Conceptualizations of Interculturalism and Classroom Practice: A Study with Teachers of Shipibo Communities in Peru*

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Concepciones de interculturalidad y práctica en el aula: Estudio con maestros de comunidades shipibas en el Perú

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta resultados de una investigación cualitativa y comparativa. Tuvo como objetivo general identificar las concepciones de interculturalidad de los docentes de dos escuelas interculturales bilingües shipibo-castellano en Lima y dos en Ucayali, y describir cómo están presentes en su práctica educativa de aula

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y planificación curricular. La metodología incluyó entrevistas semiestructuradas, observaciones y análisis de unidades de aprendizaje. Los resultados pasaron por un proceso de reducción de datos y triangulación. En la concepción de interculturalidad de los maestros se encontraron temáticas prevalentes: afirmación de la cultura propia, encuentro con otras lenguas y culturas e intercambio entre culturas. Se encontró relación entre sus concepciones y sus prácticas en aula. Mientras que la planificación curricular muestra diferencias en la incorporación de contenidos con perspectiva intercultural entre las escuelas de Lima y Ucayali.

Palabras clave: concepciones, educación intercultural, práctica docente, planificación curricular.

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a qualitative and comparative research study. Its purpose was to identify teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism in two Shipibo-Spanish bilingual intercultural schools in Lima and two in Ucayali, and to describe how these are reflected in their classroom educational practice and curriculum planning. The methodology included semi-structured interviews, observations and learning unit analysis. The results went through a process of data reduction and triangulation. The research found themes prevalent in the teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism: the affirmation of one's own culture, the encounter with other languages and cultures, and cross-cultural exchange. It found a relationship between their conceptualizations and their classroom practices; while curriculum planning for incorporating content with an intercultural perspective differs between the schools in Lima and Ucayali.

Keywords: conceptualizations, intercultural education, teaching practice, curriculum planning.

Concepções de interculturalidade e prática em sala de aula: estudo com professores de comunidades Shipibas no Peru

Resumo

O artigo apresenta resultados de pesquisa qualitativa e comparativa. Ele teve como objetivo geral identificar concepções interculturais dos professores em duas escolas interculturais bilíngues Shipibo-Castelhano em Lima e Ucayali e descrever como elas estão presentes em seu planejamento prática em sala de aula e currículo educacional. A metodologia incluiu a entrevista semiestruturada, observações e análise de unidades de aprendizagem. Os resultados passaram por um processo de redução de dados e triangulação. Na concepção de interculturalidade dos professores, os temas predominantes foram encontrados: afirmação da própria

cultura, encontro entre línguas e culturas, e troca entre culturas. Encontrou-se uma relação entre suas concepções e suas práticas de sala de aula. Enquanto o planejamento curricular mostra diferenças na incorporação de conteúdos com perspectiva intercultural entre as escolas de Lima e Ucayali.

Palavras-chave: Concepções, educação intercultural, prática de ensino, planejamento curricular.

1. Introduction

Peru is a country of great cultural, ethnic, linguistic, geographic and ecological diversity, home to numerous Andean and Amazonian indigenous peoples, and people of mixed race, Afro-descendants and immigrants. The Ministry of Culture (2016) states that there are 55 indigenous peoples in Peru, where 47 languages other than Spanish are spoken which pre-date the European colonization of America. One of these peoples is the Shipibo, one of the most numerous in the Peruvian Amazon (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2009).

When the Republic was established, the "forms of internal colonization were characterized by the exclusion and denigration of non-Iberian languages, cultures and creeds" (Valdiviezo and Valdiviezo, 2008). It was not until 1972 that the Education Reform of General Juan Velasco Alvarado's military government issued the first National Bilingual Education Policy for indigenous peoples, and declared Quechua to be the official language of Peru alongside Spanish. In 1989, the government added the intercultural component, called Bilingual Intercultural Education. The indigenous peoples' organizations, supported by Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization, signed by Peru in 1994 (ILO, 1989), are increasingly demanding that the government recognize their right to an education that respects their languages and cultures. Peru's current Political Constitution (1993) establishes that the State has an obligation to promote Bilingual Intercultural Education, which since 2000 has been called Intercultural Bilingual Education. More recently, the Education Law 28044 (2003) adopted interculturalism as a principle of national education, and in 2016 the government approved the Regulation of Law 29735 on the use, preservation, development, recovery, promotion and dissemination of Peru's indigenous languages[1].

