

INTERCULTURALITY AND INTERNATIONALIZATION: APPROACHES FROM LATIN AMERICA

MARIA JULIETA ABBA

Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos



DANILO R. STRECK

Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos

Abstract

The article aims to analyze the constructs of interculturality and internationalization based on a theoretical framework that is rooted in sociology and political economics (internationalization) and in sociology and decolonial studies (interculturality) and to understand the contributions of critical interculturality to the development of an alternative notion of educational internationalization. Methodologically, this work is constituted as a qualitative study, of the descriptive and exploratory type, using bibliographic sources. In the first and second part of the article, the main approaches and debates about interculturality internationalization of higher education that take place in Latin America, are discussed. In a third part, these two approaches are analyzed in dialogue, emphasizing similarities between them. Finally, the main contributions of critical interculturality to the development of an alternative process of educational internationalization are presented, highlighting the importance of prioritizing inclusion, of establishing relationships under conditions of equity and an expanded epistemic field.

Keywords: Latin America, interculturality, internationalization, coloniality

Introduction

Internationalization and interculturality are two concepts that are currently in vogue, both on a national level in universities, government ministries and companies, and on an international level in NGOs, financial agencies and development agencies. As with other terms that have become widely used in the field of education, such as innovation, entrepreneurialism and quality, few debates in the academic field aim at understanding these terms from a critical perspective. Generally speaking, academics and entrepreneurs who benefit from being in hegemonic centers of knowledge, are the ones who control and influence the discussion of these terms. A limiting and normative framework to develop an innovative, entrepreneurial, internationalized and intercultural education of quality emerges from discourses produced in these hegemonic centers of knowledge. The present article therefore intends to analyze these two central concepts (internationalization and interculturality) from an alternative and critical perspective, based on a theoretical framework produced by Latin American authors in the field of social sciences and education, and to understand the contributions of interculturality from the critical standpoint to develop an alternative internationalization¹.

This paper is based on findings that emerged within a qualitative study, of the descriptive and exploratory character. From a descriptive perspective, it aims at presenting the main aspects of a given phenomenon, namely internationalization, its context, its problems and its challenges. Within this paper, a new perspective is investigated and consolidated while establishing ties between different concepts and approaches hence its exploratory nature.

Theoretically, the main approaches to interculturality and internationalization of education, as they were developed by Latin American authors are discussed. Work by Walsh (2010, 2012), Tubino (2004) and Cruz Rodriguez (2013) is used in order to examine the concept of critical interculturality. This is part of a relatively long history of discussion on interculturality in Latin America (Fornet-Betancourt, 1994). The contributions of Perrota, (2016), Abba (2018), Beneitone (2014), and others are then used to analyze discourses around the phenomenon of internationalization. These two notions are then analyzed in dialogue, in order to emphasize their similarities. Finally, the main contributions of critical interculturality to the development of an alternative educational internationalization are presented.

A look at interculturality in Latin America

The concept of interculturality originated in the 1980s based on the formulation of Indigenous educational policies in Latin America². It was then reclaimed by the ancestral peoples like the Aymaras and Quechuas in the Andean Region and, more generally, by social and

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² An example of these policies is *bilingual intercultural education*, which replaced *bicultural bilingual education*, recognizing that a human collectivity never becomes quite bicultural, due to its global character and integration of culture, and to its historical and dynamic character (Walsh, 2010, p. 80; quote translated from Spanish by the authors).

political movements associated with ethnic, racial and linguistic demands (Cruz Rodríguez, 2013). It was therefore taken up as a motto in the fight to ensure the recognition and rights of ethnic groups, races and cultures that have been subordinated within a totalizing and hegemonic system.

There is actually no single definition of the concept of interculturality as this would go against its meaning. A universal definition in literature on the topic would ignore the variety of contexts that characterizes interculturality, and would also reinforce the existence of a monocultural society, thereby asphyxiating all kinds of differences (Cruz Rodríguez, 2013; Tubino, 2004). In every country and in every region, there are, to a certain extent, relations of dominance between cultures that materialize in different ways and according to different historical contexts. Since interculturality is a concept used to describe different contexts and with different interests, its comprehension is broad and heterogeneous. Three perspectives will therefore be presented below in an effort to synthesize their use and current meaning, as they were proposed by Walsh (2010, 2012) based on a dialogue with other authors, such as Tubino (2004) and Cruz Rodríguez (2013).

