

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1441>

## Disability, Inclusion and Language-in-Education Policy in the Global South: The Colombian Context

---

ROSA DENE DAVID\*<sup>1</sup> AND KIMBERLEY BROWN<sup>2</sup>

∞ This paper calls for a shift related to English language-in-education policy and inclusive education initiatives in Colombia to ensure that English language learners with disabilities receive equitable and inclusive classroom instruction that is context-appropriate. We call for English language initiatives and policies to draw from theories and practices from both the Global South and the Global North in order to teach towards inclusive education. Trends in both English language teaching and inclusive education have drawn upon the Global North for solutions, which cannot be systemised to fit one international standard. Instead, using the Colombian context as an example, the present paper suggests a localised approach to meeting the educational needs of English language learners that incorporates inclusive education at the institutional level. This model would favour the work of scholars within the region to ensure that all students receive equitable classroom instruction that builds in Global South epistemologies and localised ways of knowing.

**Keywords:** language-in-education policy, Global South, inclusion, disability, English language teaching

---

1 \*Corresponding Author. Planning and Institutional Research Office, Canada; rosadene@gmail.com.

2 Portland State University, USA.

## Posebne potrebe, inkluzija in vključenost jezikov v izobraževanju v državah tretjega sveta: kolumbijski kontekst

---

ROSA DENE DAVID IN KIMBERLEY BROWN

☞ Članek poziva k premiku glede strategije vključevanja angleščine v izobraževanje in pobud za inkluzivno izobraževanje v Kolumbiji, da bi se zagotovilo, da tudi učenci angleškega jezika s posebnimi potrebami doživijo pravičen in vključujoč pouk v razredu, ki bi bil kontekstualno primeren. Pozivamo, da naj se pobude in načrtovanja v povezavi z angleškim jezikom črpajo iz teorij in praks z vseh delov sveta, in to v smeri poučevanja na ravni inkluzivnega izobraževanja. Trendi pri poučevanju angleškega jezika in inkluzivnem izobraževanju se namreč navezujejo na rešitve razvitih držav, ki jih ni mogoče sistemizirati, da bi ustrezale enemu mednarodnemu standardu. Namesto tega z uporabo kolumbijskega konteksta kot primera ta prispevek predlaga lokaliziran pristop k izpolnjevanju izobraževalnih potreb učencev angleškega jezika, ki vključuje inkluzivno izobraževanje na institucionalni ravni. Ta model bi dal prednost delu regionalnih akademikov, s čimer bi zagotovili, da vsi učenci doživijo pravičen pouk v razredu, ki bi temeljil na epistemologijah držav tretjega sveta in lokaliziranih načinih znanja.

**Ključne besede:** vključenost jezikov v izobraževanje, tretji svet, inkluzija, posebne potrebe, poučevanje angleščine

## Introduction

This paper examines the tensions and divisions occurring between English language teaching (ELT) and inclusive education (IE) in Colombia, acknowledging the lack of interconnectedness between the two fields, which creates a disservice to students and teachers alike. Although there are many factors at play within the Colombian education system, there are three underlying issues that perpetuate the unification of ELT and IE: the lack of a universal definition that seeks to change the learning environment and not the student, the division between the private and public sectors, and the lack of teacher training and support (Anderson & David, 2022; Anderson, et al., 2022; Kamenopoulou, 2018b; OECD, 2016).

As with many governments in the region, the Colombian government has historically understood the need for English education, since English is seen as a means to drive development and internationalisation (Anderson et al., 2022; de Medina, 2002, 2004; Gonzalez, 2010). Inclusion, on the other hand, is often viewed from a medicalised position that aims to fix the 'deficient learner' rather than adjusting the learning environment to make it more accessible to a larger variety of students (Cruz-Velandia et al., 2013; Kamenopoulou, 2018a, 2018b; Vásquez-Orjuela, 2015). Hence, inclusion is often treated as an intervention to encourage the enrolment or retention of at-risk populations of children in school. In Colombia, there is a lack of articulation and interconnectedness between ELT and IE both in education policy and teacher-training initiatives, which in turn trickles down into classroom instruction and creates a disservice to all learners. Especially problematic is the fact that a group of individuals rightfully guaranteed access to English language study by government initiatives is not able to access this schooling. Furthermore, individuals stepping into roles as English language teachers receive little or no instruction in inclusive education for English language learners.

One key issue that arises when looking at IE is the fact that there is no universal definition of IE, nor is there a clear description of how IE should be implemented and specifically whom IE is meant to serve (Florian, 2009; Kamenopoulou, 2018a). It should be emphasised that identifying and responding to the needs of all learners is the main goal of inclusion. While IE is commonly assumed to support children with disabilities, it also supports other disadvantaged groups of children who experience marginalisation based on race, socioeconomic background, religious affiliation, gender identity and so forth (Kiuppis, 2014). However, each of these populations of learners experiences different barriers within mainstream education (Erten & Savage, 2012).

Colombian policies approach inclusion from a medicalised perspective, which creates an ableist framework, further problematising and stigmatising learners who are perceived as different (Kamenopoulou, 2018b).

