

Textbooks Decontextualization within Bilingual Education in Colombia¹

Descontextualización de los libros de texto dentro de la educación bilingüe en Colombia

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Abstract

Studies about textbooks proposed by authors such as Savignon (1997, 2001); Tomlinson (2003); Núñez, Téllez, Catellanos and Ramos (2009); Ramos and Aguirre (2014), demonstrate that these do not always match the context where English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is being learned. As a consequence, learning English can become arduous and meaningless, i.e., non-natural settings are created to learn the language (Ordóñez, 2011), and textbooks do not prepare learners for real language use (Tomlinson, 2003). In Colombia, English textbooks are included as a means to support language learning under bilingualism policies. However, their authenticity and cultural content are not accurate within the national context. This article presents an overview of the concepts of bilingualism and bilingual education, followed by a discussion concerning the textbooks, as facilitators in

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learning a language. Some conclusions are also offered regarding the importance of using contextualized materials when learning EFL.

Key words: Textbooks, Context, English as a Foreign Language, Bilingualism Policies, Bilingualism, Bilingual Education, Materials.

Resumen

Estudios sobre libros de texto propuestos por autores tales como Savignon (1997, 2001), Tomlinson (2003); Núñez et al. (2009); Ramos y Aguirre (2014) demuestran que estos no siempre coinciden con el contexto donde la lengua extranjera está siendo aprendida. Como consecuencia, aprender inglés puede convertirse en una ardua tarea sin sentido, i.e., se crean ambientes no naturales para aprender la lengua (Ordóñez, 2011) y los libros no preparan a los aprendices para un uso real de la lengua (Tomlinson, 2003). En Colombia, los libros son incluidos como un medio para apoyar el aprendizaje de una lengua bajo políticas de bilingüismo. Sin embargo, su autenticidad y contenido cultural no son adecuados dentro del contexto nacional. Este artículo presenta una visión de los conceptos de bilingüismo y educación bilingüe, seguido de los libros de texto, como facilitadores en el aprendizaje de una lengua. Algunas conclusiones también son presentadas teniendo en cuenta la importancia de usar materiales contextualizados en el momento de aprender inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Libros de texto, contexto, Inglés como Lengua Extranjera, Políticas de bilingüismo, Bilingüismo, Educación bilingüe, Materiales.

Introduction

The importance that bilingualism has reached in the latest decades has had great impact on education. For instance, France, Sweden, South Africa, China, and Bolivia base their policies of educational improvement on it, because they are aware of the status of globalization, which aims to obtain better social, educational, labor, and economic conditions, and consequently, enhancing the quality of life of their citizens. Bilingualism is comprehended from several perspectives, nonetheless; a view of bilingual education has an in-depth examination in this paper. Bilingual education has been implemented throughout diverse policies that each country designs. In Colombia, for example, bilingual education policies are planned to teach English as a foreign language (FL). However, when implementing these policies, it is noticed that the materials used to do this lack appropriateness because they do not match the national context where the language is taught.

It is evident that in the rush and pressure to achieve those bilingual education policies goals to learn EFL, some countries borrow materials (textbooks) from some countries where this target language is the L1 (the US and the UK). These textbooks rely on the validity and the authenticity of the language and culture from those contexts. Nevertheless, the countries that are implementing the language learning policies do not take into

consideration the rich context or the environment of the specific place where EFL is taught. Namely, teachers and learners' needs and expectations are not contemplated within the materials to be used in the process of learning English. In order to somehow satisfy these concerns, authentic perspectives take place in different scenarios, i.e., the attempt of English teachers to develop their own materials/adapt the materials already existing.

In that sense, this paper provides an overview of the concepts of bilingualism, but more specifically bilingual education. Also, it shows current bilingual educational policies in Colombia. In addition, it enlightens diverse studies, up-to-date perspectives, and positions about the use of textbooks and the importance of the context where they are being implemented. At the end of the article, some conclusions are proposed in order to make people who participate in the educational field be aware of the importance of contextualized textbooks in the classrooms within bilingual education programs.

