approach was more time consuming than usual as she faced some challenges trying to connect the grammar stated by the school curriculum to lessons that actually led her students to reflect. (Gutiérrez, 2015, p.186)
>
> Considering that some learners might be resistant to the critical components of the lessons, one sees they may find it hard to change their long-held beliefs, and ultimately exercise their social action. Thus, it is advisable for teachers not to expect total success from the first task of implementing critical literacies in their classrooms and to understand that this is a process that takes time and effort. (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019, p. 102)
>
> We consider there are some educational conditions in Colombia that may constrain the development of agency: (a) the countless methods (e.g., grammar translation, natural approach, the communicative language teaching, etc.) (Macías, 2010, p. 188) that do not fit in the characteristics of our context, restraining the possibility of knowing how students learn by using the method as a lens that prevents knowing the student holistically (how they learn, the assets they bring to their learning, their understanding of the learning process, etc.); (b) ELT policies and the colonial discourses (González, 2007, p. 319) that seek to train teachers and students as mere technicians and passive consumers of

knowledge produced by "experts" (Cárdenas, González, & Álvarez, 2010, p. 51) to privilege the industry behind ELT; (c) the distorted nature of education in Colombia and the link between this and the economy to meet the needs of a capitalist world (Guerrero, 2010) instead of looking for knowledge that meets the necessities of our community. Consequently, there is a need to further research agency development in the field of ELT in our country. (Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020, p.121)

As a consequence, the importance of contextualizing each classroom is highlighted and, according to its characteristics, include a critical approach that goes beyond elaborating activities where power relations are questioned; rather, a philosophy that permeates not only planning classes, but the relationships (students-teachers, students-students, students-teachers-community at large) inside and outside the classroom, the perspective of each text that surrounds us and our way of interacting with them (films, billboards, music, videos, the city and people).

A similarity among different studies (Esteban, 2015; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015) suggests that lesson planning and implementation of critical lessons presupposes a very great challenge for teachers both in time spent and in the development of a critical consciousness that allow the understanding of the theory and the creation of activities that include the characteristics of each context and their needs, therefore, covering the problems or social situations that enable students to assume a critical position.

The analysis also shows that when there is a space in the class to analyze and discuss social issues such as gender, violence, racism, poverty, among others, students, on the one hand, often identify themselves and feel moved when remembering their own experiences where they have suffered or have been affected. On the other hand, some students who do not identify with the situations may develop empathy and understanding about the experiences of others and the

social consequences of these situations (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019). This result shows how the analysis of social issues helps in the construction of the identity of the pre-service teachers, as well as generates social awareness that promotes social transformation. The following finding supports this idea,

Additionally, data indicated that 9 out of 14 learners felt moved to propose alternatives to combat problems such as gender violence and discrimination: "Due to my life experience, I have always wanted to help women who are or have suffered like I did. I would love to do something more for them" (Laura, Questionnaire). She explained that as she had been a victim of violence, she felt reluctant to remain silent or to ignore this issue. Moreover, motivation to take social action was not confined to the walls of the classroom as noted in the teacher's field journal: One of the students, who has an active participation in social media, made a post about violence towards women. We had previously addressed this issue in class. In his post, the student let male followers know about the importance of breaking stereotypes . . . Later that week, he kept posting messages reflecting against femicide. (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019, p.99)

The theory shows how critical literacy empowers students and allows them to express their thoughts about social problems; however, it is also relevant to discuss the occasions when students resist against the critical components, possibly because it is difficult to break stereotypes and change the paradigms on which they have grown, that is, to change the truths that have been established in every life. The analysis (Esteban, 2015; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015) also shows that students present resistance because they are not used to analyzing, criticizing and evaluating social situations in the academic field, neither considering

and examining multiple perspectives, social identities, and discourses. The following excerpt supports the proposed ideas,

> The findings of this study suggest that: a) the three participants acknowledged the need of having a more critical approach to education in Colombia, but also the challenges of shifting education in that direction. b) They struggled when moving from theory to practice as was reflected in their resistance, contradictions, successes, and back slides in this process. c) Participants' beliefs, attitudes, and reflections were transformed throughout the study, making it evident that there is a long road to traverse with pre-service teachers until acknowledgment of the relevance of CL theories mirrors their teaching practice. (Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 191).

According to the analysis of the studies, there are different aspects to take into account when applying a critical approach to language teaching and learning. These aspects are the role of text/discourse in CL, the teacher role in CL, and the students voices: language and power. Each factor will be addressed below as subcategories identified in the analysis of the different studies.

Role of Text/Discourse in CL in Colombia. This subcategory appears as a need to analyze texts and discourses beyond the traditional ideas that privilege alphabetic writing and written text, as well as identify the hidden messages that exist in them, their purposes and the world behind them. Some of the texts that the studies analyzed were advertisements displayed in public spaces (Dominguez, 2019), that help pre-service teachers understand the non-neutral nature of media. Also, the analysis of educational movies (Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín, 2011) and their role in promoting reflection to develop a critical position towards the movies and the texts about critical literacy for classroom practice and making connections with the students'

own context. Some of the Issues that pre-service teachers analyzed in the movies were:

resistance, positive competition, democracy, authority, critical empowerment, and critical

literacy.

Furthermore, the analysis of the community (Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez,

2020) as a text connected to the school, which according to each local context has not been

analyzed enough and generates spaces for different voices to be heard through this intervention.

> Through the interaction of the participants with their community, we could observe
>
> pertinent aspects that contributed to their building of knowledge from people outside of
>
> the classroom, to know their community necessities, and to reflect upon how they and
>
> their actions could support improvement or, at least, generate awareness. Most
>
> importantly, and as described by some participants, this research study granted the
>
> opportunity to experience how sts know and how they can bind their abilities, and their
>
> teacher self-realization with the reality of their contexts. (Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez
>
> Álvarez, 2020, p.121)

Finally, the analysis of different texts (Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo, 2014;

Esteban, 2015; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Granados-Beltrán, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2015;

Kern, 2017; Piñeros & Quintero, 2006; Samacá, 2012) about international and national studies

on critical literacy, critical pedagogy, awareness-raising and critical approaches to education,

which allow understanding the different forms and examples of how critical literacy has been

approached in educational contexts around the world.

The following quotes reveal the conception that some pre-service teachers developed

about texts, going beyond textual ideas to begin to critically analyze their purposes and benefits,

This time, besides identifying the most salient purpose of advertisements (to sell a

product), these participants acknowledged that these texts also seek to sell values,

lifestyles, ideals about success, and even happiness. (Dominguez, 2019, p.43)

To understand how media convey hidden messages, which can promote,

validate or disseminate sociocultural issues affecting our health (as in the case of

alcoholic drinks) and our human interactions (as in the social exclusion they could

unveil in that advertisement). (Dominguez, 2019, p.42)

In order to clarify what a text is, the definition provided by Robinson, E., & Robinson, S.

(2003) was considered. These authors define text as a "vehicle through which individuals

communicate with one another using the codes and conventions of society". Accordingly,

songs, novels, conversations, pictures, movies, among others are all considered texts.