The Colombian people face adversity and inequality that is further complicated by the lack of social services related to education and educational reform. It is of paramount importance for Colombia to not only work with a universal definition of inclusion, but to localise how to successfully implement this definition. This is not yet being done. At the same time, the development of competence in English is often considered a priority for Colombian children, as English is seen as a way to prepare the next generation to be able to participate internationally in the twenty-first century. The present research seeks to identify the mismatches regarding ELT and IE initiatives in public school classrooms throughout Colombia. It explores the intersection of IE, ELT and English-in-education planning, and the privileging of Global North (GN) theories and practice. We argue that if the Colombian education system is to truly prepare ELT educators to meet the needs of its diverse student populations, it is necessary for English language initiatives to build in dimensions of inclusive education and craft curricula that are grounded in localised and contextualised settings. This must be done while addressing language-in-education planning and teacher education standards.

## **Theoretical Considerations**

### *The Global South (GS)*

This paper explores the Colombian education system through a post-colonial lens, acknowledging the fact that the current global power imbalances that are in place are deeply connected to colonisation and neo-colonialism (Sousa Santos, 2018). The GS is used to describe geographic locations across the world that have and continue to experience economic and political oppression due to structures put into place during the colonial era and the disparity that continues to plague regions around the world that are often referred to as underdeveloped, developing or Third World countries (Dados & Connell, 2012; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2011; Kamenopoulou, 2018a). The economic and political realities of Colombia today do not match most educational settings in the GN; the harsh realities of post-colonialism need to push educators within the region to look for answers in directions that are not necessarily centred on Northern-centric ways of learning.

### *Inclusive education (IE)*

In classrooms around the world, various definitions of equity, diversity and inclusion are being used to shift the learning agenda to meet the needs of all learners, particularly those who are at risk of being marginalised. The latter includes individuals with disabilities, who account for roughly 15 percent of the world's population or 1 billion people (WHO & World Bank, 2011), with 10 percent of the population having some kind of learning disability (Kormos & Smith, 2012). Although increased attention has been devoted to IE initiatives worldwide since the creation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNGA, 1989) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the actual implementation of IE practices varies drastically across global contexts (Pijl et al., 1997). IE is commonly understood as an approach to teaching that creates educational opportunities for all learners, especially learners who have traditionally been excluded from the education system, who are at high risk of being excluded or have not received the kind of support they need to succeed in their educational studies (Kamenopoulou, 2018a). However, as there is no universal definition of IE, in some cases where institutions have tried to implement and have failed, IE simply means getting at-risk populations of children into classrooms regardless of the educational outcome (Acuña & Cárdenas, 2017). These conflicting ways of approaching inclusivity are not just problematic for the children themselves, they shed a light on a much larger problem: the need for education reform that begins with the learners themselves and the contexts in which they live.

For many countries rooted in the GS, inclusive instruction may be the only means to meet the needs of diverse learners due to the educational divide between the private and public sectors, as well as limited resources and teachers. Educational initiatives that are easy to employ in the GN may not be accessible in the GS (due to, for example, lack of electricity or consistent internet access). The dichotomy between what IE is and who it serves highlights the need not only for a universal definition, but for a localised definition and a level of attention to policies that seek to support the larger, overarching understanding of IE on the ground. Furthermore, policies need to transfer down to an implementation level, from the macro-level and onward to the micro-level.

### *ELT and language-in-education policy*

ELT models have been situated in a time-space continuum. Popular social science theories at a given moment in time have influenced what is presented to pre-service and in-service teachers. Most recently, communicative language teaching (CLT), content language integrated learning (CLIL),

project-based learning (PBL) and task-based learning (TBL) have been marketed and infused in ELT programmes throughout the world. The problematic nature of this lack of inclusion of locally designed models, theories and practices influences both language-in-education plans and policies crafted at the nation-state level. Bettney (2022) uses the term ‘coloniality’ to describe drawing only on the works of individuals in the GN. Bohn (2003) acknowledges that in his native Brazil, teachers have not drawn from theory or practice-building from their peers, but rather have turned again towards general GN sources and theories. He comments on the cost of this practice, stating that “Brazilian teachers have become strangers in their own land” (p. 170).

As we will see, the Colombian ELT context parallels the scene described in Brazil. In addition to a lack of promotion of locally crafted theories about language teaching and learning, there is little to no infusion of information and practices aligned with inclusive education for pre-service and in-service teachers (Acuña & Cárdenas, 2017; Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016). CAST co-founder David Rose (2019: xii) problematises in particular the lack of exploration of what he terms ‘different ecologies’ in different cultures focusing on fossilisations of the framing of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) around the world. Pre-service and in-service teachers are introduced to notions of inclusive education models that may include a set of recommendations that more often than not work best in settings with accessible technology. Such models are unsuitable for most language classrooms in public sectors in Colombia. In the worst-case scenario, pre-service and in-service teachers are never introduced to ideas of disability and difference in the language classroom, instead being left to seek out this kind of information on their own. A brief exploration of recent TESOL methodology texts reveals that very few incorporate chapters related to what it means to have a learning difference or disability (Jian Wang, personal communication 5/9/20).

*Language-in-education planning* refers specifically to educational planning that focuses on English language education. While this frequently refers to mother tongue and additional language policies in the mainstream classroom, our concern here is how the language situation, the macro-level policy goals and implementation, and the micro-level policy goals and implementation are articulated for the use of teacher education programmes training pre-service and in-service teachers to teach English (Tollefson, 1981). Countries rooted in the GS often approach language policy and planning from a Northern-centric perspective and draw upon the work of scholars situated in the GN or educated in the GN, thus again retaining a possible level of coloniality (Bettney, 2022; Roux, 2012). These mismatches are characteristic not only of the Colombian context, but of many Global South contexts (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020).