To begin with and bearing in mind the importance of textbooks within bilingual education, a concern emerges: are not Colombian real contexts and learners' needs relevant within textbooks when learning English as a foreign language? Well, the answer seems obvious but in real and current Colombian classrooms, most of us teachers, and government policies

apparently do not consider them essential. This may happen because the bilingual education policies care more about time than quality and meaningful learning. These policies have been designed to be implemented in specific periods of time; however, when they face reality it seems to take longer than they expected. For that reason, these bilingual policies have changed and been redesigned over time. It seems like the policies do not consider all the variables that are immersed in the process of implementing them.

Additionally, to this fact, an economic factor of that haste appears to be included in those bilingual policies. As the most important fact to achieve those policies is time, acquiring English textbooks became a fast process too. And publishing houses have taken advantage of it, evidently learning English is an excellent way of benefiting economically. For instance, with the “Colombia Bilingüe National Program,” they have captured a promising market. Namely, publishers are focused on economic incomes rather than language learning.

The point of this paper however is not to blame teachers, government bilingual policies or publishing houses, but to find a possible solution to this concern about textbooks decontextualization. In order to illustrate an answer to the previous issue, some researchers and research are illustrated in the following paragraphs.

In a foreign arena, Tomlinson (2003, p. 5), considers that “texts overprotect learners, deprive them of the opportunities for acquisition provided by rich texts and do not prepare them for the reality of language use, whereas authentic texts can provide exposure to language as it is typically used”. This scholar defends the idea that textbooks constrict the learner within certain patterns that do not allow him or her to go beyond what is offered in the textbook. As Prodromou (1988) states, “just because materials are authentic, there is no guarantee learners will find them interesting” (as cited in Harwood, 2013, pp. 5-6).

In Rossner (1988), Rubdy (2003), and Tomlinson’s perspective (2003), materials should be connected locally and globally with the context and the learner’s own life. Likewise, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) declares that it is “fundamentally important to define, clearly and explicitly, objectives which are at once worthwhile in terms of learner needs and realistic in terms of their characteristics and resources” (CEFR, p. 5). Celce-Murcia (2002) states, for example, that teaching English explicitly, but as a separate unit disconnected from content learning and social contexts, makes language learning seem inappropriate, unexciting, and absent of purpose.

In the Colombian context there is also evidence of the issue that is perceived. According to Núñez et al.

(2009), materials that are used to learn a language should be chosen and designed by all participants in order to facilitate their learning process. A critical analysis was conducted in a Colombian public school about the perceptions of the English textbook that the students were using. The results showed that real situations from Colombian life were not present. In other words, the content of the book was not contextualized; there was not a correlation with students' lives. One participant affirms that "the book shows an ideal of perfect life. People look fine; they live in modern cities, they use means of transportation that students do not and they are in places that they can only see in books, movies or internet" (Carvajal, 2012, p. 120).

Ordóñez (2011) also considers that materials used to learn a FL should bear in mind that the content that is developed within the language classroom, matches the reality of the learners:

these should correspond to real life communicative situations, actions, processes, and products. Authenticity for specific groups of students is further supported when performances are related to their contexts and interests, when the students themselves participate in decision-making about what to learn, what to do to learn, and how to do it and when communicating requires the use of different sources of information, knowledge from different disciplines and types, and interactions

with others. All this is what happens in the real world when one acts using or looking for real understanding of phenomena and events (p.150).

The latest perceptions let us think that something has to be done in order to diminish that foreign language teaching gap, i.e., textbooks that are being used to learn English do not match the context where English is being learned, because the context is definitely relevant to successfully achieving the planned goals of bilingual education in any context. To achieve this understanding, the theme review embraces a historical perspective to figure out where the textbooks acquire relevance from, i.e., bilingualism and bilingual education. Moreover, bilingual education policies in Colombia are mentioned too in order to revise how important materials/textbooks in the bilingual programs are. The next part focuses on materials/textbooks in-context use in the EFL setting.