The first perspective is *relational interculturality*, which views it as an exchange between cultures, namely, between people, practices, knowledges, values and distinct cultural traditions (Walsh, 2012, p. 63)³. From this perspective, it is assumed that interculturality has always existed in Latin America since there have been relations and contacts between cultures, for instance between Indigenous peoples and the descendants of Africans with the white, mulatto and creole society. According to Walsh (2012), the problem with this perspective is that it conceals or minimizes the conflictual character of these relations and the background of dominance that enables and sustains them, as it limits interculturality to contact and relations covering up or leaving the structures of society – social, political, economic and also epistemic – that position the cultural difference in terms of superiority and inferiority (p. 63)⁴.

Due to the limitations of this perspective, according to Walsh (2012), the need arises to expand and problematize it based on the situated political, economic, ideological and cultural underlying intentions in diverse contexts. Therefore a second perspective is formulated, called *functional interculturality*, which recognizes cultural diversity and purposefully adopts interculturality as a driving force of established social structures (Tubino, 2004). Its name derives from its functional character within the hegemonic system; it presents interculturality as compatible with the matrix of existing neoliberal models. This perspective derives from the old multicultural logic which sought to promote interaction, coexistence, tolerance and equality among cultures. Inspired by multiculturalism, functional interculturality thus recognizes difference in a neutral, objective form, regardless of contextualization. It is worth highlighting that, according to this type of logic, the relation among cultures is determined by their majoritarian and minoritarian character where the minorities must adapt to the liberal structure proposed by the majority, eliminating their particularities and assimilating those of the majority.

³ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

⁴ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

In effect, functional interculturality therefore goes against the inherent principles of an intercultural approach.

As mentioned above, Walsh (2012) emphasizes that cultural diversity and its social recognition are used to fuel strategies of domination, where the objective is not to create equitable and egalitarian societies based on the promotion of social justice and equal access to common rights, but to control the ethnic conflict and preserve social stability in order to attain the economic goals of the neoliberal model of capitalist accumulation.

From this perspective, inclusion is presented as an essential mechanism to promote social cohesion; i.e., it is a matter of managing the cultural diversity inherent to a given population so that it does not become a source of threat and insecurity. Policies promoted by some international agencies such as the United Nations Procurement Division (UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) illustrate what is meant by functional interculturality. One of these policies is the recognition of linguistic diversity, and the inclusion of regional languages in the school curriculum without considering the global political motivations and implications.

The third perspective is termed *critical interculturality* and suggests that the central problem is not diversity or difference in itself, but structural, colonial and racial dominance, and their relationship with capitalism. While the previous perspective was presented as functional to the prevailing model of society, critical interculturality calls for questioning the social order, in order to transform it and to unsettle the conditions of inequality in which minorities live. Another aspect that can be emphasized when it comes to critical interculturality is that differentiation among cultures is determined by their dominant/subordinate character. It is important to reflect on the fact that these unequal relations are a legacy of colonial domination or coloniality. The latter is affirmed as a pattern of power founded on the idea of race as an instrument of hierarchization, of dominance and of social control. In this context, critical interculturality is a call of and from people who have suffered an historical submission and subalternization, from their allies and from the sectors that fight with them for social refounding and decolonization, for the construction of other worlds (Walsh, 2012, p. 65)⁵.

In this sense, when Walsh (2010, 2012), Cruz Rodríguez (2013) and Tubino (2004) argue for critical interculturality as a “bottom up” construct, they view interculturality as a political, social, ethical and epistemic proposal rising from the bases that were rendered subaltern due to the imposition of European colonial power in Latin American countries. In this way, Indigenous peoples, peasants, women, and Black people, among other minorities, become protagonists of their own history, and begin to tell it with their own voice. In spite of differences in terms of the exercise of power and domination, there is a common experience of exclusion and subjugation. Respectively, there are also various ways of resisting and creating movements for transformation such as the Zapatista movement in México, the landless peasant movement in Brazil and the feminist movement against feminicides in Argentine.