## Colombian education: A brief overview

Colombia is as culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse as its geographic landscape. With a population of 50 million (World Bank, 2021), Colombia is home to 64 indigenous languages and two creole languages (Islander and Palenquero), while Spanish is the official language (González & Rodríguez 1999; González, 2010). Present-day Colombia has forged a new path towards reconciliation of its turbulent and violent past with the 2016 signing of a ceasefire accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (UN Peacemaker, 2016). However, with deep social and economic inequalities, ongoing armed conflicts and internal displacement, along with high poverty rates among Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations, children with disabilities are among a long list of children who may experience exclusion (Kamenopoulou, 2018b; OCHA, 2017).

Education in Colombia is understood as a civic right, as the Constitution of 1991 posits that all Colombians have the right to an education. Compulsory education currently spans a ten-year period and requires students to be in school from the age of 5 to 15 (OECD, 2016). Primary education lasts five years beginning at age 6, while secondary education is divided into four years of compulsory basic secondary education encompassing grades 6 through 9 (WENR, 2016). The Colombian education system is divided into the private for-profit sector and the public sector. Many of the private for-profit schools model their curricula around some form of international curriculum that prioritises foreign language education or bilingual language education (usually English) at the expense of the development of competencies in the students' first language (i.e., Spanish) (de Mejía, 2004, 2013). Additionally, these for-profit schools market themselves as international schools and often offer an internationally accepted accreditation such as the international baccalaureate to justify the huge cost of tuition. Although the exact numbers of students attending private schools are rather ambiguous, it is estimated that 19% of Colombian school-age children attend private schools, with 81% of the population attending public schools (OECD, 2016). Uribe et al. (2006) indicate that the differences between the private and public sectors highlight the drastic difference in quality between the public and private sectors. The public sector faces a plethora of obstacles, such as poor school infrastructure, high dropout rates and a lack of qualified teachers (WENR, 2020). The OECD (2016) has indicated that Colombian secondary students have relatively poor learning outcomes, ranked second to last among the 37 OECD countries, and in rural areas and some border regions dropout rates are as high as 11%, with an estimated 35,080 school-aged children

out of school in 2019 (World Bank, 2021). All of this highlights some of the challenges that Colombian education faces. In the continuation, we will focus our analysis on the tensions between ELT and IE.

### **The Colombian education system: Tensions in ELT**

Although Colombia's cultural and linguistic landscape is diverse, bilingualism in the Colombian context is often thought of as "the mastery of Spanish and another Western language, mainly English" (González, 2010, p. 333). Bilingual and multilingual communities where Spanish and an indigenous language (or languages) are spoken and intertwined are often fraught with social and economic disparity and heightened racial and ethnic discrimination (Behrman et al., 2003; González, 2010). It is widely understood that English holds the highest status of any foreign language (de Mejía, 2004). Due to its proximity to the United States, along with Colombia's strong economic ties to the US and a large Colombian population residing within its territory, an American variety of English is often favoured over other varieties of English (British Council, 1989, 2015).

As Colombia has seen a surge in English language programming and English has been integrated into Colombian education in both the private and public sectors, truly bilingual education within the region is generally only available to children from middle to upper-middle class families living in urban areas (de Mejía, 2002; Valencia, 2013). These private schools are typically advertised as international bilingual schools and are tied (sometimes loosely) to some form of an international curriculum (e.g., the International Baccalaureate Organisation, the Cambridge International Examination or the Council of International Schools). In contrast, students within the public sector receive limited English language instruction from teachers who are often given the additional teaching hours merely to fill their schedules, with little, if any, articulation between levels.

The interest in English language education came to fruition in 1994 and has continued to grow with shifts in English language policies and initiatives (Gonzales, 2010). In 1994, foreign language education was first put into legislation with Law 115. This legislation suggested that school-aged children should develop competencies in a foreign language, but it did not establish a policy or programme (Ley 115, 1994), leaving schools to map out their own agendas. This resulted in large numbers of schools (private schools) integrating some form of English language curriculum. In 2004, the Colombian government implemented the National Bilingual Program (PNB, Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo) with the advice and assistance of the British Council (Bettney, 2022;



British Council, 1989, 2015). The programme has undergone several policy and name changes and continues to advance English language initiatives within the region, with the goal of all Colombian citizens being bilingual by 2019, (Bettney, 2021; Usma Wilches, 2015). Sadly, the underlying theories of language education remain those of the GN and do not yet truly reflect the local needs of learners and teachers alike.

Unsurprisingly, the PNB has reshaped the role of English within the nation, going as far as stating that being proficient in English will provide Colombians with more economic advantages. The PNB includes a list of communicative competencies that are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) and outlines a number of Northern-centric teaching approaches (e.g., CLIL, CLT, PBL, and TBL) that it recommends be adopted to ensure English education meets international standards (Elicer Benavides, 2021; Usma Wilches, 2015). For the *Ministerio de Educación* (MEN; Ministry of Education), adopting the CEFRL provided a framework to create an English language assessment tool that would become a part of *PRUEBAS SABER*, a standardised knowledge test used to assess all students across various disciplines.

In terms of proficiency, the Ministry set its sights high, projecting that by 2014, 40% of all high school graduates would have a minimum B1 proficiency, and 100% of EFL teachers would have a minimum B2 English proficiency (Elicer Benavides, 2021). However, the *PRUEBAS SABER* results told another story of English language education in the region. The 2014 and 2017 *PRUEBAS SABER* results indicated that Colombia has a long way to go in terms of reaching its goals. In 2014, 94% of the students nearing graduation had low levels of English proficiency, ranging from below basic proficiency (A-) to A2, while only 4% attained the goal of B1 English proficiency (Elicer Benavides, 2021). In 2017, the percentage of students spanning low level to basic users decreased by 3%, with 91% of students having A- to A2 English proficiency and 7% meeting the B1 expectation (Elicer Benavides, 2021). The Ministry has tried to place the onus on the teachers, stating that improving teachers' English proficiency is crucial to raising the national standard, and it continues to implement a series of general English courses aimed at improving English within the region.