Bilingualism and Bilingual Education

To understand bilingual education, first the term bilingual is clarified. Bilingualism is "open to a variety of descriptions, interpretations and definitions" (Hoffman, 1991, p. 14). Bilingualism is defined from sociolinguistics, sociology, geography, politics, education and social psychology. Weinreich (1968, p. 1), considers "the practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism, and the person involved,

bilingual” (as cited in Hoffman, 1991, p.15). Mackey (1970), sees bilingualism as the ability of one individual to use two or more languages. Grosjean (1985-1994), recognizes a bilingual as a person with “a unique linguistic profile”, (as cited in Baker, 2001, p. 7). To sum up, the term bilingualism will be understood as the use of two languages by an individual. In addition, different types of bilingualism influence the definition that this term receives, and it also depends on the policies aims of the specific context.

Regarding the different types of bilingualism, one person may be an individual bilingual (Luxembourg and Paraguay), or belong to societal bilingualism (Canada), or even belong to multilingual contexts (India, Belgium, Switzerland and Finland). Likewise, biological, neurological, psychological, or more general factors, i.e., age, context, relationship between sign and meaning, the order and consequence of bilingual language acquisition, proficiency, use or function, and attitudes (Hoffman, 1991) also shape a bilingual person. In Hoffman’s words (1991), bilingualism is a “multi-faceted phenomenon” (p. 14), and “all definitions are arbitrary to a greater or lesser extent” (p. 18). Namely, it does not exist as a fixed definition, but an approximation of it.

Based on Hoffman (1991), a person has to demonstrate certain variables to be considered a bilingual, such as language development, maintenance

and or loss of the first and second language, sequential relationships between L1 and L2, language competence, i.e., proficiency, functional aspects of language use, i.e., what, when and with whom the L1 and the L2 are used, linguistic features (code-switching, borrowing, and interference), attitudes towards L1 and L2, internal and external pressures, environmental circumstances that surround the bilingual, and biculturalism or the degree of familiarization with the culture of both languages.

In recent times several countries have included the concept of bilingualism in their policies. From the old continent to the new one, some national programs have been implemented. Just to mention some of them: Sweden, where an Immigration Act in 1954 was implemented in order to welcome immigrants to learn its language and its culture (Oppen, 1983). France, which shows how languages of unequal status can be placed on an equal footing in a school context (Helot, 2002). In South Africa, for example, additive bilingualism was implemented to introduce English as the language of access and power (Probyn, 2006). In addition, in Latin America bilingualism is evident too. For instance, in Bolivia, where indigenous or native languages (Quechua) are spoken by segments in different parts of the country, but the language (Spanish) used in politics and economics dominate their daily lives (Chiswick, Patrinos and Hurst, 2000).

Argentina creates *Bilingual Schools* in order to teach the content through two languages (Banfi and Day, 2004).

In Colombia for instance, and because of two transcendental events: the political opening and the recognition of the nation as multilingual and multicultural (De Mejía, Ordóñez and Fonseca, 2006b); Valencia (2005, p. 1) states that bilingualism refers to “exclusively Spanish/English bilingualism” (as cited in De Mejía, 2006b, p. 153). This statement agrees with the Ministry of Education (M.E.N) purpose, in its National Bilingual Program, which is to promote the use of English language by Colombian citizens to communicate effectively, based on international standards. In other words, for the Colombian government being bilingual means speaking Spanish and English. Those standards are framed under the CEFR for Languages, which “provides a common basis for the elaboration of language, syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe” (CEFR, 2001).