⁵ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

In contrast to a relational interculturality perspective, which takes an objective interest in relations among cultures and promotes one-directional learning, critical interculturality views relations between cultures as constantly changing because cultures themselves change over time in relation to one another. According to Tubino (2004) cultures are situational realities, dynamic, historical subjects that are self-defined by the relations with others (p. 155)⁶. When Paulo Freire (1989) stated that no one is alone in the world since each person is a being in the world, with the world, and with others, he offered us with a view of identities as changing, as always being constructed in dialogue with others and with the contexts in which they emerge, and, ideally, under equal conditions. Oliveira (2015) identifies parts of Freire's work that recognize the formation and expression of cultures amid certain social and political situations, thereby characterizing it as one of the original sources of critical interculturality. Candau (2009) also puts into perspective the major impacts of Freire's work, relating them with critical interculturality. The long period of exile, specially his work as consultant in the field of education to the World Council of Churches in Geneva allowed him to experience different ways of living and interpreting human existence in the world.

In addition to education, one of the most fertile fields of interculturality in Latin America is theology. Fernet-Betancourt (1994, p. 78) emphasizes how opening one's mind to the way other peoples and cultures interpret and live their relations with transcendence, with the other and with nature enables the generation of another kind of rationality. By integrating popular songs, oral traditions, local and regional stories and legends in its reflection, one goes beyond the borders that traditionally separate disciplines towards a more complex and inclusive type of transdisciplinary rationality. Theology started to dialogue not only with academic disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, but with knowledge generated within the community's religious experience. Preiswerk (2011) identifies some aspects of this type of rationality in the Latin American theological education: it is contextual, ethical-political, critical and liberating, relational and intersubjective; plural, multipolar and inclusive; decentered; unprecedented; inter and transdisciplinary and intersubjective. For him, interculturality, contrary to multiculturalism, does not limit itself to confirm diversity but intends to build bridges and exchanges in the midst of variety, without the intent to homogenize and without attempting to integrate the diverse to the dominant model (p. 427)⁷.

So far we have analyzed three theoretical perspectives on interculturality discussed in the literatura in Latin America namely: relational, functional and critical. We have argued for the relevance of a critical approach to interculturality emerging from the struggles of segments of the population that suffer within coloniality, a concept that stands for the objective and subjective conditions of domination expressed in relations of power, race, gender and class relations (Moraña, Dussel, & Jáuregui, 2008). Next we shall take a look at the internationalization of education literature, where different points of view on this topic will be presented and analyzed.

⁶ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

⁷ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

A look at internationalization in Latin America

This section aims to put in perspective theories about the internationalization of education, understanding internationalization as a phenomenon that is currently more developed within the sphere of higher education, but which is also more and more present at other educational levels, as for instance elementary education (Streck & Abba, 2018). Paying close attention to these specific terms enables us to reflect on the fact that *higher* education might very well imply that there is a *lower* kind of education, and vice-versa. In this sense, analysing, from a critical perspective, the vocabulary used to describe educational systems reveals the colonial discourses that influence our perception and categorization of knowledge and also opens avenues for a new kind of epistemology.

In this sense, Mignolo (2010) called attention to the epistemic colonization produced by the colonial, modern and eurocentric matrix of power. This matrix controls knowledge and its geopolitical placement in the modern world. Therefore, Mignolo (2010) proposes a decolonizing grammar which allows rewriting world history from a critical perspective. This grammar encompasses the vocabulary, the syntax and the semantic as key elements of knowledge that corroborate for the constitution of epistemic (de)colonization. Another mechanism for deepening and expanding the (de)colonial turn is border thinking as a subaltern epistemic perspective. In border thinking western knowledge and subjectivity coexist with other forms of knowledge and language, other forms of living one's gender and other memories and beliefs that nevertheless remain within relations of domination and exploitation. In this way, border thinking also allows connecting the projects that resulted from the colonial wounds and enhances their protagonism based on different colonial histories of oppression.