(Esteban, 2015, p.27)

...reading not only written texts but also the world. In relation to this, Clavijo et al. (2004)

found in a research project that teachers and learners approached language and literacy

through experiences that included "reading" the city of Bogotá as a text and relating it to

other types of school learning. Literacy became understood as a way of constructing

knowledge in all the areas of the curriculum by building students' awareness of the

importance of local history through the exploration of oral traditions or constructing life

histories as knowledge that serves to reflect upon societal values. (Piñeros Pedraza &

Quintero Polo, 2006, p.184)

As stated in one of the studies (Esteban, 2015) "Critical literacy is associated with the

possibilities students have to question, analyze and criticize the texts they are asked to read"

(p.32). For this reason, it is important that the text is conceived from different approaches and

meanings that allow recognizing its role as creator of realities, in which it sometimes supports and builds power relations. The text, as a control tool, gives the writer and reader different positions, it can convince people about certain ideas or defend ideologies as truths, in a certain socio-cultural, religious and political context. Language in both texts and discourses creates ideas and values, it is not neutral because it is based on culture. That is why, language could change according to the contexts and realities.

Teacher Role in CL in Colombia. According to the studies, to apply a critical approach to education it is necessary that the teacher develops a political, democratic and inclusive perspective (recognizing all groups, not only the privileged but also those who have been marginalized) in his/her teaching process. The teacher must privilege their local context, thus addressing the socio-cultural and political issues that affect their students. In a socio-critical approach, the teachers defend the population of subordinate or marginalized students, for this reason, they equate students with communicative tools that allow them to participate in conversations and ethical decision-making that promote social justice.

As stated in Gutiérrez's study (2015), teachers have a responsibility not only in terms of teaching, but also a political and social one, given that according to the focus of their teaching, students can develop critical, purposeful and decisive thinking skills. One of the findings of this study confirms it, by stating that,

> David felt optimistic towards the possibility of having this transformation and expressed how it was part of teachers' responsibility to encourage students to become critically literate and reflective about the world around them: "[…] As teachers, we have the huge responsibility of guiding students towards expanding their reasoning and looking at issues from different perspectives" (David, reflection 1, March 11, 2013). (p.184)

The critical teacher constantly problematizes his/her practice, reflects on it, questions and thinks about how to improve it, transforms the practice according to the needs of his/her context. In this way, the teacher recognizes that in order to transform social reality, it is important to reveal ideas that have been transmitted for a long time as truths that should not be questioned. When the teacher empowers the students, they recognize that they can be agents of change and therefore, they can propose alternatives for change. Another study (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019) supports this idea by indicating that,

> Therefore, as a teacher at the university level, she felt and still feels that she has the responsibility to educate citizens able to transform our society and ultimately, help them disrupt and interrogate multiple messages that have been presented to us as universally true... Thus, Catalina confirmed that in critical literacy, learning is bidirectional; she understood that in critical literacy teachers are called to downplay their authoritative role (Giroux, 1987), and as such they must be sensitive and attentive to different aspects, which can be identified through interaction, observation, and dialogue with learners (Nieto, 1977). (p.102)

Some findings of the studies show that teachers have a duty to develop critical consciousness by recognizing first the power relations that govern their thoughts, actions and decisions, thus, teachers have a great responsibility to understand how their practice can affect their students. As the following fragment shows, teachers must be an example of social justice and not, on the contrary, agents that reinforce the unequal hierarchy of society.

> Thinking about my responsibility as a future teacher. According to Larrivee (2006), responsibility is the careful consideration of the consequences of one's actions, especially as they affect students. During the development of this pedagogical proposal, we noticed

that pre-service teachers highlighted some characteristics "good" teachers have. We relate this aspect to responsibility because by reflecting on how pre-service teachers want to be as future teachers, they analyze their decision-making skills. In the excerpts taken from the reflective essays and the discussions held in class, we noticed that pre-service teachers acknowledge that the role teachers play in the school environment impacts students' lives. (Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín, 2011, p.182)

Every period of time needs a reconfiguration and redefinition of the roles of the population, that is why, currently teachers and students as active social agents need to rethink and rebuild their role in society. As Piñeros Pedraza and Quintero Polo (2006) argue interactions among teachers and students "serve as the means to realize transformative pedagogy… these interactions are ways of fostering collaborative relations of power... These patterns effectively challenge and transform the ways in which schools have traditionally reproduced social and economical inequalities." (p.185). In the case of teachers, a role that transcends the emphasis on the cognitive, linguistic and non-social aspects of learning, that is, an instrumentalist approach. Rather, a role that aims to empower students. As found in the following quotes,

Teachers need to think about our role as teachers must go beyond teaching a class, for instance, we might become guides, facilitators, mediators as well as listeners, making our students feel that their voices are heard and are important to us, that they are human beings with the right to be wrong, and above all, that we are teachers and students who are learning to construct a new generation of ideals in regard to the kind of people we are forming in our society. As mentioned by Corson (2001), teachers need to redefine their roles in schools in order to determine their interactions among themselves, students, and communities. (Samacá, 2012, p.206)

71

As most students do not know about other possible political and economic systems, they do not usually question the existing political and economic order in Colombia. One could say that this political stance is not proper of a language teacher; however, teaching any subject, which means developing and following a curriculum, is an inherently political activity which forces the teacher either to adapt his/her teaching practice to his/her own convictions or to submit to someone else's agenda (Auerbach, 1995; Canagarajah, 2000). (Kern, 2017, p. 167)

Some of the results of the studies show that due to the instrumentalist approach that has been privileged for several years in Colombia, teachers may encounter difficulties in implementing a critical approach, since it requires a reinvention of the teaching and learning process. As the following study (Piñeros Pedraza & Quintero Polo, 2006) points out, it is a transformation process that requires dedication, effort and responsibility.

One aspect worth discussing further and that is related to our article is that the implementation of transformations by teachers is not free from despair and pain since teachers need to abandon the "comfort" of readymade answers and recipes in teaching in order to explore the "far-possible" of risking their own selves both as people and professionals. (p.184)

Although there may be difficulties in the implementation of a critical approach in teaching in Colombia, the consequences of the changes may be positive for social transformation. As argued by Piñeros and Quintero (2006) teachers need to go beyond reflexivity and awareness-raising to achieve change in practice and critical consciousness.

We truly believe that there is change when educators come to question and are able to change beliefs and habits. For us, the meaning of educational change relates to change in

practice. To accomplish this, change needs to be multidimensional (Fullan, 2001). That is to say, it is viewed from different perspectives. Educators can think of changes in materials, changes in approaches, methodologies, and styles of teaching as well as changes in beliefs, as in the theories that lead teaching practices. All these aspects are necessary to achieve change in practice or effective change. (p.185)

According to the analysis of the studies, the teacher must promote that what is learned and experienced in school contributes to the construction of a community that advocates justice, equity and respect. Consequently, teachers and students are co-builders of knowledge and meaning that break down systems of oppression. Some of the questions teachers should start asking are: What kind of politics do I privilege in my teaching? What literacy practices do I favor in my teaching? How do I give voice and vote to my students? How do I connect the contents/knowledge and learning experiences of my students with their reality? How do I allow my students to analyze, criticize, and propose changes in what is stated in class? How do I create spaces for feedback, from student to student, from student to teacher, and from teacher to student? How do I present social ideas (as definite truths or structures)? How do I challenge my students to propose transformations?