In summary, Colombia has had a long and sometimes turbulent relationship with English language education, which, for better or worse, has aligned itself with Northern-centric epistemologies. The current English language policy has set an ambiguous course for its learners and their teachers, leaving both teachers and their students behind without further recourse. In the next section, we look at IE in Colombia.

## The Colombian education system: Tensions in IE

There has been relatively little systematic research about IE and the inclusion of learners from different marginalised groups. Moreover, there is a perceptual mismatch at the national level regarding what IE is, who IE is meant to serve and what IE entails inside any given classroom (Acuña & Cárdenas, 2017; Kamenopoulou, 2018a, 2018b; Moreno Angarita & Gabel, 2008). Educational researchers (e.g., Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016; Beltran-Villamizar et al., 2015; Kamenopoulou, 2018b) who have studied inclusion in Colombia have found that even though there are policies that advocate for inclusive practice, the policies related to disability are rooted in medicalised discourse of disability, which is synonymous with looking at disability through a deficiency lens. Current understandings, policies and practices regarding IE, along with a lack of teacher training and support, often lead to misperceptions in general education classrooms and the exclusion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Acuña & Cárdenas, 2017; Kamenopoulou, 2018b).

IE was first entered into law in 1994, as a direct response to the UN's 1994 Salamanca Agreement (Ley 115, 1994), but there have been difficulties executing policies and practices on the ground (Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016; Kamenopoulou, 2018b). *Ley 115* broadly stated that education must be guaranteed to all Colombian citizens and that IE teaching strategies must be used to make education accessible to all learners. In 2011, Colombia furthered its international commitment to inclusion by ratifying the United Nations' 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2013, this initiative was strengthened by providing a more detailed set of policies to ensure that the needs of students with differences and disabilities were met through the establishment of six principles: participation, diversity, interculturality, equity, quality and appropriateness. In reality, however, inclusion looks starkly different in Colombia. At the time of publication, to our knowledge, there have only been a handful of initiatives and programmes that have sought to provide access to education to school-aged children who have been identified as members of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, such as the *Escuela Nueva Activa* model (Active New School, ENA), the *Programa Nacional de Etnoeducación* (the National Ethno-education Project, PNE), Educación Inclusiva de Calidad (Quality Inclusive Education, EIDC) and *De Cero a Siempre* (From Zero to Always, DCAS). Each of these programmes and initiatives serves diverse populations in distinctly different ways.

While these kinds of programmes and initiatives show growth in the region, there has been very little research or quality data to analyse the

effectiveness of this kind of programming (MEN, 2013). However, census data can help to paint a more complete picture. In 2014, there were 119,060 students with diagnosed disabilities, although data from the 2005 census indicated that there were 426,425 children aged 0–17 with some form of disability in Colombia (OECD, 2016). The Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation's (FSC) 2016 *Alternative Report* estimated that in 2015 there were approximately 10.3 million children enrolled in school and only 1.34 percent were children with disabilities. Of these students, 85 percent were attending public schools while 15 percent were enrolled in the private sector. The FSC *Alternative Report* (2016) clearly articulates the issue at hand, acknowledging that, "It is estimated that a large number of children in early childhood with disabilities are invisible to the state agenda and programs" (p. 41). Of the students with disabilities who were registered, 33.8 percent did not finish any grade level and only 37.9 percent finished primary school (Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016). This number continues to decrease, with only 20.5 percent of students registered with disabilities finishing high school and only 1.7 percent going on to complete university studies. These numbers indicate that the current efforts being made by MEN are not enough.

The Colombian government continues to invest in IE (Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016). Yet, teacher-training initiatives, classroom resources and materials remain scarce. Kamenopoulou (2018b) found that IE was synonymous with the notion of having a support teacher, meaning that schools were only inclusive if they employed a support teacher(s), or a teacher whose sole purpose is to work with children with disabilities, which is generally beyond the budget of any public school. Moreover, her findings suggested that support teachers did not remove students with disabilities from the general education classroom, that they were not putting enough effort into their work, and that some schools were purposely trying not to be inclusive by avoiding the hiring of support teachers. These findings shed light on two overarching problems: defining IE and the lack of teacher education.

IE is widely misunderstood, and in the case of Colombia it is often treated as if it is synonymous with disability, leaving out other populations of children who are at risk of exclusion (Kamenopoulou, 2018b). The work of Beltrán-Villamizar et al. (2015) acknowledges that there are four additional groups of children in Colombia that are at risk of marginalisation: black Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations; children who are victims of the armed conflict; children being reinstated into society after being somehow involved with the armed conflict(s); and children living at the borders. Yet, in the case of Kamenopoulou's (2018b) work described above, teachers held the common misconception that schools were only inclusive if they had support teachers, and that

inclusion was synonymous with disability. In regard to teacher-education, the most recent findings indicate that special education programmes are on the decline in Colombia, even though in 2015, the Colombian government invested 12.2 million dollars in teacher training, classroom resources and materials (Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016). Furthermore, in 2015, there were a total of 443 teacher-training programmes, but only 18 of these programmes were geared towards special education. Of these 18 programmes, 14 were university teacher-training programmes, 3 were categorised as specialisations (also known as certificate programmes) and 1 was a master's programme (Correa-Montoya & Castro-Martinez, 2016). Under most circumstances, pre-service teacher training does not explore inclusion or special education, as this area is regarded as a matter for special education professionals. Moreover, if pre-service teachers want to develop a background in inclusion, they must choose to specialise in special education (Kamenopoulou, 2018b). This lack of training and support leaves large numbers of Colombian educators without the resources needed to serve their diverse student populations.