There are many interpretations, readings and analyses of scientific studies about internationalization, performed in different parts of the world (Didou Aupetit & Escobar, 2014; Guimaraes-Iosif & Pollom Zardo, 2015; Knight, 2012; Morosini, 2006; Kehm & Teichler, 2007). However, few studies elaborate and discuss concepts and theoretical /analytical frameworks which address the challenges, paradoxes and limits of internationalization (Stein et al., 2016). The very concept of internationalization has changed since it was initially formulated (Altbach, 1989; de Wit, 1995; Knight, 1994; Teichler, 1999), and requires critical reflection (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011; Stein, 2017).

Furthermore, research on this particular topic conducted in and documented from the hegemonic centers of knowledge establish an exiguous dialogue with research taking place in other regions, as, for instance, in Latin America (Abba, 2018). On this crucial point, Beneitone (2014) highlights the fact that the theoretical debate on internationalization comes from a few authors who work in contexts outside Latin America, and that it is therefore essential to ask whether contributions are generated *Desde el Sur* (From the South) to define internationalization.

In an effort to address this question, we take the theoretical contributions of Perrota (2016) as reference. This author, based on her studies on Mercosul, identifies three trends to internationalization while analyzing this phenomenon in the context of regional integration. First, the idea of *internationalization of the status quo* reinforces and feeds a hegemonic model

of internationalization without questioning it. As Perrota (2016) explains it, this hegemonic model comes from the framework of a world economic order that has bestowed a central value on knowledge, and that, at the same time, has started to surround it, to privatize it, and consequently to concentrate it (p. 18)⁸. In other words, education and knowledge become goods that can be traded on the international market.

The second trend Perrota (2016) highlights is based on the idea of *revisionist internationalization* which, in some ways, is close to the first idea described above. It questions some aspects of the hegemonic model of internationalization through a revision of its policies and practices. The third and last trend is referred to as *rupturist internationalization*. As its name suggests, this trend proposes a break with the hegemonic model of internationalization through a critical process of denunciation. Rupturist internationalization is characterized by solidarity, a respectful process of internationalization, based on horizontal relations of interuniversity cooperation, which do not ignore the leitmotiv of the university: being a space for the production and circulation of critical thinking, in the complex balance between the local, national and regional needs and the contribution to the advancement of knowledge (Perrota, 2016, p. 53)⁹

According to Perrota, the first two tendencies (status quo and revisionist) are close to the model of hegemonic internationalization, while the rupturist trend is similar to the model of solidary internationalization. Other theoretical contributions dedicated to constructing alternative analytical categories regarding internationalization are of importance to be mentioned here; among them are the concepts of solidary internationalization (López Segre, 2007, Perrota, 2016), necessary internationalization (Abba, 2018), endogenous internationalization (Didou Aupetit, 2017; Taborga, López, Oregioni, & Abba, 2013), and non-hegemonic internationalization (Oregioni, 2017).

What characterizes these theoretical productions and brings them together is the identification of two perspectives of the process of internationalization of education. On the one hand stands the hegemonic perspective, together with the commercialization of education, which is expanding daily as a consequence of the power relations exerted by transnational corporations and international agencies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and others. This perspective is thereby ruled by the geopolitics of knowledge, which establishes an arbitrary hierarchy between the States located in the North, where the hegemonic centers for the production of knowledge are located, and the States that belong to the colonial periphery subordinated to this production of knowledge.

On the other hand, another perspective presents itself to critically overcome the mercantile and hierarchical vision of knowledge. This alternative comes from counter discourses emerging in the South, not so much as a geographic space, but as a metaphor where suffering and oppression are consequences of the dominant capitalist system (Sousa Santos, 2006). An internationalization process coming from the South, constructed on a democratic base (Cunha,

⁸ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

⁹ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

2016), considers that education is a fundamental student right and should be experienced by as many human beings as possible.

In the following part, a dialogue between the approaches proposed for each of the central topics of this work (interculturality and internationalization) will be presented in order to identify bridging points that could bring these two approaches together. The intention is to develop the understanding of internationalization as a complex phenomenon immersed in a world that comprehends a great cultural diversity.