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1   *El Peruano* Government Gazette, 22 July, 2016. Supreme Decree 004-2016-MC, which approves the Regulation of Law 29735.

In this context, the Ministry of Education (MINEDU, 2016) through its Department of Alternative Basic Education, Intercultural Bilingual and Educational Services in Rural Areas, drafted the National Plan for Intercultural Bilingual Education to 2021. The plan expresses a growing awareness of the need for intercultural education for all, not only for indigenous peoples, to eradicate prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion from Peruvian society, to the benefit of democratic coexistence and Peru's development.

In view of these intercultural bilingual education policies, the Ministry of Education in its 2016 National Curriculum announced curricular diversification at regional, local, institutional and classroom levels with an intercultural approach. It has also developed various teaching materials for different indigenous peoples in their native languages. For this study, it should be noted that since 2013 the Ucayali Region has had a Regional Curriculum Design for Intercultural Bilingual Primary Education for the indigenous peoples in its jurisdiction.

1.1. Problem statement: from education policy to classroom practice

Government rules, guidelines or approaches are expected to be applied in schools through daily teaching practice. However, experience shows that they are formally incorporated in the narrative or documents, but do not necessarily lead to the practice intended. Tapia and Cueto (2017), in a review of studies on curriculum development and factors associated with learning achievement, conclude that there is a gap between what the official curriculum prescribes and what happens in the classroom. They recommend taking measures to narrow this gap.

It is therefore important to know how teachers understand curriculum approaches and content, and how much these coincide or not with their own conceptualizations, as these are known to influence their classroom practice (Martín, Pozo, Mateos, Martín & Pérez Echeverría, 2014; Trumbull, Scarano & Bonney, 2006). Hence the importance of taking teachers' conceptualizations into account when developing education policies and curricula, so that these are more relevant and are implemented as a result of this dialogue.

Based on these considerations, the researchers ask how do teachers understand interculturality and how it is reflected in their classroom practice and curriculum planning?

Given the complexity of teaching practice (García-Cabrero Cabrero, Loredo and Carranza, 2008), in this study, "classroom practice" is seen as the way in which each teacher conducts the teaching and learning processes as

foreseen in the curriculum planning and other emerging topics, as well as the interactions they establish with students. Curriculum planning is understood as the process at the classroom level. It involves planning learning units to guide the learning sessions in the classroom and contains the competencies and skills that students will develop in a given period of the school year.

1.2. Study background

The study reviewed previous research in Peru, and found three studies that explore teachers' and education officials' conceptualizations of interculturalism and intercultural education. In the most recent study, León (2014) concludes that the participating teachers at the pre-school level in Puno, Cusco and Ucayali have a concept of interculturalism and intercultural education focused mainly on the use of the mother tongue, with little attention given to aspects such as identity, worldview and indigenous techniques. He identifies as positive the presence of elements of the indigenous culture in the classroom environment, some content, the use of the language in the learning sessions and the participation of wise men from the community in the classroom, but as activities that do not ensure comprehensive pedagogical processes. The author notes that teachers lack clarity on how to carry out intercultural education at pre-school level and have difficulty with curriculum programming.

Valdiviezo (2013), in a study on intercultural bilingual education with teachers from three schools in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, Cusco, finds variety and complexity in teachers' conceptualizations, some of which he describes as static and others as more fluid, but which in general tend to echo the official narrative of intercultural policy that emphasizes mutual cultural understanding and harmonious collective relations. From a critical perspective, he warns that such conceptualizations render invisible the inequalities and their causes and consequences for different cultural and social groups, and therefore fail to question asymmetrical power relations. Nevertheless, he finds some critical opinions, especially from indigenous teachers, and suggests the need to better understand how they reinterpret the intercultural education policy in order to put it into practice.