After a concise and short explanation of the term bilingualism, the paper moves into a narrower concept which is a small part of this broad concept, i.e., bilingual education. Bilingual education also relies on several multidisciplinary perspectives. Based on Baker (2002, p. 229), “Bilingual education is not just dual language policy, provision and classroom practice in schools. Bilingual education is also part of manifest and latent national or regional language

planning”. As the author mentions, bilingual education is a complex process that requires preparation and the aid of all participants in various settings. People immersed in a process of language education should take an active role in accomplishing such a goal. Another function of bilingual education is to promote language vitality through time and circumstances.

Four main categories in bilingual education are recognized: as language planning, as pedagogy, as politics, and as economics. The first category is based on the maintenance, revitalization, and reversal of the language. The second one, sees language as the means for transmitting the curriculum content, where both languages are developed and encourages biliteracy, cognitive benefits, self-esteem, curriculum achievement, security of identity, and economic advantages. The third one demonstrates that political ideologies are always present (national identity, power, dominance). The last group focuses on cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency of learning a language. It is said that the costs for bilingual education are almost the same as those for traditional programs (Baker, 2002). These categories are implicit in any bilingual program.

For Genesee (2004), bilingual education definition is the one adopted in programs for students who go to school speaking a majority societal language (English in Canada, or Japanese in Japan), and programs for students

who go to school speaking a minority language (Spanish in the U.S., or Hungarian in Slovakia). The first type of bilingual education is well known as “immersion.” The second type is recognized as bilingual education for minority language students, and it is evidenced where immigrants are present. This definition even if appears broad, favors an open-minded view of what bilingual education implies.

Bringing this concept into the national context, schools in Colombia that are perceived as the most successful, are the ones called bilinguals, where foreign models (Canadian immersion programs, and European and North American monolingual schools) are borrowed. Also “artificial environments” have to be created to communicate in the FL (Ordóñez, 2011, p. 148). This author considers that four actions are needed to use a FL; the presentation of the FL at early ages (preschool) or total immersion programs, the learning of diverse academic areas not only the FL, having native foreign language teachers in the classroom, and the obligation to speak the FL in and outside of classroom.

Additionally, based on De Mejía (2004), a fact is evident: English is the only foreign language considered in the Colombian government’s definition of bilingualism while bilingualism in internationally prestigious languages, such as Spanish–English, Spanish–French, and Spanish–German is considered worthy of investment of considerable sums of money, as it provides access to a highly ‘visible’, socially accepted form of bilingualism, leading to the

possibility of employment in the global marketplace, bilingualism in minority Amerindian or Creole languages leads, in most cases, to an ‘invisible’ form of bilingualism in which the native language is undervalued and associated with underdevelopment, poverty and backwardness (p. 382).

Based on that assumption, this paper focuses on English as the foreign language to be learned in Colombia. According to Zuluaga (1996), the FL in Colombia which claims more importance is English, because of its influence in the domains of education, business and tourism.

As it is confirmed, learning a foreign language in Colombia means learning English. For that reason, English textbooks become essential within Colombian bilingual programs, since they ease the process of policies implementation, and also because textbooks become the main resource teachers use in the language classroom. The following review shows what bilingual programs have been and are being implemented currently in the national territory, and it also presents how some of the bilingual programs have totally focused on the real context that textbooks should consider to achieve meaningful language learning.

Bilingual Educational Policies in Colombia.

In the pursuit of making Colombia a bilingual country, different programs have been recognized in the last two decades. They are condensed and succinctly presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Colombian Bilingual Programs.*

What?	When and who?	Objective?
The National Bilingual Program	2004-2019 Colombian Ministry of Education	To have citizens who are capable of communicating in English, in order to be able to insert the country within processes of universal communication, within the global economy and cultural openness, through [the adopting of] internationally comparable standards. ¹ (MEN 2006, p. 6)
Programa de Fortalecimiento del desarrollo de competencias en lengua extranjera	2007 Colombian Ministry of Education	To increase academic quality programs and to support teachers and students virtually. <i>*Implementation of the material Bunny Bonita</i>
Colombia, Very Well	2015-2025 Colombian Ministry of Education / President SENA / Colombian Ministry of tourism. ICFES	To use English as a tool to communicate worldwide and improve job opportunities.
Colombia Bilingüe	2014-2018 Colombian Ministry of Education	To move from 2% to 8% of pre-intermediate level (B1) in 2018.