Approaches in Dialogue

Comparatively, we believe that the approaches presented above have three main similarities that deserve to be emphasized in the context of an analysis of interculturality and internationalization in the field of education. The first of them is that the classifications by Walsh (2010, 2012) and Perrota (2016) were elaborated as ideal types, as analytic categories based on a theoretical corpus that is rooted in sociology and political economics (internationalization) and in sociology and decolonial studies (interculturality). However, both authors acknowledge that, in reality, these categories may appear in a hybrid form, depending on the complexity of the context. For instance, an educational project may adopt certain aspects of critical interculturality and, at the same time, present traits of functional interculturality. The same goes for internationalization. In a given university, the institutional mission may be characterized by the rupturist trend, and its practices may promote the development of experiences with characteristics of an internationalization that promotes the status quo of the hegemonic trend. This process allows us to identify and analyze the different approaches in a given context of study, and how institutions and professionals deal with tensions and conflicts in the process of internationalization.

The second similar aspect is that both proposals present three possibilities that could emerge from their implementation in relation to the current social, cultural, educational, political and economic hegemonic model. As can be seen in Table 1 below there is a wide range of possibilities for combining these types of internationalization and interculturality. As proposed in axis A, we see the functional character of internationalization and interculturality, related to the maintenance of a given situation, without any kind of change or modification. Axis B presents on the one hand a revisionist relation regarding the hegemonic model (internationalization), and, on the other, a neutral concept of the relation between the different cultures (interculturality). Finally, the proposal of axis C at the same time as it questions/criticizes the model in force, presents itself as an approach with a potential to construct an alternative to this model.

Table 1.

Analytical proposals: Interculturality and Internationalization

Axes	Interculturality	Internationalization
A	Functional	Of status-quo
B	Relational	Revisionist
C	Critical	Rupturist

Developed by the authors based on the contributions of Walsh (2010, 2012) and Perrota (2016).

The third similarity between these approaches is the fact that they all originate in Latin America. As mentioned previously, the production of knowledge in the countries of the South presents an epistemological challenge to the hegemonic perspectives produced by the North, imposed as universal, and assumed as rational global truths (Lander, 2015; Sousa Santos, 2004). In this sense, through the dialogue with knowledge produced in other regions, a plural and heterogeneous form of knowledge can be constructed. In the case of Latin America, it is the first space where a non ethnocentric and alternative horizon surfaces, for instance through (de)coloniality and Buen Vivir (Good Living), (Quijano, 2014)¹⁰, which present themselves as *other* paradigms in the face of Eurocentric modernity.

Having defined conceptually the approaches about interculturality and internationalization, and identified certain points where both meet, we will next present the main contributions of interculturality in its critical approach to the development of an alternative form of internationalization.

How can critical interculturality contribute to the development of an alternative internationalization?

Analyzing the topic of internationalization of education and looking specifically at universities, a few questions arise, such as: who are the students who enter these institutions? Once they have entered, who are the students who achieve internationalization? In seeking answers to these questions, we present statistics/numbers that can support this analysis and provide some answers to these questions.

Beginning in 1950, a massification of higher education at the international level occurred. In the period between 1975 and 1995, enrollment in higher education at the international level doubled going from 40 to 80 million students, although access to this level of education is still selective and unequal (Torres, 2010). The statistical report of CEPAL for 2016 informs that the coverage of higher education in Latin America increased in the quintile of the population with

¹⁰Towards the end of the 20th Century, victims of the capitalist and colonial system began to resist the patterns of dominance and exploitation that the latter used for its reproduction. This resistance (re)signified social existence, giving it a new historical meaning (Quijano, 2014). In this sense, Buen Vivir, a term coined by the indigenous population in the 17th Century, is a contribution produced in Latin America, which refers to a complex of social practices guided toward the democratic production and reproduction of a democratic society, another form of social existence with its own, specific historical horizon of meaning, radically alternative to global coloniality of power and coloniality/modernity/Eurocentricity (Quijano, 2014, pp. 19-20; quote translated from Spanish by the authors).

higher incomes (11%), while in the quintile of lowest incomes, the increment was 2% (Comisión Económica Para América Latina y el Caribe [CEPAL], 2017). If we add to this analysis the category of race, we see that this selective and unequal character becomes even more significant. For instance, in Brazil, in 2009, in the age group of 18 to 24 years, the percentage of access to higher education was 28% for whites and 11% for those who declare themselves non white (Black, Pardo and Indigenous) (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas [INEP], 2009).