Students Voices: Language and Power. As stated before, language is not neutral and it can be used as a tool for social power. Esteban (2015) supports this idea by arguing that "Language for the participants cannot be perceived as a simple tool to communicate something. For them language has power. They analyzed that by means of language cultures have been dominated and nowadays, language has been used to control people." (p.33). Consequently, when pre-service teachers recognize the power of language, they not only identify the purposes behind texts and discourses, but also develop a critical consciousness of the power their language

73

has over students and other people they influence. This helps pre-service teachers to develop a

critical, fair, respectful, ethical and reflective language according to each context. In the findings,

Esteban (2015) reaffirms the importance of giving voice to students by stating that,

> All the data collected allowed me to identify that involving students into different
>
> activities, as the dialectical process they followed, gave me also the possibility of
>
> listening to my students voices regarding their positions towards socio cultural issues that
>
> are implicit in the texts we had for our classes. (p.38)

Pre-service teacher education in Colombia (a country that reflects social injustice,

poverty and violence) has a great social responsibility in giving a voice to those who have been

silenced, that is, creating spaces, platforms or means by which political-social recognition is

provided and community work is done for the rights of all. One of the studies (Hernández

Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020) analyzed gives importance to the communities to which pre-

service teachers belong, who have the opportunity to be their spokespersons in order to discuss,

analyze and propose changes to different issues and problems that they experience. The

following excerpts stated the relevance of the community issues in education.

> Voicing the Untold Necessities of the Community. This moment illustrates the sts'
>
> necessity to voice what others simply cannot, as the result of segregation. Inevitably,
>
> interaction with the communities led students to question the way different members of
>
> their community have been blatantly silenced due to their life conditions. (Hernández
>
> Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020, p.118).
>
> One of the most common features of pre-service teachers' reflections was related to the
>
> idea of taking into account students' context and the school community in the decision
>
> making process at school. Another relevant characteristic in students' reflections was

their awareness of the fact that the educational policies of a country have a high impact on school curriculum and also the recognition that these policies are not frequently on the side of the students. For this reason, many pre-service teachers will eventually need to fight against unjust policies to improve students' learning opportunities in school.

(Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín, 2011, p.187)

The role of the teachers as researchers is an important characteristic of the critical teachers as they continuously investigate what is happening in their educational context. That is why, "critical researchers and teachers would have to re-assess their role as mere complainants to engage as public intellectuals who become agents of change in their corresponding spheres of influence" (Granados-Beltrán, 2018, p.187). When teachers investigate, they give voice to the phenomenon investigated, tells a story or explores a situation in order to be understood, analyzed and possibly transformed. According to this, Granados-Beltrán (2018), based on the dimensions of coloniality, proposes a more just and horizontal relationship between researcher and researched.

> Based on the dimensions of coloniality—coloniality of being, coloniality of knowledge, and coloniality of power—this section suggests possible initiatives for reinvigorating critical ELT research in Colombian undergraduate contexts. The dimension of coloniality of being could be addressed by creating more horizontal relations between the researcher and researched so that the latter are not deemed unilaterally flawed. Corona Berkin and Kaltmeier (2012) explain that horizontality is an alternative mode of research that intends to reduce power differentials between the researcher and researched. It aims to understand the Other as a subject under construction since the researcher and researched are constituted in one another and the voice of the Other is determined by the

75

one who listens to it in a dialogic context of speaker and listener. This implies that researchers should become aware of their positionalities (Madison, 2012) and how they could be influenced by the constellations of power; that is, how their position is marked by the dynamics and logic of the academic field, which has a high symbolic power and is deeply informed by the coloniality of knowledge (Kaltmeier, 2012). In this way, neither students nor teachers would be ascribed problems that they may not have, but through a horizontal dialogue, researchers would be able to comprehend and transmit participants' histories and voices. (pp. 187-188).

Another study (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019) that highlights the relevance of giving voice to pre-service teachers and, therefore, that they give their students a voice, shows that by listening to students and carrying out an awareness-raising and empowerment process, students "have the opportunity to engage in a dialogical relationship that may facilitate them to unveil power messages and raise awareness in such a way that they are empowered to question and disrupt oppressive structures" (p.95).

Another methodology (Kern, 2017) that was presented to empower students in critical discussions that connect their realities with the world was the German seminar, giving the opportunity to pre-service teachers to develop autonomy in their decision-making process about their learning. Learner autonomy is an issue that appears as a pattern in some studies (Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020; Kern, 2017) related to critical literacy practices and reflexivity. When pre-service teacher programs foster autonomy and reflexivity, these processes could promote critical development of agency and critical consciousness in the future teachers. As stated in one of Kern (2017) findings,

when students are invited to learn in a dialogical way that fosters their autonomy, they feel they can express themselves freely, without thinking about a grade. They can then relate historical events and processes to their own reality, thus obtaining references for social transformation and gaining a less alienated comprehension of the world surrounding them, which constitute two of the objectives of critical pedagogy. (p. 168)

Giving a voice to pre-service teachers and students is a pattern that appears in all the analyzed studies as a key to generating critical literacy practices. The voice (language, vote, recognition) is a tool that allows us to show others reality, recognize other unthinkable truths, fight for a more just world, express diversity from different perspectives, and finally, build a dialectic communication with the other where there is no oppressive or hierarchical relationship. When both students and teachers have a voice in the learning process , they both are empowered to transform their reality. This idea is supported by Piñeros Pedraza and Quintero Polo (2006) when they argue that,

Equality empowers people, and that power and hope foster motivation. Motivated people, in turn, are involved and this helps people learn. Then, this motivation together with learning and empowerment increases teachers' morale and interest in the profession. Inspiring classrooms can also encourage both learners and teachers to see themselves as intellectuals who critically see the world and struggle against crisis, thus, improving the school quality life. It clearly shows how influenced education is by determining factors, which are economics, politics, community life, and literacy. (p. 184)

This means that students and teachers can become intellectuals of their reality by recognizing the dynamics of oppression and fighting for social justice. They begin to use their language as a tool of power not to support or reinforce the relationships between oppressor and

oppressed. But to have a voice, make other realities known, sensitize others to reality, propose changes that allow maintaining equitable and respectful relationships.

The following parallel (see Table 4) summarizes different aspects found in the analysis of the studies, that shows the differences between a traditional approach and a socio-critical approach to education. The parallel includes aspects such as language, the classroom, texts/discourses, teacher and student role, and the conception of the teaching process.