These programs have had applications in the national territory and they have somehow done a great job in most of Colombia. However, it is recognized that these programs are not perfectly suited to all students and teachers' needs. To mention one example during the years of implementation of these bilingual programs, just a few attempts at designing contextualized

material have taken place and not for all grades. One of them is called "Bunny Bonita", and it aims to teach basic English with useful language for everyday communication for children between 4 and 8 years. Its main emphasis is on grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. The main purpose of the program is to support students and teachers in the development of language

skills for first, second and third graders, in order to reach the A1 level, based on the CEFR. The second material is called “English, please,” which is a series of textbooks (first version: 2010-2014/ second version: 2014-2016) which ease the process of learning English through meaningful contexts, and topics that are close to the students. This material has been designed for ninth, tenth and eleventh graders.

The implementation of these English textbooks are definitely a valiant attempt at creating meaningful learning environments, however, it is also evidenced that it has not been carried into effect in all grades, and even if the material is useful, it is relevant to consider that all public institutions in Colombia do not have the same context. Each context is unique, so textbooks cannot standardize English learning.

Focusing on the previous paragraphs about the materials that have been implemented in Colombia, and moving forward in the paper, a connection to textbooks is established. Textbook is a key term that deserves attention because it entails a deep background in its development.

Textbooks

Materials “include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 2). Materials can be *informative*, i.e. informing the learner about the target language; *instructional*, which guide the learner in practicing the language; *experiential*, those provide the learner

with experience of the language in use; *eliciting*, which encourages the learner to use the language, and *exploratory*, that help the learner to make discoveries about the language (Tomlinson, 2012). Furthermore, Brown (1995) and Mishan (2005), consider that materials include texts and tasks that can be presented in paper, audio or visual form.

The contents in the materials involve two main categories that need to be analyzed when choosing an accurate textbook, i.e. linguistic content (language, pragmatics, and genre), and cultural content (Harwood, 2013). Based on Johnson (2003), materials need rigor to be produced (ibid, p. 13). Diverse and tough competing demands are faced by material writers. They have to be comprehensible enough for the population who is using them, and flexible enough to adapt activities. Young (1990), declares that materials’ creators make an effort to satisfy everyone who is involved in the process, and the process becomes endless since people’s needs are always evolving. According to Tomlinson (2003), materials should drive the needs and wants of the learners, nevertheless, teachers and administrators may take into consideration other aspects (standard examinations or government policies).

Designing materials is not a matter of graphs and words, it implies a range of variables. According to Johnson (1989), curriculum planning, ends/means specification, program implementation

and classroom implementation, are essential stages in policy decision making in material design; teachers play a crucial role in material design because they have the ability to assess and understand their students' needs. Teachers should evaluate if the material is meaningful, interesting, and comprehensible, which argues for a setting that promotes successful communication, and the output: precise, coherent, and situationally appropriate (Sharwood, 1993). Materials are focused on linguistics, visual, and auditory aspects, and they can be presented in print, CD, DVD or even the internet. Designing materials is a complex activity that involves many factors and participants. It requires specific planning and coherence, but bearing in mind the importance of flexibility to be adopted and adapted.

Materials constitute a large range of options in the language learning field; nevertheless, this paper is centered on English textbooks. Textbooks are "the most common educational material that teachers use within a classroom" (Carvajal, 2012, p. 115). Based on that claim, textbooks in this theme review paper are understood as the most useful material used in the language classroom to support English learning. According to Krashen (1983, p. 17) "the textbook is the teacher resource book of activities. Such books give teachers ideas for presenting activities that provide comprehensible input on topics of interest and relevance".