As to internationalization, if we look at the international mobility of students, there is also a growing trend, although it is limited and unequal between the regions (Didou Aupetit, 2017; Luchilo, 2013). According to data from the *UNESCO Institute for Statistics* (UIS) from 2017, the number of outgoing international students was 5,085,893 worldwide, of whom 310,466 students were originally from Latin America and the Caribbean. Percentage-wise, within Latin America and the Caribbean, this number represents 1,14% of the total enrollment in higher education in this region. One might also refer to other dimensions of internationalization, besides mobility, which lack developing, as in the case of curriculum (Gacel Ávila & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2018), research (Lamarra & Albornoz, 2014) and the study of languages (Finardi & Guimarães, 2017).

Considering this overview, there is no doubt that education often is a tool for the construction/legitimization of the values/attitudes/identities of the dominant classes (Walsh, 2010; Mészáros, 2008). One of the dramatic consequences of this tendency is the hierarchization and homogenization of cultural identities. It is critical that we create possibilities to also be able to think about an alternative education and internationalization. We believe that one of these paths can be interculturality, in its critical form, based on new horizons protagonized by multiple values/attitudes/identities; horizons where relations established under conditions of equality will actually end up being equitable (Walsh, 2012), and where there is an inclusive process of various types of existences within a same temporal space.

It should be underscored that a careful approach must be adopted when using the term *inclusion*, so that it is not understood as the action of incorporating another culture into a dominant totality, based on a relation in a single direction, neglecting its history, its roots and everything that is part of its identity. Therefore, when we refer to the need for inclusive internationalization, we believe in a form of internationalization in which international students are treated equally and have the same equal opportunities without needing to establish conditions for race, gender, ethnicity, nationality or social class. For instance, where a student from X country will have the possibility of travelling to another country and during the course of this experience be treated the same as any student.

Critical interculturality can also be extended to the epistemologic field. In this sense, hegemonically westernized and modern science and knowledge are challenged by ancestral knowledge, already recognized as scientific and technological knowledge, for instance, in the national Constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia (Walsh, 2012). This university knowledge is also challenged by a “pluriversal” kind of knowledge (Sousa Santos, 2011), that comprises several contexts (local, national, international) and several types of knowledge within a transdisciplinary dialogue. However, as Walsh (2012) stresses, interculturality goes beyond incorporating subjects

in the curriculum connected to cultural diversity or to folkloric traditions. Interculturality in its critical approach is a practice, a project in constant movement, which winds its way towards a substantial change from various angles (Tubino, 2004).

Therefore, when critical interculturality is constructed in a dialogue with society as a whole, in the field of education it overturns the elitizing and excluding trends, enabling the rise and the existence of social and humanly more enriching experiences in internationalization. This reflexive process further implies action, what Freire (2016) calls *action and reflection*, as a non-dichotomic dialectical relationship, where knowledge feeds back doing, influencing a new reflection, and both feedback on themselves (Kronbauer, 2010).

Continuing the analysis of this process of *action and reflection* around the two concepts (interculturality and internationalization), it is worth mentioning that there are some Latin American experiences that can be identified mostly with critical interculturality, and that have contributed to the development of an alternative internationalization. Some institutions of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean have indeed taken up a true commitment to critical interculturality and to the epistemologic dispute, particularly in the North-South relations. (Abba, 2018). These institutions are the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA), the University of International Integration of African-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB), and the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM). All of them are universities that can be identified as Intercultural Institutions of Higher Education (Mato, 2009), that were created specifically to serve the needs, demands and proposals for formation in the higher education of communities of more than one indigenous people, descendants from Africans and/or of other adscriptions or cultural identifications, in which one seeks to learn the knowledges, modes of production of knowledge and modes of learning of various cultural traditions, placing them in a relationship with each other (p. 49)¹¹.