This section has described IE in Colombia, acknowledging that current understandings of inclusion have had a negative effect on the overall education system and shedding light on the need for a universal definition, along with teacher-training programmes to help familiarise teachers with what inclusion means and whom it seeks to serve. As described above, IE is meant not only to serve learners with disabilities, but also seeks to recognise and support learners from diverse socio-cultural-ethnic populations as a precursor to equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. In the following section, we look at how these tensions in and around ELT and IE affect both ELT teachers and the diverse students they serve.

### **Inclusive education planning in Colombia: A theoretical model**

In order to identify what inclusive education in the ELT setting in Colombia could aim for, it is necessary to identify ELT issues that have dominated teacher-education worldwide. As an increasingly globalised world puts all kinds of English speakers together, it is incumbent upon the ELT community to provide the greatest access possible to promote engagement and agency on the part of speakers. Preparatory programmes need to model this. However, the majority of TESOL programmes situated in the Global North, whether for pre-service or in-service teachers, continue to draw upon the privilege of the native speaker: textbooks, theories and practices remain those of the Global North.

Barnawi and Phan (2014, p. 3) believe that TESOL preparatory programmes need to employ what they term “a more consistent and collectively critical approach in TESOL pedagogy and curriculum”. Their exploration follows that of Ilieva and Waterstone (2013), documenting practices that do not reflect what Kumaravadivelu terms a ‘post-methods’ approach (2003). Barnawi and Phan (2014, p. 4) suggest that a post-methodology approach “[...] presupposes that periphery teachers will devise their classroom pedagogy in ways that are compatible with local intellectual conditions”. This access is best promoted by teaching teachers how to incorporate techniques, curricula and assessments situated within their own contexts, drawing upon design principles that are adaptable and not necessarily tied to the Global North. Sadly, as Yang in Phan (2017, p. xviii) observes, those educated in the West often return home, as expected, with knowledge situated in that context, but without a comparable reservoir of information for their own contexts.

Philipson (1992) explored the dependency of Global South English language practitioners upon the Global North in his classic *Linguistic Imperialism*, outlining policies and practices that affect language teaching pedagogy. In his analysis comparing centre and periphery, he notes that GN theories, recommendations for models and methods, and even textbooks have not been infused with information from anywhere else. Kubota (2019, p. 8) uses the phrase ‘epistemological racism’, noting with respect to a Brazilian applied linguist’s work:

Scholarship from the geographically GS was not regarded as ‘global enough’ or was positioned outside of the ‘global context’. The concept of ‘global’ in turn is made equivalent to northern (i.e. Euro-American) theory and practice.

We suggest there are parallel issues in the areas of inclusion and disability studies, most notably regarding the ELT classroom and preparatory practices for pre-service and in-service teachers. Moreover, the general paucity of preparatory modules examining learner differences in ELT contexts is the default or unmarked parameter in both programmes and texts. For example, a brief exploration of 17 TESOL Method texts from 2001 to 2019 reveals that only 2 contain units on teaching ELLs with learning differences (Jian Wang, personal communication, 5/8/2020).

Underscoring this observation is the dimension of inequality evidenced in theories and practices of this diversity from the GS that are not referenced, or are under referenced, in the general language teaching canon. Paradigms of language teaching have been strongly rooted in the GN, including CLT, this decade’s

contemporary darling. If we instead – or even in addition – examine the indigenisation of social science research, international development and English language instruction, World Englishes, language-in-education planning and policy, and IE, this enables us to develop new strategies, policies and ultimately curricula preparing teachers and learners. Hamnett et al. (1984, p. 78) unpack three dimensions of the indigenisation of social science research, focusing on what they term “theoretic, structural, and substantive indigenization”. Theoretic indigenisation involves the creation of theories and metatheories framed by local world views; structural indigenisation refers to the creation of institutions and organisations that support local research; and substantive indigenisation relates to the actual content of research: the areas of focus are local.

Within our proposed perspective, theoretic indigenisation would involve the development of an inclusive education approach that consistently takes local context and nation-state parameters into account; additionally, this development of theory would be focused within the nation-state needs (substantive indigenisation). Such theories would bring inclusive education for ELLs into the pre-service and in-service education models in Latin America.

Structural indigenisation would involve the *infusion* of the theories discussed above into think tanks and teacher preparatory institutions, where evidence-based practices would be proposed that fit the context outlined above. In the GS, education ministries are responsible for the goals, policies and practices that educational institutions need to follow for the preparation of language teachers. When leaders in these settings have been socialised into their disciplines via leadership from abroad (e.g., leaders have studied outside their home countries and worked with theories designed in different contexts), they are not always aware of the ideological implications of their work.

For example, while CLT appears to be the default teaching model promoted by most current programmes, there are contexts where it can be problematic. As Chowdhury and Phan (2008, p. 305) suggest, “Even though CLT claims to create a democratic classroom that is responsive to students’ needs, it is often inappropriate and incompatible, neither sophisticated nor responsive enough for the complex educational needs and cultures of students in certain settings”. Structural indigenisation would attend to what Tollefson terms the “language situation, macro policy proposals and macro policy implementation” (1991) of a nation-state, in our case, Colombia.