Table 4

Parallel: Traditional vs. Socio-Critical Approach to Education

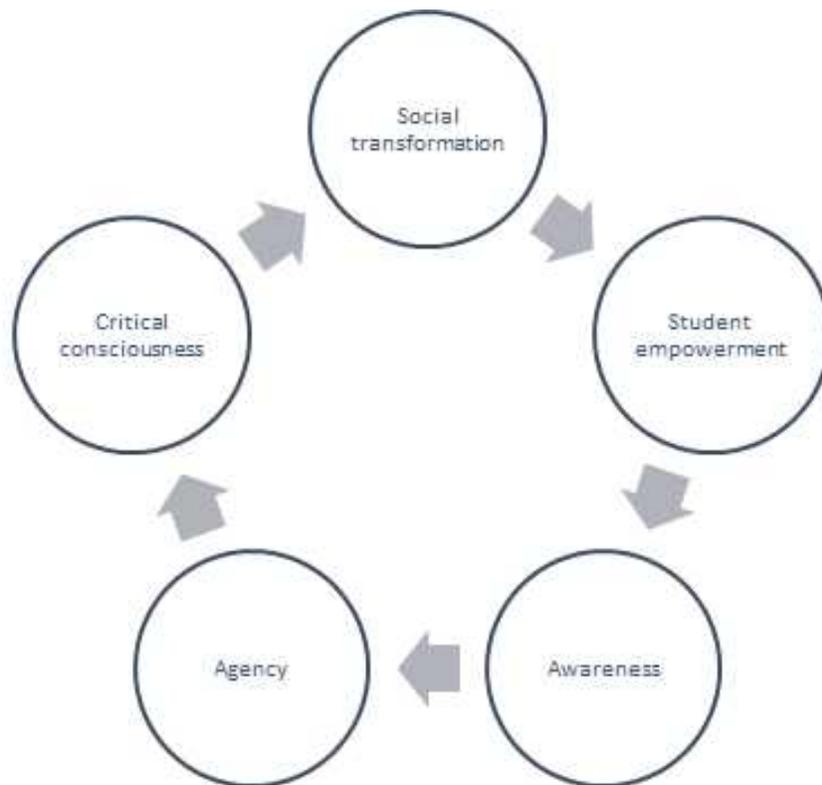| **Traditional Approach**	**Socio-Critical Approach**
Language is a means of communication and it is neutral.	Language constructs reality and communication, it changes according to the context and it is never neutral.
The classroom is a space to reproduce and represent power dynamics.	The classroom is a space to disrupt hierarchies and to question the status quo.
Texts/discourses are neutral, they represent the reality. In the meaning-making process the written text and alphabetic writing are privileged.	Texts/discourses are used from a specific perspective and with pre-established intentions and purposes. They are control and domination tools. In the meaning-making process the text can be multimodal, that is, it can be made up of movement, color, sound, images, among other resources.
The teachers are a transmitter of	The teachers foster reflexivity and critical thinking;

knowledge and content. They focus on teaching the linguistic and cognitive aspects of the language.	they create spaces to critique, analyze and transform the reality. They connect the socio-cultural and political context of their students with the classes.
The students repeat the content taught by the teacher. They learn by rote and do not develop reflective thinking, problem solving and decision making skills. They have a passive role in the learning process.	The students have a participatory and active role. They are committed to understanding and transforming their reality. They interrogate and analyze the ideas, values, and contents that teachers and texts present them.
Teaching as a hierarchical representation of society. It is based on authoritarianism and discipline. It is a teacher-centered approach.	Teaching as a political act, which aims at emancipation and social transformation. It is a student-centered approach.

The Need for a Critical Approach in Language Education in Colombia

A critical educational approach is proposed as a key step for transforming power discourses and ideologies in Colombia. Based on the analysis of the different studies, this meta-analysis proposes the following conceptual framework around the theory and pedagogy of critical literacy. This conceptual framework works as a pedagogical proposal whose objective is social transformation through education from a socio-critical approach. After the diagram each concept (understood as a step) will be explained.

Figure 3

Cycle for Social Transformation

This meta-analysis proposes this framework as a cycle that Colombian education, from a socio-critical approach, should start following in order to achieve social transformation and contribute to the construction of a fairer and more equitable country, based on critical theory and critical pedagogy. This cycle is a way to think about the social transformation as a process rather than a concept, as stated by Braidotti (2002) "the challenge lies in thinking about processes, rather than concepts" (p. 1). A process that does not propose an end, on the contrary, a continuous review of relationships, situations, contradictions, and hierarchies.

Student Empowerment. This is the first step. It consists in opening spaces, inside and outside the classroom, to discuss, critique, analyze and evaluate the socio-cultural and political realities of the students and their communities. When students have the opportunity to talk about the situations that affect them, they begin to understand how they can be part of the change. The

empowerment of students works as a first step for them to identify the power they have as social beings and begin to reveal the dynamics of power, and the way in which the system has been structured, that is, the way everything works in economic, political, and social terms. One of the purposes of education, according to a critical approach, should be to empower students so that they can be free as their thoughts, speeches, decisions and actions are based on a knowledge and recognition of reality through multiple angles, perspectives, and approaches. Then, empowering oneself means recognizing potentialities and developing them in such a way that in the process there is justice, equity and respect for others and for oneself.

Awareness. The second step is awareness-raising about the different contradictions that exist in daily life and how they affect the development of each person's potential. When students recognize the power they have as agents of change, it is important to develop awareness of the different issues in which social injustice is experienced, such as poverty, oppression, inequality, and the different forms of discrimination: sexual, class, linguistic, gender, religious, and ethnic. This step is related to reflection and sensitization, at this stage it is not intended that the person makes decisions or carries out actions of change. On the contrary, it is the recognition of: What is happening in reality? What is the truth? How is reality represented and by whom? What interests are behind truth, knowledge and discourses/texts? How do discourses/texts position us? What are the purposes of discourses/texts? How is the information used? In this step, people could begin to recognize their own position in reality, as well as identify according to their context and possibilities their own identity, how it has been constructed, and what are the implications of this for their life.

Agency. When what students learn matters in their lives and a critical curriculum is created that includes what happens in students' lives, the next step is to develop ideas for how to

take on agency. When we talk about agency we talk about how to transform reality, what decisions to make and what actions to take. Agency is the knowledge that one has of oneself and of the possibilities of acting in his/her real context. In this sense, the development of agency can be generated from making an informed decision about the dynamics of oppression, power and dominance; as well as developing a critical thinking skill that provokes acting ethically. Some of the questions that could be asked during this stage are: Since I already recognize my reality and my identity in it, how can I change what affects me in a negative way? What conversations can I create to help others raise awareness of reality? How can I engage in the practice of democratic citizenship? What ethical decisions should I make in each situation? How can I stop representing and reproducing the dynamics of power and control over those around me?

Critical Consciousness. This is a step that goes beyond understanding that there are people who receive privilege and there are people who are marginalized based on their identity, to propose ways of acting that challenge social and political contradictions and generate social change. This concept is the integration of the notion conscientização from Freire and critical literacy theory (Mora, 2017; Willis, et al., 2008). It is also related to the creation of tools that allow students to participate in conversations on social, cultural and political issues. A critical consciousness allows students to understand and critique abstract categories or ideas such as ideologies of power, oppressor/oppressed, text/discourse as a tool of power, reading and writing as processes that go beyond the traditional and alphabetic form, the position of the subaltern, among other categories. As this stage is more related with action, the meaning-making process is one of the tools students and teachers have to develop ways to fight against injustices. The process of meaning-making could occur through graffiti, tattoos, videos, blogs, among other platforms that serve as means of expression. In this sense, the student could start helping in the

creation of his reality. Some of the consequences that are expected when different individuals have developed a critical consciousness of their environment and their own identity, is the construction of new laws, procedures, rules and policies that allow breaking existing hierarchies, affecting the history, leaving the comfort zone and questioning the status quo. A conscious critical education in Colombia would be an educational proposal that would have as its objective the development of a critical consciousness that allows to think and create a new just reality in social, cultural, political and economic terms.