Another experience is worth mentioning in regards to its contribution to critical interculturality because of the interaction between various languages it promotes in its educational space. This initiative, called *TANDEM*, is carried out at UNILA, since 2014 and its objective is linguistic and cultural learning, generally between pairs, in an authentic context of communication and cooperation (Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana [UNILA], 2017, para. 1)¹². Originally, the meaning of the word *tandem* is attributed to bicycles that have two seats. The word was then used to refer to forms of work and of collaborative teaching-learning. According to the manual of the Tandem Project of UNILA (Rammé & Del Olmo, 2014), tandem has become, above all an activity complementary to the traditional process of learning languages, (mainly in a classroom), since it places the language learners in contact with native or competent speakers of the target language, thus providing authentic communicative environments where they can develop their socio-cognitive, intercultural and linguistic skills fully and unrestrictedly. Finally, the idea of this linguistic cooperation would obey the same assumptions of a ride on a tandem bicycle: the two companions must pedal

¹¹ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

¹² Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

together and collaborate with each other to reach their destination (Rammé & Del Olmo, 2014, p. 4)¹³.

Thus, the Tandem project allows democratic and free access to other languages, through contact with people who grew up speaking these languages as their mother tongues, enabling not only language learning but also cultural enrichment through the exchange of experiences.

Finally, we can mention another experience of critical interculturality supported by cooperation and solidarity facing a competitive and unequal world. TATU is developed in Argentina and is a non-profit solidary, independent, Latin Americanist and internationalist organization whose line of thinking is that of Comandante Ernesto Guevara and has the participation of physicians graduated from and students of different year classes of ELAM (Espino Hernández & Integrantes de Tatu, 2009, p. 55)¹⁴. The name Tatu was given to this initiative in honor of the guerrilla name used by Che Guevara when fighting in Africa, and the purpose of the group is to provide medical care to people who do not have access to health services. Some of the activities performed by this group include identifying major health problems in various communities of Buenos Aires, forming health groups, working in health education, recompiling information for planning and implementing plans for the prevention of diseases and contributions raised by people and by agencies (Espino Hernández & Integrantes de Tatu, 2009). This example illustrates that internationalization with a critical intercultural perspective contributes for improving people's living conditions, as well as for qualifying the ordinary academic experiences of internationalization.

Final considerations

Interculturality and internationalization, as seen/explained in this text, are concepts and practices that go hand in hand. We can say that every process of internationalization of education implies some type of interculturality, and also that interculturality extends beyond the local, regional and national experiences. However, both must be seen in the context of political relations of power and ethical values that give them specific meanings. Therefore, our interest was to identify the different approaches within interculturality and internationalization, and then to bring these two topics closer and observe the potentials of this relation for the development of a critical and alternative educational path.

We consider that the approach to interculturality (in its critical focus), on the one hand expands and on the other delimits the process of reflection/action of the internationalization of education. It expands it in the sense that it places dialogue and discussion within a larger sphere of reflection about social and cultural processes in heterogeneous societies; and it delimits it in the sense of challenging us to ask the question and search for answers about the type of internationalization a) that one wishes for, and b) that is possible. As we saw in our review of relevant literature, the approaches of interculturality and internationalization, besides being developed on the plane of ideas, are also situated on a plane of action through the experiences

¹³ Quote translated from Portuguese by the authors.

¹⁴ Quote translated from Spanish by the authors.

mentioned above, and which are positioned as criticism and alternatives to the hegemonic model for the internationalization of education within a broader set of global interconnectedness.

In a context where internationalization of education has become a priority, critical interculturality helps us understand the complexity of the challenges of contemporary society, such as the migratory movement, the strengthening of nationalism, the construction of walls and the upsurge of frontiers. Therefore, the fact of conceiving ourselves as beings constituted *in and by* culture allows one to see internationalization as a broad process that goes beyond practical purposes such as higher quality of academic education, improvement of new technologies or enchantment or frustration with different ways of life. Critical interculturality implies conceiving internationalization as an opportunity for dialogue with *another*, the one that while facing us represents the possibility of a better understanding of ourselves, as well the possibility of establishing more meaningful relations with the other and with the world in which we live.

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