Teachers rely on textbooks as a means to facilitate the learning process. Additionally, textbooks serve as a bank of input and output activities, where language skills are promoted, i.e., the speaking ability is fomented when the textbook promotes an activity where the learner has to describe a usual day in her/his life.

Regarding the importance of textbooks, Bachman (1999) and Savignon (1997, 2001) consider that textbooks occupy a central place in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) because many teachers depend on them in order to help the apprentices improve their communicative competence and put it into real life social contexts. However, it is not necessary nor healthy for teachers to just support or depend solely on their teaching practice, because it becomes a class where the main character is the textbook rather than the student. The purpose of textbooks should be to serve as a basis of the whole process, not the process itself.

Wong and Snow (2000) reported "all students require instructional support and attention to acquire the forms and structures associated with it [academic text]" (p. 22). According to these authors, textbooks are important to assist the foreign language learning. Textbooks, apart from giving instruction, should develop students' critical understanding of how language is used (Moll and Gonzalez, 1994). In other words, the use of languages has to

go beyond the classroom, regarding the impact on the ones that are learning. As different learners learn in various ways (Oxford, 2002), the ideal textbooks aim to provide the best ways for the learners to acquire a language. However, most commercially produced materials focus on informing their users about language features and on guiding them to practice these features, a fact that is emphasized by Richards (2001, p. 251).

In addition to the concern, an economic factor plays an interesting role in teaching materials. Textbooks are produced by publishers for commercial distribution, and they are generally concerned about producing innovative and creative books, primarily motivated by financial income and success, rather than learners' needs and wants (Tomlinson, 2003). In this respect, Álvarez (2008) points out that the Colombian community immersed in education, have observed the opening of new offers from publishing houses, taking advantage of the National Program called "Colombia Bilingüe", in order to conquer an economically appealing market.

Another aspect that emerges from textbook de-contextualization is that they do not serve as mediators of cultures. For instance, a textbook from the USA tends to standardize their

culture, and they forget that each state, each town, each community, possesses its own culture. Usually what textbooks do is considering cultures that they are related or close to, but they do not consider the culture where the textbook is going to be used because there is not a real contact with it. Additionally, it is meaningless when English teachers use the textbooks that do not take into account the real people that the students can establish contact with. As Goldstein (2014) declares "there is little point in insisting on including examples of purely Anglo-American culture if the majority of our learners are not going to interact with native speakers in their country of origin" (p. 9). For that reason, textbooks should act like a channel that connects the current culture and the culture from the native settings. Rico (2012) states that "as mediators, materials should bridge the gap between communities and make possible the intercultural encounters." (p. 141).

Bearing in mind the concepts that were addressed in the paper and considering the importance of having contextualized textbooks in the classrooms to have meaningful learning, some points of view are exposed.

Conclusions

The content of this theme review article and a critical perspective based on research studies in Colombia and abroad serve to provide some conclusions, in order to illuminate a possible solution to the concern that was presented.

International and national researchers, among them Tomlinson (2003); Álvarez (2008); Núñez et al. (2009); Ordóñez (2011); Ramos and Aguirre (2014) have demonstrated that textbooks need to be connected with the context where the language is learnt in order to be meaningful for the participants, especially learners. Textbooks should always include the environment that surrounds language learning, in that way, students will consider it useful in their lives' daily experiences. In order to do that, these researchers have done great contributions that need to be elucidated. The following paragraphs illustrate their perceptions and actions to acknowledge an answer to this concern.

First, the best way to produce textbooks is including students, teachers and administrators before, during and after the process of writing (Tomlinson, 2003). Related to the last assumption, textbooks should be designed by the community that is learning the language in order to combine the language and the foreign culture with the culture and immediate context that is being experienced. The context must match students' current needs,

and their background. Ciechanowski (2009, p. 561) states that "teachers should explicitly tie each variety of English to their suitable contexts and commitments, rather than teach separate or disconnected vocabulary or grammar lessons. Teachers should help learners understand the differences and similarities in language used across every day activities."