Social Transformation. As the butterfly effect shows, small actions can make big changes, and even small changes can go a long way for some people depending on the context. Education is a path, a way of interpreting and validating life. For this reason, it is so important to direct education towards individual and collective transformation, as a form of empowerment that allows developing the potential of each human being, a form of liberation and justice aligned with the dignity that we have only for the fact of being born and existing. Social transformation is based on constant reflection, it is a nonstop process. This is not the end of the process, because there will always be something else to understand, critique, and emancipate. It could take a long time and effort to cover all marginalized groups, and the idea is not to make the marginalized become the oppressors or dominant groups, but to break this way of inhabiting the world, it is a continuous process of reviewing that implicates consensus among the critical community members. Social transformation as an objective is a way of continuous improvement, that is, of a non-stopping work towards justice. By contextualizing each situation, there are several ways to fight for this transformation so that the school is truly integrated into reality and society. Social transformation is a goal that could be achieved through critical thinking, constant reflexivity, analysis, and a constant review of relationships and situations that allows promoting justice,

equity, equal dialogue, creating positions from which everyone has a voice, developing self-affirmation, an ethical performance and finally, achieving freedom.

In conclusion, the analysis proposed critical literacy as an approach for second language education in Colombia to disrupt the current power hierarchies and unjust relationships that exist in the country. Nonetheless, the results show that most of the pre-service teachers are "unaware of the social role language teaching should play." (Gutiérrez, 2015, p.189). For this reason, it is necessary for language teacher preparation programs to promote different perspectives and approaches that not only give importance to linguistic, grammatical and instrumentalist aspects of the language, but also recognize socio-cultural and political aspects of it. Gutiérrez (2015) supports this argument by saying that "teacher preparation programs are still promoting a view of language teaching focused on skill development as opposed to a view of it as a social and cultural practice." (p.189).

Chapter Five

Discussing the Findings, Implications, and Future Directions about Critical

Literacy in Pre-Service Teacher Education in Colombia

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the meta-analysis in relation with the

literature review and the research question in order to explain the implications of this study in the

field of second language teaching in Colombia. The discussion is divided into the categories that

oriented this meta-analysis that show the emerging concepts in the country about critical literacy

and the discussions that Colombian authors have developed around language use in relation to

social justice and the creation of more equitable frameworks for language learning and teaching

in Colombia. Finally, I will discuss some future directions in the field of pre-service teacher

education in Colombia.

The research question that guided this meta-analysis: What critical literacy conceptions

and methodologies are reported by qualitative studies investigating pre-service teacher education

in Colombia? is answered in the following categories, which allow us to understand how

Colombian scholars and practitioners have begun to create an extended socio-critical framework

that discusses the importance of social issues in relation to language learning and teaching

processes, as well as how languages should work as empowerment tools in the community to

promote social justice.

Critical Literacy in our Local Contexts

One of the local conceptions about critical literacy in the country conceives literacy as a

vehicle for social transformation, as a tool that enables students to go beyond knowledge to

connect it with their own experiences, and to be able to propose solutions or transformations that lead to a fairer life. Literacy as a social practice is a tool to fight injustices, challenge domination, strive for the common good, have a civic and political commitment, and build community based on the concepts of justice, equality, and respect. Correspondingly, the results of the studies endorse the importance that students question all the texts and situations in their daily lives. Thus, "individuals become critically conscious about their own position in these realities and their capabilities to make positive changes, while taking into account the interests of different social classes and backgrounds" (Abednia & Izadinia, 2012, p. 2). This process refers to conscientização (Freire, 1973) in which students could develop a critical consciousness of the world around the textual creation and its relationship with their lives.

Furthermore, the studies demonstrated that teachers' beliefs influence their teaching practice (Dominguez, 2019; Esteban, 2015; Gutiérrez, 2015), for this reason, pre-service teacher education is responsible for offering different approaches in their degrees, which allow the knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts of pre-service teachers to transcend the traditional approach to education and to develop critical literacy skills that, later, allow teachers to guide their students in the development of these skills. That is, to be able to read, analyze, question and understand the world from each text/discourse that shapes and re-creates it.

The analysis show that one way for pre-service teachers to create critical literacy practices is to understand the meaning-making process (Esteban, 2015; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015) as a tool for teachers and students to comprehend and to interact with texts and to propose social action. Pre-service teachers need to think and create ways to connect the realities of the country, and the specific context of their students with classroom learning. Allowing students to become spokespersons for their communities

(Dominguez, 2019; Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020), creators of content (physical or virtual) that denounces the social injustices they experience and consider solutions or ways to advance in the creation of a more just world. When students become aware of the different forms of marginalization and power relations, they can make informed and ethical decisions about their role in society. Then, they can stop defending, sustaining, supporting and accepting those power relationships.

Considering that critical literacy and critical pedagogy overlaps, that is, there is an intersection between these concepts, some studies (Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo, 2014; Kern, 2017; Piñeros Pedraza & Quintero Polo, 2006; Samacá, 2012) demonstrated that the principles of critical pedagogy related to language teaching practice should be taken into account in pre-service teacher education in Colombia since these open the possibility of bringing up real issues and social problems to the classroom, therefore, they discuss local communities' situations and real world topics such as gender, class, race, language, ethnicity, inequality, oppression, and injustice (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Hence, critical theory for classroom practice (Aguirre Morales & Ramos Holguín, 2011; Granados-Beltrán, 2018) was another perspective that some studies discussed as a tool to empower students to be active participants of the practices in which they are involved; thus, the processes of reading and writing are tools that they can use for their needs and interests, then, these are significant for their lives. The findings suggested that applying a critical approach can generate individual and group transformation, in the way in which people start having consciousness of their reality and of the world they inhabit.

As stated by Samacá (2012) critical pedagogy as well as awareness-raising practices have a great importance in education today, especially in language teacher preparation programs in

Colombia, as a way for pre-service teachers to rethink language classrooms and to lead social transformation. This idea is connected with other authors (Ko, 2013; Vasquez, 2014) when they discuss the importance of introducing critical literacy in the classrooms, hence, opening opportunities to re-analyze and re-define classrooms. Accordingly, the aim is to create a dialogue and balance between the curriculum and critical literacy practices.

Some of the results of the studies (Kern, 2017; Piñeros Pedraza & Quintero Polo, 2006) corroborated the idea that teaching is a political act. In accordance, Bacon (2017) argued that "The idea that education is politics… lies at the heart of critical pedagogy… critical pedagogy theorists advocate the development of critical consciousness toward education's role in reproducing or disrupting social power hierarchies" (p.3). Furthermore, critical literacy entitles people to be active politically, have a democratic perspective to link socio-political concerns with language classes in order to commit to a more reflective posture. This perspective of education will permit both students and teachers to review and analyze the ethical and political aspects of the educational practice.