Peschiera (2010) finds that civil servants and teachers from different regions in Peru follow the standard narrative on interculturalism, with a Utopian perspective that does not question inequalities or current power relations. Most of these educational actors restrict IBE to indigenous peoples, with the idea of preserving and recovering cultures considered of lesser prestige in hegemonic contexts. He concludes that these conceptualizations correspond to the

functional perspective of interculturalism and that this interpretation may be the main factor that interferes with the purposes of intercultural education.

The three studies described above find that teachers hold mainly to a standard narrative of interculturalism, and they lack a critical perspective. They also identify positive points, mainly the preservation and affirmation of indigenous languages and cultures. Further research is needed to understand the diversity in teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism and to examine how these correspond to classroom practice and curriculum planning, in order to provide State policy with empirical feedback.

2. Theoretical framework: conceptualizations and interculturalism

This section details what this research means by conceptualizations and presents different approaches to interculturalism in order to identify and interpret those that are consistent with the conceptualizations of interculturalism found in the teachers who participated in the study.

Regarding conceptualizations, a difficulty arises because different terms are used as synonyms: beliefs, conceptions, interpretations, and representations all refer to the "thinking" that we are trying to see and understand, which is confusing (Jiménez and Feliciano, 2006). "Beliefs" and "conceptions" are the terms most commonly used as synonyms. In other cases, "conceptions" are understood to integrate beliefs, meanings, concepts, propositions, preferences and tastes (Ponte, 1999, cited by Ginocchio, Frisancho and La Rosa, 2015).

According to Giordan and De Vecchi (1995), cited by López-Vargas and Basto Torrado (2010), conceptualizations are the product of a personal process that integrates knowledge learned from family culture, social practice, school, the media, and adults' professional and social activity. In other words, conceptualizations have socio-cultural roots and are in turn a socialization factor that is at the basis of psycho-social exchanges produced in the field of action (Rodrigo, Rodríguez and Marrero, 1993); they are the result of dynamic processes that integrate socio-cultural, cognitive and emotional aspects which influence the way people act (Buendía, Carmona, González and López, 1999).

Arbeláez (2010) argues that conceptualizations:

> [...] are not just a product, they correspond to a process that occurs in the context of a processing activity, they depend on an underlying system that constitutes a framework of meaning. In the conceptualizations expressed, we recognize many actions, significant moments and processes of mental construction impacted by individual and collective experiences that have affected

their meaning. Every conceptualization has two components: one has to do with what is conceived and the other with how it is conceived. They form the frames of reference from which human beings act, they are the prism through which they perceive and the context in which they process information (p. 4).

Based on the above, for this research, "conceptualization" refers to the way in which teachers personally understand interculturalism, what it consists of and how it is manifested.

Regarding "interculturalism", authors such as López (2001) and Walsh (2009) agree that this term arose as a response to the homogenizing effect of official education in Latin American nation states, that were determined to forge a national identity in countries characterized by their ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, which was detrimental to indigenous peoples because it devalued their original cultures.

Different meanings are ascribed to interculturalism, depending on the social actor that uses the term, such as indigenous organizations, academics or educational authorities. Interculturalism in educational practice has been a topic of discussion on the agenda of indigenous movements since the 1980s, with different responses depending on their historical experience and expectations. In Peru, the Amazonian peoples consider bilingual intercultural education (IBE) to be a vindication of their ethnic, cultural and linguistic rights, while some Andean peoples view it with a certain fear and distrust (Zavala, Cuenca and Córdova, 2005), especially because BIE continues to be an education for indigenous peoples (Zavala, Cuenca and Córdova, 2005).

In general, the concept of interculturalism refers to the relationship between and interchange of customs, values and knowledge of people and peoples of different cultures. However, an analysis of the conditions in which people and peoples from different cultures relate to each other shows on the one hand a functional interculturalism and on the other a critical one, depending on the historical, social, economic and political factors of the context (Tubino, 2005; Walsh, 2000).