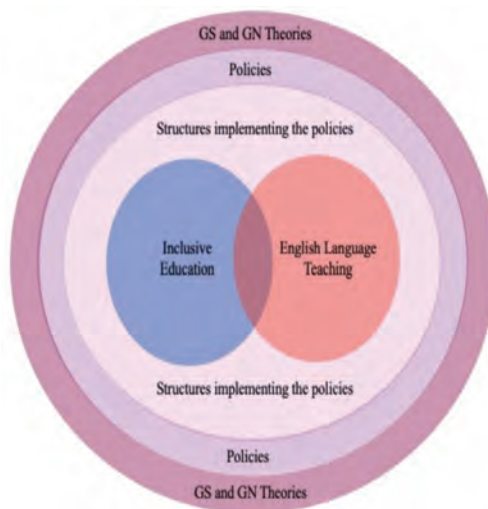
Within the area of IE, numerous authors note the paucity of both grounding theory and case studies with attention to the local context (Grech & Soldatic, 2016; Kamenopoulou, 2018a; Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2018). This is the dimension of theoretic indigenisation. Others call for the implementation

of programmes within teacher education that address the needs of learners in local contexts (Schuelka, 2015; Sharma et al., 2013). Our conscious situating of theories, structures and practices in a GS context is related to work in international education and development, as well as the role of English. For us at this point, the key is to attend to both where the theories have originated and the degree to which they can account for and inform what happens in the GS.

Tollefson (1981) lays out the relationship between a general language situation, macro-level policy decisions and implementation, as well as micro-level policy decisions and implementation, focusing on how these dimensions affect second language acquisition. We would take the model further, as it was not originally linked to inclusive education studies or equity. The figure below, adapted from Echeita Sarrionandia and Ainscow (2011), suggests how we view the relationship between these elements. At the outermost circle, we see that both GS and GN theories are represented. At the next level, policies are again introduced from GS and GN perspectives. We then see structures promoting the levels of indigenisation discussed above. The practices promoting the same levels of indigenisation and at the centre of the Venn diagram below reflect the idea that notions of inclusive education play an equal role with ELT policy in creating the best conditions for learners.

### Figure 1

#### *Policy Planning Cycle*



*Note.* Implications for equitable design in ELT. Adapted from Echeita Sarrionandia, & Ainscow, 2011.

In order to craft more equitable and context-specific preparation for pre-service and in-service teachers, we believe attention to theoretic, structural and substantive indigenisation is necessary. Theories of inclusive education and English language teaching need to build upon the context of the GS and most specifically the nation-state context. This applies to methods of language teaching and textbook selection as well as curriculum design that builds in dimensions of UDL. Notions of IE that move beyond learning disabilities and specific language differences need to be built into language education preparatory programmes.

Kamenopoulou (2018a) suggests that one way to bring inclusive education into teacher preparatory programmes, in general, is to consider what she terms 'universal' and 'singular' dimensions of the field. For Kamenopoulou, these perspectives emerge from the local context. However, she suggests that the content of teacher education programmes in the GN that send teachers back to their home country contexts needs to include both universal dimensions of the field and country-specific recommendations. For us, an equitable design would first and foremost introduce pre-service and in-service teachers to the notions of inclusive education and equity for ELLs with such needs. This is currently a marked and often unrepresented dimension of English language teacher preparation. Secondly, as Barnawi and Phan (2014) have suggested, building attention to local contexts and needs into language teacher preparatory programmes in the GN will permit English language teachers and teacher educators who are returning to their home countries to actively design programmes and interventions, as they have attended to such things in their graduate programmes. Their home countries' needs have not been invisible. Thirdly, in-service language teacher professional programmes in the GS must include not only the universal but singular dimensions of how to meet the needs of English language learners with both diagnosed and undiagnosed learning differences and disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

We have demonstrated that although GN theories and policies may be necessary, it is not sufficient to draw from them alone in establishing appropriate context-based IE and ELT policies and programmes in Colombia. Inclusion is absolutely paramount for teachers and learners. Drawing upon a universal definition of inclusion creates a learning and teaching environment that relies on changing the environment rather than the student. Working with a localised notion of IE still demands that English language teachers work from policies that build in inclusion from the very start. We suggest that teacher educators



can model what it means for learners to have agency, thus sending forth a generation of English language educators in local contexts who will pass this belief on to their learners. An underexplored dimension of the arguments raised in this paper includes what the long-term effect of this type of agency and inclusion means for other students in these classrooms. In an era of increasing globalisation, both face-to-face and virtual, our classrooms have become active contact zones for the exploration and development of greater intercultural competence and empathy. People in the local context have the right and responsibility to make equitable choices for their learners within their own contexts that are not reliant on the GN. Language teacher preparatory programmes need to draw upon indigenisation and the incorporation of theories and practices related not only to language methodology, but also to inclusive education.