Furthermore, this meta-analysis extends in accordance with Hayik´s (2011) idea that "Merely integrating materials with social justice issues into the curriculum does not make it critical. An in-depth interrogation of real-life issues is required for a more critical classroom." (p. 97). In this way, it established the importance of connecting students not only with general social problems, but with those with which students are affected. Those matters are related to the culture and politics of the contexts in which students operate. Then students will identify how the politics, ideologies and values presented in texts could affect them, thus, they would be able to propose and generate changes in their daily decisions and choices.

Critical Education as a Form of Emancipation

88

Critical literacy aims to identify, analyze, criticize, understand and transform the particular forms of marginalization which encompasses the understanding of the dynamics of oppression (Bacon, 2015). In this regard, the findings show how critical literacy is a way to promote social justice inside and outside the classroom where the teacher develops a more democratic and inclusive perspective in his teaching, as Shor & Freire (1987) affirm, the teacher will have to reflect on the following "This is a great discovery, education is politics! When a teacher discovers that he or she is a politician, too, the teacher has to ask, what kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom am I being a teacher?" (p. 46).

According to the role of teachers in critical literacy practices, the findings of this meta-analysis support the idea that teachers will not only teach students to read and write, or about specific knowledge, but they will also teach them the worlds behind the texts, the intentions, purposes, and agendas hidden in them. That is why, teachers need to "become courageous in our commitment to defend subordinated student populations… and equip them with critical transformative tools" (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 120). Consequently, students will be able to make different decisions based on multiple points of view, understanding in depth the relationship between what they have learned and their own lives.

Critical literacy "position teachers and learners as co-constructors of knowledge, analyzing and producing texts toward exposing, deconstructing, and disrupting systems of oppression" (Bacon, 2017, p.2). In accordance with this statement, some results of the studies (Dominguez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015; Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020) corroborate the idea that critical literacy in language teaching promotes social justice, a term that is based on criticism of current societies, such as working class, non-heterosexuals, marginalized people, women, ethnic minorities, among others (Crookes, 2012). Hence, this could help the students

analyze "how different identities and representations are constructed through language and thus become independent thinkers" (Ko, 2013, p.101).

Echeverri Sucerquia and Pérez Restrepo (2014) also reflect about the negotiation of power relations between professors in the academic field in order to understand theory individually and collectively, that is, a reflection of how professors, teachers and pre-service teachers must develop awareness of their positions and identities in society, so their actions would have an impact in the co-creation of the citizens and political actors, that is, the students. It is relevant to open spaces in pre-service teacher education to discuss different perspectives on language education and processes of professional development. This argument also supports Freire's point about how education can empower or domesticate teachers and students, and how social justice and freedom must be the final objectives of the society.

Another pattern found in the results of the studies is related to the concept of critical praxis described by Freire (1985) which integrate action and reflection in order to make a difference in the world and transform it. Most of the studies (Dominguez, 2019; Esteban, 2015; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015; Hernández Varona & Gutiérrez Álvarez, 2020) refer to the importance of putting into practice what has been learned about critical literacy, in other words, pre-service teachers had the possibility of preparing critical lessons. This finding is relevant for the Colombian educational context because it shows that the emphasis on theory is being transcended to apply the concepts in practice and, therefore, understand critical literacy as a form of emancipating students, teachers and their communities.

In conclusion, the studies understand that critical literacy works as a form of emancipation because it helps people to transform their reality. It refers to the ability to read texts and question the working ideologies that are present or not in them. This ability is not only

about recognizing reality and its consequences but is focused on transcending the current situation to promote changes. According to the analysis, this transformation can occur from educational spaces, allowing teachers, students and the community to work together to break the power relations that create social injustice. When each individual is aware about their role in society, their identity and their actions, they can make decisions that help them not to support or reinforce the structures of domination and power, on the contrary, to promote justice in their daily lives.

The Need for a Critical Approach in Language Education in Colombia

The results corroborate what other Colombian scholars have argued about the need for a critical approach to language education in the country (Mora, 2014, 2016; Mora et al., 2021; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019a, b). This evidence shows that pre-service teacher education needs to prepare students to learn how to live in the world according to its demands, that is, where each learning is significant and practical for their lives. For this reason, there is a need to orient the teaching process more towards the connection between language classes with the cultural, social and political context in which the students operate, integrating skills such as collaboration, critical thinking/problem solving, creativity, social and cultural awareness. Thus, it is not only important to bear in mind global demands and skills, but also the specific characteristics, needs and interests of the local context of the educational practice.

All the studies analyzed make a call for the importance of reviewing other critical and social approaches to understand language use, literacy development, learning and teaching processes according to the characteristics of the Colombian context. Accordingly, Granados-Beltrán (2018) argues that "The tenets for updated critical research by Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) served as the foundation for exploring Colombian ELT research in the BA programs" (p.

189). As an opportunity to understand the power relations and to problematize hegemonic ideologies presented in these contexts. He continues the discussion by stating that,

> ELT research both at the undergraduate and graduate level in Colombia could become a
> fertile terrain for both critical education and inquiry which goes beyond the instrumental
> nature of the foreign language, to rethink it as a means to comprehend other people and
> contexts as well as the local ones. (p.187)

According to Abednia and Izadinia (2012) a critical approach to education will "consider education to be in constant interaction with social, cultural, political, and economic realities. They believe that education systems, on the one hand, are highly influenced by the social structures and, on the other hand, can contribute to the improvement of the status quo." (p.1). Consequently, this idea agrees with some results from the studies (Esteban, 2015; Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015) that recognize that education cannot be neutral and should become a tool for building a just society. Furthermore, they conceive the text as a political, moral and ideological tool that constitutes power relations. In this sense, it is fundamental to take into account the interpretation and analysis that the reader carries out bearing in mind the socio-cultural and political context and the consequences that it could bring to real life.

As evidenced in the results, some studies (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Gutiérrez, 2015) agree that the application of a critical approach in language teaching in Colombia is a process in which resistance, confusions and difficulties may arise, as it requires more time from teachers in terms of planning classes, a balance that must be generated between the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the students, the interests of the parents in relation to learning

English, among others. Therefore, it is a process that can take a considerable time to overcome the limitations that arise according to each specific context.

Despite the difficulties found in the studies, they reconfirm the need for an educational approach that allows understanding the social aspects of language and that gives them priority and importance, in this way, English or other languages will be tools for reading, understanding, analyzing, and questioning the texts that create the world, the relationships that are established in it, and people' identities. Additionally, the studies showed that the role of the teacher as a guide and mediator in the development of critical literacy practices allows to overcome some of the concerns, difficulties and limitations, since the teacher is in charge of providing clarity regarding the objectives of the activities, the time and results thereof.