Functional interculturalism poses harmonious relations while respecting differences, but without questioning situations of inequity or the structural causes that are harmful to ethnic minorities and the original or indigenous peoples, who are considered less developed and of lesser value than the hegemonic culture. In contrast, the critical perspective of interculturalism considers it fundamental to recognize, question and modify the power relations that generate inequitable conditions and relations. It seeks to generate conditions

of equality that guarantee dialogue and respectful solutions to the conflicts and tensions inherent to human coexistence (Fornet-Betancourt, 2000).

Similarly, Walsh (2000) states that:

> [...] social, ethnic, economic and political inequalities in society do not disappear in the encounters between people or between cultural elements or practices. However, it is in this cross-border of relationship and negotiation that new strategies, expressions, initiatives, meanings and [inter]cultural practices are also constructed and emerge, challenging the homogeneity, cultural control and hegemony of the dominant culture (p. 12).

Zúñiga states that interculturalism:

> [...] is desiderative; it governs the process and is at the same time an unfinished, ongoing social process, in which there must be a deliberate intention of a dialogic, democratic relationship between the members of the cultures involved and not only the coexistence or unconscious contact between them. This would be the condition for the process to be described as intercultural. (Zúñiga, 1995, cited by Zúñiga y Ansión, 1997).

Clearly, unless the structural roots of inequalities between people and peoples is questioned, interculturalism becomes a narrative and practice that can produce superficial or insufficient changes that fail to alter an unjust social, economic and political system. A critical intercultural perspective requires profound changes in the structures of power as a condition for a respectful and participatory coexistence in permanent dialogue, as a comprehensive national program and not only for education or indigenous peoples. The practice of critical interculturalism therefore involves different dimensions: social, cultural, linguistic, ethical, political and economic.

It is also important to identify two types of narrative on interculturalism: one descriptive and one normative. On the one hand, the descriptive narrative of interculturalism refers to empirically verifiable facts regarding the coexistence of people or peoples with different cultural practices in a physical space, facing tensions or conflicts. On the other hand, the "should be" normative narrative of interculturalism is produced in philosophy and education. Philosophy proposes interculturalism as an ethical and political project of diversity-inclusive democracy. In education, the normative narrative of interculturalism is presented as a principle and as a curricular approach (Tubino y Zariquiey, 2004).

Tubino (2004), in *Interculturalidad para todos: ¿un slogan más?* ("Interculturalism for all: just another slogan?") says:

> In view of these narratives on interculturalism in Peru today, we believe that it is possible and necessary to construct a concept that, gathering the main contributions from each of them, will help us to identify the key guidelines to be followed in order to offer an intercultural education open to differences and flexible to the circumstances throughout the national education system (p. 3).

In the same vein, Peschiera (2010) cites Zavala, Cuenca and Córdova (2005) with whom he agrees that the normative and descriptive discourses are neither mutually exclusive nor contradictory, and states that "it is necessary to identify the key guidelines for reaching consensus on interculturalism in an open, critical and flexible manner" (p. 17).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative methodological approach to delve into the conceptualizations (Simons, 2009) that teachers in schools in Lima and Ucayali have constructed regarding interculturalism and how these conceptualizations guide their classroom practice to implement intercultural education.

The study had three specific objectives: (1) to recognize in the narrative of the teachers included in the study the conceptualization of interculturalism that guides their pedagogical work; (2) to identify how those conceptualizations are reflected in teachers' classroom practices; and (3) to identify how their conceptualizations of interculturalism are present in the short-term curricular programming.

3.1. Participants

The participants included 15 teachers from four public schools serving children from Shipibo communities: two in Lima (Peru's capital), where a group of migrant Shipibo families live, and two in Ucayali, where Shipibo families live in their region of origin (see Table 1). The teachers were given information on the research objectives and procedures and on the form their participation would take, and they signed an informed consent form.