## References

- Anderson C. E., & David, R. D. (2022). Situating futures literacies in the Colombian educational system: A decolonizing theoretical model. *Foresight*. Vol. ahead-of-print.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/FS-12-2021-0246>
- Anderson, C. E., Medina Cuesta, L., David, R. D., & McDougald, J. S. (2022). CLIL and the dynamics of policy and sectorisation in Colombia. In E. Codó (Ed.), *Global CLIL: Critical, Ethnographic and Language Policy Perspectives* (pp. 74–95). Taylor & Francis.
- Barnawi, O., & Phan, L. H. (2014). From western TESOL classrooms to home practice: A case study with two 'privileged' Saudi teachers. *Critical Studies in Education*, 56(2), 259–276.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.951949>
- Behrman, J. R., Gaviria, A., & Székely, M. (Eds.). (2003). *Who's in and who's out: Social exclusion in Latin America*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Beltrán-Villamizar, Y. I., Martínez-Fuentes, Y. L., & Vargas-Beltrán, A. S. (2015). El sistema educativo Colombiano en el camino hacia la inclusión. *Avances y retos. Educación y educadores* 18(1), 62–75.
- Betney, E. (2022). Examining hegemonic and monoglossic language ideologies, policies, and practices within bilingual education in Colombia. *Ikala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 27(1), 249–270.
- Bohn, H. (2003). The educational role and status of English in Brazil. *World Englishes*, 22(12), 159–172.
- British Council. (1989). *A survey of English language teaching and learning in Colombia: A guide to the market*. English Language Promotion Unit.
- British Council. (2015). *English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors*. <https://bit.ly/2DLsWJK>
- Chowdhury, R., & Phan L. H. (2008). Reflecting on Western TESOL training and communicative language teaching: Bangladeshi teachers' voices, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(3), 305–316.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790802236006>

- Cook, P. (2015). Strengthening Colombian indicators for protection in early childhood. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 23(3), 638–660.
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. L. (2011). *Theory from the South: Or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa*. Routledge.
- UN General Assembly. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38fo.html>
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Geneva, United Nations. (2006). <http://www.un.org/disabilities/>
- Correa-Montoya, L., & Castro-Martinez, M. C. (2016). Disability and social inclusion in Colombia. *Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation alternative report to the committee on the rights of persons with disabilities*. Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation Press.
- Cruz-Velandia, I., Duarte-Cuervo, C., Fernández-Moreno, A., & García-Ruiz, S. (2013). Caracterización de investigaciones en discapacidad en Colombia 2005-2012. *Revista de la Facultad de Medicina*, 61(2), 3–8.
- Dados, N., & Connell, R. (2012). The Global South. *Contexts*, 11(1), 12–13. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1536504212436479>
- de Mejía, A. M. (2002). *Power, prestige and bilingualism. International perspectives on elite bilingual education*. Multilingual Matters.
- de Mejía, A. M. (2004). Bilingual education in Colombia: Towards an integrated perspective. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 7(5), 381–397.
- de Mejía, A. M. (2013). Bilingual education in Colombia: The teaching and learning of languages and academic content area knowledge. In C. Abello-Contesse, P. M. Chandler, M. D. López-Jiménez, & R. Chacón-Beltrán (Eds.), *Bilingual and multilingual education in the 21st century: Building on experience*, multilingual matters (pp. 42–57). Multilingual Matters.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2018). *The end of the cognitive empire: The coming of age of the epistemologies of the South*. Duke University Press.
- Echeita Sarrionandia, G., & Ainscow, M. (2011). Inclusive education as a right: Framework and guidelines for action for the development of a pending revolution. *Tejuelo*, 12, 26–46.
- Eliecer Benavides, J. (2021). Level of English in Colombian higher education: A decade of stagnation. *Profile: Issues in Teacher Professional Development* 23(1), 57–73. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v23n1.83135>
- Erten, O., & Savage, R. S. (2012). Moving forward in inclusive education research, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(2), 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360311003777496>
- Farrell, P., & Ainscow, M. (2002). Making special education inclusive: Mapping the issues. In P. Farrell & M. Ainscow (Eds.), *Making special education inclusive* (pp. 1–12). David Fulton.
- Florian, L. (2009). Towards inclusive pedagogy. In P. Hick, R. Kershner, & P. Farrell (Eds.), *Psychology for inclusive education: New directions in theory and practice* (pp. 38–51). Routledge Falmer.
- González, A. (2010). English and English teaching in Colombia: Tensions and possibilities in the expanding circle. In A. Kirkpatrick, (Ed), *The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes* (pp. 332–351). Routledge.