In Colombia, this initiative took place when the teachers planned their performances to occur in ways as close as possible to how they happen in reality by using authentic materials, allowing students' participation in deciding what to do, on what topics, and how to do it, furthermore, it promoted collaborative work (Ordóñez, 2011). However, this kind of implementation has not been spread throughout all Colombian territory, which will be the ideal goal. This supreme goal implies a lot of work, but not only by creating bilingual policies on paper but putting them into practice. To do that, all Colombian stakeholders and specific circumstances should be addressed.

Ideally, in a bilingual program, students' needs should be contemplated first, and then the government policies, not the other way around as it usually happens. Also, the ones who create the policy programs should be led by educational agents mainly, not lawyers, or people who focus on other interests but educational ones. And the circumstances, for instance, in the whole Colombian territory, students' needs,

priorities, viewpoints, dispositions, and possibilities are totally different. For that reason, each context deserves exclusiveness. Only in that way, Colombian bilingual policies will be a real fact, and not mere dreams.

Second, although Colombia has attempted to solve the problem about the context of English textbooks, with the implementation of the material *English Please* and *Bunny Bonita*, it does not fulfill Colombian requirements, since it was designed just for elementary schools, and the process seems to have made a few advances during this time. The requirement to create English textbooks for secondary and high school, technical programs and universities is still needed. Additionally, it is also important to mention that there is a huge difference between public and private settings, where this key aspect needs to be examined.

Third, cultural aspects should always be reflected in the language of textbooks to have connections between both languages, and their corresponding cultures, in order to try to understand a little bit more about what the culture consists of. Textbooks tend to narrow their cultural scope too much, making it hard to see what is beyond our own culture. For instance, as Colombians we may think that American people are the ones with blond hair, blue eyes, and the ones who eat fast food based on the images that materials illustrate, but we totally forget that the USA is a multicultural country, where many

people from different parts of the world live, and consequently their food choices are much larger than what is depicted in textbooks. Subsequently, English teachers should have the ability to unveil what is beyond the images from a decontextualized English textbook.

Fourth, as the main and ambitious attempt to give an answer to the issue about the context in the English textbooks, a proposal of creating our own textbooks is stated. It is a difficult task, and it could take many years to become real, but it would be the beginning of positioning education as one of Colombia's priorities. Based on Tomlinson (2003, p. 4), "teachers throughout the world need little training, experience, and support to become materials writers who can produce imaginative materials of relevance and that appeal to their learners". Núñez, Pineda, and Téllez (2004), assert that learning a language should not be a task totally confined to the textbook, teachers can take advantage of everything that surrounds their specific settings. Núñez and Téllez (2009), estimate that most EFL teachers have the skills to develop their own materials based on their knowledge regarding language teaching, and their experience as language educators.

Núñez and Tellez (2008), consider that most English teachers are professionals with plenty of creativity, with the potential to embark upon the fascinating task of developing their own

didactic materials based not only on their teaching experience, but also on their expertise in the cognitive and learning processes needed by the language learners. Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos, and Ramos (2009), have addressed some of the reasons why teachers should develop their own materials. First, students' feel stimulated if the materials are designed by their teachers because they introduce changes and original ideas, they invite learners to participate in demanding learning activities, and they attract students' attention. Second, it helps teachers to improve their teaching insights, practices and procedures becoming active agents of change. According to Ramos and Aguirre (2014), there exist some benefits when designing their own material, i.e., teachers' empowerment, increase of students' motivation, the need to listen to students' voices to consider their needs, the requirement of contextualizing teaching materials, the awareness teachers can benefit from in terms of having a holistic view of education, and both the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills they acquire by developing materials.

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