Analysis supported that when pre-service teachers understand the theoretical and practical aspects of critical literacy, they recognize the importance of developing a critical consciousness that allows them to integrate reflection with action in their classes, empower their students and contribute to social transformation, that is, the construction of a world characterized by justice, respect, and equity. However, to change the approach in language education in Colombia, it is necessary, as stated by Gómez Jiménez and Gutiérrez (2019), that the roles of teachers and students be reconfigured according to the needs of the current reality. In their words,

> Finally, if higher education institutions and policy makers aim at educating citizens who
> are social and change agents, then the curriculum should reconsider and transform the
> roles that teachers and learners have traditionally adopted in the classroom. If such
> transformation occurs, more opportunities for students to construct knowledge from their
> experiences as well as unveil and question power messages infused in our society are

provided. To achieve this, language teachers should be given the time and support to explore and incorporate critical perspectives into language teaching. As a result, teachers will be more empowered and more aware that they too have the right and the responsibility to make decisions in curriculum construction. (p.103)

The results show that for pre-service teachers to develop critical literacy practices with their students, it is necessary that they first have the opportunity to understand the different aspects that are part of a critical reading of texts and the world, especially, of their teaching practices. In other words, to become conscious of the ideologies that illuminate their own teaching. Dominguez (2019) supports this idea by arguing that

For instance, teacher education programs should work along with experienced researchers and educators to share knowledge and experiences through workshops or presentations. This is one way in which teachers of teachers could engage in deconstructing media texts critically. Besides, English teacher education programs should facilitate the conditions for teachers to join efforts in designing courses, units and lessons, and even to conduct research aiming at developing students' critical awareness of media. (pp.48-49)

In order for language teachers to apply a critical approach to teaching, it is necessary that they first question the way in which they have learned themselves, their way of thinking, acting and inhabiting the world. In other words, pre-service teachers need spaces in which they can question, criticize, understand from different perspectives and analyze the pedagogical practices in which they are both students and teachers. Accordingly, McLaren (2002) states that

The main question for teachers attempting to become aware of the ideologies that inform their own teaching is: How have certain pedagogical practices become so habitual or

natural in school settings that teachers accept them as normal, unproblematic, and expected? How often, for instance, do teachers question school practices such as tracking, ability grouping, competitive grading, teacher-centered pedagogical approaches, and the use of rewards and punishments as control devices? The point here is to understand that these practices are not carved in stone; but are, in reality, socially constructed... To what extent do such pedagogical practices serve to empower the student, and to what extent do they work as forms of social control that support, stabilize, and legitimate the role of the teacher as a moral gatekeeper of the state? what are the functions and effects of the systematic impositions of ideological perspectives on classroom teaching practices?... How do the dominant ideological practices of teachers help to structure the subjectivities of students? What are the possible consequences of this, for good and for ill? (p.82)

When education aims at social transformation and the development of a critical consciousness in the different educational actors, tools are created to transform the injustices and inequities of the country into opportunities to build a community based on social justice. This is why critical literacy must be conceived in our country as a social imperative (Mora, 2014; Mora, et al., 2021), that is, not a transitory issue but a fundamental one that allows us to understand and analyze all the discourses and ideologies that build the educational reality.

A critical approach to language education in Colombia will conceive both teachers and students as learners, that is, they both have to be cognitive subjects (Shor & Freire, 1987), this will enable them to read and analyze their world from a critical consciousness approach and create possibilities to change the injustices in which both participate consciously or unconsciously. As stated by Samacá (2012) there is a need

to create an environment that helps pre-service and in-service teachers both understand and reflect upon our roles as society's transformers and generators of change. When you can identify the sources of power, recognize your own position in relation to power, and understand the political nature of what you learn, you can develop your own social actions. (p. 205)

Accordingly, teachers must review knowledge to understand how the world of students has been constructed, what are the current conditions in which they live and also understand how knowledge helps to marginalize particular perspectives on the world. This finding presented a correlation with the ideas of McLaren (2002) about the importance of questioning the way knowledge helps to structure and reinforce stereotypes, power relationships and ideologies in education. This would allow us to understand that knowledge is built by society and mediated by culture, therefore, it tends to marginalize some and privilege others.

Correspondingly, Granados-Beltrán (2018) affirms, based on the experience and appreciation of some Colombian professors (the professors interviewed come from different cities in the country) about future teachers research, that it is necessary for pre-service teachers to investigate issues related to the influences of social and cultural conditions on language learning. In this way, he argues for the need to transcend what professors call 'common research topics' such as "use of songs to foster oral production, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, or skills integration" (p.186) as research topics of BA programs. He also states that formative research at the undergraduate level needs that pre-service teachers start "trying to comprehend participants' behaviours, contexts, needs, histories, and voices." (p.187). This study speaks about the need to investigate the influences and impacts that pre-service teachers' studies have in their real

teaching contexts, in order to understand if their research interests and the results of their

research can be observed in their daily practices.

Implications

The findings of this meta-analysis constitute a reflection about the ways we have to

transform and improve learning and teaching practices in the Colombian education system.

Taking into account the current educational needs and the discussions that Colombian authors

have developed around language use in relation to social justice and the creation of more

equitable frameworks for language learning and teaching in Colombia, there is a need to redefine

our teaching practices generating spaces in pre-service teacher education programs where

teachers can problematize their reality and read the world through critical literacy as an

analytical tool that allows identifying what is explicit and implicit in the different texts.

One of the implications is the redefinition of teacher and student roles and the

relationship that exists between these social actors. By identifying them as agents of change,

capable of transforming their reality and generating an impact in their communities, teachers and

students consolidate themselves as collaborators, where both are part of a team that works for

social justice. The role of the teacher and the student must be in constant reflection and

questioning, which will allow for continuous improvement of educational practices.

The teacher must understand how pedagogical practices have been socially constructed

and, therefore, question how educational situations or practices have become natural since they

are accepted and validated as normal or expected. Their role should also reflect on how their

decisions and pedagogical practices in general help to empower students or, on the contrary, to

control them so that they cannot think for themselves and make informed and ethical decisions

that allow them to develop their full potential as a social being. In this regard, there is a need to

find the way to create consensus among the critical community members so they all have a voice and vote in the new social transformation. In the creation of new law, rules, processes, and ways of doing things, teachers have the role of preventing the oppressed from becoming the oppressors and guaranties a real social transformation instead of a simple position or role change or swap.

In terms of policy making, this meta-analysis presents a strong message to the Colombian Ministry of Education. This study calls on the need for a broader understanding of critical literacy practices in the context of pre-service teacher education. In addition, on the reflection of how a critical approach in the teaching of second languages can be developed in the Colombian context in order to develop a critical political consciousness in society. This presents a call for including critical literacy in pre-service teacher programs and in the school curriculum as a way to transcend the claim made by the national minister of education to include critical thinking in the school curriculum because it is not enough.

Another of the implications of this meta-analysis confirms the need to operate under a more comprehensive framework that has a vision of literacy, texts/discourses and roles of educational actors according to current practices and the needs of each context. Understanding literacy not as a particular skill, but as a concept that conceives reading and writing as complementary processes linked to the social construction of each community. The texts/discourses from a critical perspective of the relations of power, control and domination. The roles of educational actors (teachers, students, and the community) as agents of change, capable of transforming social reality and fighting for a more just and equitable society.