- González, M. S., & Rodríguez, M. L. (1999). *Lenguas Indígenas de Colombia*. Instituto Caro y Cuervo.
- Grech, S., & Soldatic, K. (Eds). (2016). *Disability in the Global South: The critical handbook*. Springer.
- Hamnett, M., Porter, D., Singh, A., & Kumar, K. (1984). *Ethics, politics, and international social science research: From critique to praxis*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Ilieva, R., & Waterstone, B. (2013). Curriculum discourses within a TESOL program for international students: Affording possibilities for academic and professional identities. *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* 10(1), 16–37.
- Kamenopoulou, L. (2018a). *Inclusive education and disability in the Global South*. Palgrave/Macmillan.
- Kamenopoulou, L. (2018b). Inclusive education in the global south? A Colombian perspective: 'When you look towards the past, you see children with disabilities, and if you look towards the future, what you see is diverse learners.' *Disability and the Global South*, 5(1), 1192–1214.
- Kamenopoulou, L., & Dukpa, D. (2018). Karma and human rights: Bhutanese teachers' perspectives on inclusion and disability. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(3), 323–338.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1365274>
- Kiuppis, F. (2014). Why (not) associate the principle of inclusion with disability? Tracing connections from the start of the 'Salamanca Process'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(7), 746–761.
- Kormos, J., & Smith, A. M. (2012). *Teaching languages to students with specific learning differences*. Multilingual Matters.
- Kubota, R. (2019). Confronting epistemological racism, decolonizing scholarly knowledge: Race and gender in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 41(5), 1–22.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. Yale University Press.
- Ministerio de Educación [MEN]. (2008). Programa Educación Inclusiva con Calidad 'Construyendo Capacidad institucional para la Atención a la Diversidad'. Convenio Ministerio de Educación Nacional - Tecnológico de Antioquia, Colombia [Inclusive education with quality programming: Building institutional capacity with attention to diversity. Agreement between Ministry of National Education - University of Technology of de Antioquia, Colombia] 2008.  
[https://pebaibague.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/4/3/2343628/educacion\\_inclusiva.pdf](https://pebaibague.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/4/3/2343628/educacion_inclusiva.pdf)
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN]. (2022). *Proyectos Etnoeducativos*.  
<https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/w3-article-23511.html>
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN]. (1994, February 8). *Ley General de Educación: Ley 115* [General Law of Education: Law 115].  
[https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/articles-85906\\_archivo\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/articles-85906_archivo_pdf.pdf)
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN]. (2013). *Lineamientos política de educación superior inclusiva* [Higher inclusive education policy guidelines].  
[https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1759/articles-357277\\_recurso.pdf](https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1759/articles-357277_recurso.pdf)
- Moreno Angarita, M., & Gabel, S. L. (2008). Politics, inclusion and disabled children: The Colombian context. In S. L. Gabel & S. Danforth (Eds.), *Disability and the politics of education: An international reader* (pp. 225–236). Peter Lang.

- OECD. (2016). *Education in Colombia*. OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264250604-en>
- OCHA. (2017). *Colombia humanitarian fund annual report*. United Nations Humanitarian Country Team. [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Colombia%20HF\\_Annual%20Report%202017.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Colombia%20HF_Annual%20Report%202017.pdf)
- Pennycook, A., & Makoni, S. (2020). *Innovations and challenges in applied linguistics from the Global South*. Routledge.
- Phan, L. H. (2017). *Transnational education Crossing 'Asia' and 'the West': Adjusted desire, transformative mediocrity, and neo-colonial disguise*. Routledge.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Pijl, S. J., Meijer, C. J. W., & Hegarty S. (1994). *Inclusive education: A global agenda*. Routledge.
- Rose, D. (2019). Foreword. In S. Bracken & K. Novak (Eds), *Transforming higher education through universal design for learning* (pp. xii–xx). Routledge.
- Robayo Acuña, L. M., & Cárdenas, M. L. (2017). Inclusive education and ELT policies in Colombia: Views from some PROFILE journal authors. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 19(1), 121–136.
- Roux, R. (2012). English language education policy in Colombia and Mexico. *International perspectives on education. BCES conference book volume 10*. ERIC ED567040.
- Schuelka, M. (2015). The evolving construction and conceptualisation of 'disability' in Bhutan. *Disability and Society*, 30(6), 820–833.
- Sharma, U., Folin, C., Deppler, J., & Guanxue, Y. (2013). Reforming teacher education for inclusion in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region. *Asian Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1(1), 3–16.
- Stier, J. (2004). Taking a critical stance toward internationalization ideologies in higher education: Idealism, instrumentalism and educationalism. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 2(1), 1–28.
- Tollefson, J. (1981). The role of language planning in second language acquisition. *Language Learning* 31(2), 337–348.
- Tollefson, J. (1991). *Planning language, planning inequality: Language policy in the community*. Longman.
- Trines, S. (2020). *WENR: Education in Colombia*. <https://wenr.wes.org/2020/06/education-in-colombia-2>
- Usma Wilches, J. (2015). *From transnational language policy transfer to local appropriation: The case of the National Bilingual Program in Medellín, Colombia*. Deep University Press.
- UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality.
- United Nations Peacemaker. (2022). Agreement on the bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, and the law down of weapons between the national government and the FARC-EP. <https://peacemaker.un.org/ceasefire-colombia-2016>
- Uribe, C., Murnane, R. J., Willett, J. B., & Somers, M. (2006). Expanding School enrollment by subsidizing private schools: Lessons from Bogota. *Comparative Education Review*, 50(2), 241–277.
- Valencia, M. (2013). Language policy and the manufacturing of consent for foreign intervention in Colombia. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development* (15), 27–43.

Vásquez-Orjuela, D. (2015). Políticas de inclusión educativa: una comparación entre Colombia y Chile. [Politics of inclusive education: A comparison between Colombia and Chile]. *Educación y educadores* 18(1), 45–61.

World Bank. (2022). *Population, Total - Colombia*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CO>

World Bank. (2021). *Children out of school, primary - Colombia*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.UNER?end=2019&locations=CO&start=1982&view=chart>

World Bank & International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. (2014). *Towards sustainable peace, poverty eradication and shared prosperity*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/21037/ACS109000REVISotesotexto120220140qr.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>.

World Health Organization, & World Bank. (2011). *World report on disability*. World Health Organization.

## Biographical note

**ROSA DENE DAVID** is a senior research analyst for the Planning and Institutional Research Office, and a Ph.D. student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, BC., Canada). Her research looks at the intersection of disability justice and supporting equity-deserving students on university campuses.

**KIMBERLEY BROWN**, PhD, is full professor in Applied Linguistics at Portland State University, USA. She teaches in both the Department of Applied Linguistics and the Department of International and Global Studies. She is former Vice-Provost for International Affairs. Her research interests include intercultural education, World Englishes, and language learning pedagogy.