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Table 1. Demographic data of the teachers who participated (N=15)

Demographic characteristics	School		Total
	Ucayali	Lima	
Teachers	5	10	15
Pre-school	2	4	6
Primary school	3	6	9
Place of birth			
Ucayali	5	3	8
Lima	-	5	5
Cusco	-	1	1
Jauja	-	1	1
Sex			
Female	3	9	12
Male	2	1	3
Language			
Spanish	-	6	6
Quechua/Spanish	-	1	1
Shipibo/Spanish	5	3	8
Ethnic group			
Shipibo	5	3	8
Mixed race	-	7	7
Shipibo speaking skills			
Very good	3	3	6
Good	2	-	2
Not very good	-	2	2
None at all	-	5	5
Level and area of expertise			
Preschool education	2	4	6
Primary Education	3	6	9
Secondary education	1	-	1
IBE	1	2	3

* Some teachers have more than one area of expertise.
Source: Data obtained from interviews.

3.2. Procedures and instruments

To achieve the proposed objectives, we used three procedures each with its own instruments: semi-structured interview, non-participant classroom observation and documentary analysis of learning units. The results from these three data sources were analyzed independently and triangulated to arrive at the overall conclusions of the study.

The study began with interviews about each teacher's conceptualization of interculturalism and demographic data. The initial coding of the interviews found 63 categories. These were then organized in related themes and the number of categories was reduced according to the criteria that each one be thorough, exclusive, significant and replicable (Ruiz, 1996). This process identified common categories in teachers' conceptualizations in Lima and Ucayali; and single categories considered only by teachers from one of the locations. These categories guided the subsequent analysis of the classroom observations and the learning unit analysis (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

Once they had the preliminary results, the researchers held a focus group in each region to socialize the findings with the teachers, confirming, clarifying and complementing the analysis conducted.

Using the categories identified in the interviews, the researchers went on to classroom observation to examine the extent to which teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism were reflected in their classroom practices. For this purpose, the researchers gathered information on language use, content treatment, procedures, Shipibo cultural practices and contributions from other cultures, classroom set up, educational materials, and interactions between teachers and students and among students. They went on to process and analyze data from the observations in relation to the conceptualization of interculturalism each teacher had expressed in the interview.

To examine how each teacher includes his or her conceptualization of interculturalism in the classroom curriculum, the researchers used the learning unit documentary analysis. The researchers analyzed the curricular components in each unit: the competencies, skills and indicators of the different areas, including whenever possible the learning activities to be carried out during the period covered in the unit. It should be mentioned that for planning, teachers in Lima schools use the National Curriculum Program for Primary Education (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2016). This stipulates the learning to be achieved in the areas of Communication, Mathematics, Social and Personal, Science, Technology and Environment, Physical Education, Religious Education, Art and Culture, and English and Spanish as a second language.

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The Ucayali schools on the other hand use the Bilingual Intercultural Primary Education Curriculum Design for the indigenous peoples of the Ucayali Region (2013), which incorporates two new areas: Territory and Identity and Spirituality, which corresponds to the social and cultural characteristics of their context, and "Mother tongue in the indigenous language".

4. Results

This section presents the conceptual categories identified in the teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism, distinguishing those held in common from those that are unique to each group of teachers in Lima and Ucayali. It also presents the classroom practices and curriculum programming aspects consistent with each conceptual category.

Three common conceptual categories emerged from the interviews that teachers in Lima and Ucayali schools share in their conceptualization of interculturalism. For them, interculturalism implies (a) affirming and valuing one's own culture, (b) the encounter with other languages and cultures, and (c) cross-cultural exchange. The post-interview focus groups confirmed the pre-eminence of these categories.

For the teachers in the participating schools, interculturalism thus begins with "affirming and valuing one's own culture", a conceptual category that groups together responses that emphasize the importance of valuing one's own culture first in order to relate to others with respect and build interculturalism: "I think that first we should know our own culture and customs and then those of others" (Shipibo teacher, Ucayali). In the focus groups, the teachers confirmed that affirming and valuing one's own culture is the basis and fundamental condition for interchange with others.

The second category, "encounter with other languages and cultures", brings together ideas related to recognizing differences from other ethnic groups, such as language, customs and worldviews: "For me it means speaking both languages. Speaking my own language and learning someone else's on the basis of the respectful practice of the other" (Shipibo teacher, Lima). In the focus groups, the teachers confirmed this meaning and emphasized the importance of affirming the Shipibo language and learning languages other than their own.