Limitations

One issue I would like to outline is the lack of detail given to the methodology part of each study. The analysis of the methodology part of this meta-analysis took into account data

collection procedures, data analysis procedures, the theoretical/conceptual framework, and the critical literacy conceptions according to the studies, in this part, I realized that the majority of studies described their methodological decisions in a generic way and some data about the participants and data analysis procedures were not found in their studies.

Another limitation that was also discussed by most of the studies is about the duration of the investigations, since they were short, that is, if they could have lasted longer and therefore, collected more data and extended the analysis of the same, the data found could have been further strengthened. This limitation also generates the need to develop more research that allows us to continue exploring the needs, challenges, impacts and consequences of the application of a critical approach in pre-service teacher education in Colombia.

Future directions

This meta-analysis suggests exploring the implications that a project about critical literacy as a tool to read Colombian educational policy could have on pre-service teachers beliefs, ideas, decisions, language learning and teaching processes, and literacy conceptions. This would aim to understand the contradictions of teachers' pedagogical practice and the ideologies that inform their practices in order to disrupt the power hierarchies that build and define language education in the local contexts.

Furthermore, there is a need for more research to create proposals for the curriculum of the pre-service teachers programs in Colombia to include a critical approach in second languages teaching and have different examples of critical theorizing in Colombian pre-service teacher education context. A proposal to understand how to implement critical literacy in the Colombian context and its significance within the larger social reality. This would help teachers and students

to continue making the hidden curriculum explicit and developing a critical consciousness of their practices.

It is important to point out that pre-service teachers are already challenging traditional and reductionist views of literacy, texts, and approaches to language education in Colombia. That is why more efforts, time and research are needed to continue understanding and defining the practices of learning and teaching languages from the discussions around social justice and language use in relation to social issues in our classrooms, then, the creation of more equitable frameworks for language learning and teaching.

This meta-analysis also shows the need for research about the contradictions that can be found in real life about racism, homophobia, and other discrimination forms, the reason for these situations according to the context, and the way these contradictions affect or have impacts on language education in the country. In this sense, the results arise the need for more research that gives a voice to those who have been silenced or have not been able to speak due to their position and identity in the community. Research that focuses on the voices and stories of underprivileged groups in Colombian society.

Furthermore, a possible area for further research could focus on understanding and analyzing what is the relationship between social class and knowledge taught in pre-service teacher programs. As well as answering the following questions: How does university knowledge reinforce stereotypes about women, minorities, and disadvantaged people? How is university knowledge used to reinforce ideologies of power and domination? How does university knowledge support unjust power relations among different groups in society?

Additionally, one of the findings favor what Mora et al., (2021) have argued about the need for more presence of BIPOC scholars in our local scholarship. In other words, it is

necessary to have more knowledge generated from the perspective of minorities, in our case of indigenous groups, women, Afro-Colombians, among others. A discourse on cultural literacy that recognizes its material and social influences and consequences in the way people live, and that contributes to the construction of critical conscious thinking subjects.

Conclusions

The field of second language teaching and learning and literacy in Colombia have experienced different changes during the last 15 years in which different educational perspectives have begun to be explored that transcend the focus on the linguistic and instrumentalist aspects of the language. Rather, some scholars, researchers and teachers have begun to re-examine and re-define their practices based on critical and social approaches that take into account the cultural and political characteristics of the language teaching process. According to the demands and characteristics of today's world, one of the tools and approaches that allow analyzing, understanding and transforming reality is critical literacy, which also requires a reconceptualization of the roles of teachers, students, communities and the curriculum in general where everyone works together to create an empowered society, with critical thinking, ethical and free acting.

This meta-analysis included peer-reviewed articles, theses and studies that addressed critical literacy directly as a topic of inquiry over the past 20 years. I conducted the study in the following steps: (a) literature search, (b) selection of eligible studies for meta-analysis, (c) developing and applying a coding scheme for meta-analysis, and (d) data analysis. For the analysis and synthesis of the data, I identified the eligible studies, I decided what was relevant for the purpose of the meta-analysis, I read in detail each study, I related all the studies looking

for similarities, differences, themes and categories, I translated the findings, and finally, I synthesized and expressed the final analysis.

In the findings part, I presented a framework (see Figure 2) that explains the concepts that appeared in a transversal way in most of the analyzed studies and the way they work in the local contexts. Also I presented the conceptions about critical literacy according to the discussions of Colombian scholars and practitioners. As part of the synthesis process, I presented a parallel (see Table 4) that shows the most salient characteristics of a traditional and a socio-critical approach to education. Furthermore, for the data analysis, I used the following categories: understanding the context of Colombia; critical education as a form of emancipation and three sub-categories: role of text/discourse in CL in Colombia, teacher role in CL in Colombia, and students voices: language and power. The last category: The need for a critical approach in language education in Colombia, in which I explained a cycle for social transformation (see Figure 3), made up of five steps: student empowerment, awareness, agency, critical consciousness, and social transformation.

The broad interest of this study was to review and re-analyze qualitative data of the different studies found about critical literacy in pre-service teacher education in the country to determine what are the conceptions about critical literacy and the methodologies reported by them. The findings of this meta-analysis are defining critical literacy as a reflective and analytical ability to read texts understanding working ideologies to then promote social justice and transformation. The findings showed the limitations and difficulties for applying a critical approach in second language teaching in Colombia due to our traditional vision of teaching and how Colombian scholars and practitioners suggest ideas to overcome these challenges. Critical

literacy in Colombia works as a tool to build equitable language practices and it aims for social transformation.

Final reflection: What did this study mean to me?

This study represents a personal and professional transformation in my life, which has confirmed the importance that research has in my teaching practices, since it generates the tools to understand and transform the learning and teaching processes for their continuous improvement. Before this study, I had different ideas about teaching because I did not focus on the socio-critical aspects of the language. Now, critical literacy is part of my pedagogical foundations and philosophy, allowing me to build more ethical and just relationships with my students and community, where we all share the role of learners, and we question the texts/discourses that the world presents to us.

Working on this meta-analysis was a challenge, not only because of the time when I had to do it where the global reality for covid-19 was difficult, but also because it was the first time that I had the opportunity to develop this type of analysis, which first meant learning from different academic sources as well as the help from my mentor on how to conduct this type of study. Then, I read and reviewed multiple times different meta-analyzes that allowed me to have a reference and an example to develop mine. In this way, I realized that a meta-analysis "can also become a helpful tool for researchers who may not have access to a site for fieldwork. It can be a space for reflexivity about how we are conducting research and provide new avenues for expanded research." (Ramírez, 2020b).

This study has helped me to better understand the current reality of my country, especially, in relation to the multiples social problems that we experience such as violence and poverty, as well as to recognize that my role as a language teacher is to create spaces that

empower students and build a community of practice that aims at social transformation and building a better world. Using languages as tools to discuss, analyze and question the texts that create and recreate reality. In this sense, contributing to the construction of free, empowered and critical beings. Finally, my beliefs and practices not only changed professionally, but also personally, this study has served as a foundation for different decisions I have made in raising my daughter, where my interests about her learning have changed. I also want her to develop the necessary skills to become an agent of change in her reality and a critical conscious human being.

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