The third category, "cross-cultural exchange", refers to the respectful interchange of knowledge, sharing and dialogue with different ethnic and linguistic groups: "Sharing information with other people who are not from my group. They may be mixed race, Japanese, Chinese … I share my

worldview with them, and we share the way each of us sees the world" (Shipibo teacher, Ucayali). In the focus groups, they highlighted interculturalism as an opportunity for members of different cultures to exchange knowledge, beliefs and customs, learn from others and incorporate new elements into their experience: "To be intercultural, I believe, is not only to discover, but to look beyond, to see how we can improve. In this globalized world, not only to look at indigenous peoples, but to look at ... other countries" (mixed-race teacher, Lima).

It is important to note that in both focus groups, teachers differentiated between encounters and exchanges, recognizing that while an encounter between cultures and languages can be beneficial because it enables learning about other groups, it does not necessarily involve an authentic interchange, or in other words, learning from each other.

Regarding the single categories, teachers in Ucayali said that encounters between different cultures lead to changes in customs and ways of seeing things. The teachers in Lima, on the other hand, emphasized respect and non-discrimination as intercultural behaviors: "... I think it is respect for cultures, that of a mixed-race child, of a Shipibo child, because no child is discriminated against here" (mixed-race teacher, Lima).

The conceptualizations of interculturalism of the teachers in Lima and Ucayali, Shipibo and non-Shipibo, emphasize more significantly the affirmation and appreciation of their own culture as a fundamental condition for relating to other cultures, and have a very strong commitment to the preservation of the Shipibo language. However, most teachers include elements of the categories "encounter with other cultures" and "cross-cultural exchange", showing varying levels of complexity in their conceptualizations.

In line with the methodology, the researchers observed the teachers interviewed in the classroom to examine how their conceptualization of interculturalism is reflected in their practice. It is possible to say that there is a relationship between what the teachers said and what they do in the classroom. Examples of this relationship are given below, and present some teachers' responses regarding interculturalism and what researchers observed in their classrooms.

The following statement on interculturalism contains elements of the three categories mentioned above:

> For me, it means speaking both languages. Speaking my own language and learning someone else's language, through a practice that is respectful of the other person. Practicing everything related to other cultures. For us,

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interculturalism means sharing with respect; without practice we cannot talk about interculturalism (Shipibo teacher, Lima).

In this pre-school classroom most of the students belong to the Shipibo community, although they were born in Lima. Very few are mixed-race and all are Spanish-speakers. The researchers observed that the teacher conducts the activities in Spanish, but takes every opportunity (greetings, farewells, days of the week and songs) for girls and boys, including mixed-race children, to learn Shipibo as a second language (L2). The teacher thereby affirms the value of the Shipibo language, and also affirms the ethnic identity of the Shipibo by welcoming the mixed-race children:

> Teacher (in Shipibo): Sing loudly, why don't you sing loudly? We are all proud of our Shipibo community and we really love it. Which of you belong to the Shipibo community? [Girls and boys raise their hands, including a mixed-race boy]

> Teacher: [approaches the mixed-race boy] You're not. [Immediately addresses everyone]: But he feels about us as if he were, and we are very fond of him.

A teacher in Lima, a mixed-race woman of Andean origin, described interculturalism as: "It is a beautiful mix of coast, highlands and jungle. I enjoy learning what the children know, a mixture of different cultures. I have children from Puno and Huancayo. They do not speak Quechua, but they do have the culture, for example, the *huayno*. At home they have another culture. I have noticed that they do not adapt to the Shipibos".

The researchers observed that every day this first grade teacher writes down the new Shipibo words she learns with the children and her colleagues. She attends the Shipibo class (L2) taught by a Shipibo teacher and sings songs in Shipibo. She also taught mixed-race and Shipibo boys and girls to sing a *huayno* in Spanish and taught them Andean dances.

The conceptualization of interculturalism below speaks of sharing and understanding as concrete forms of cross-cultural exchange, for which the affirmation of one's own culture is a prerequisite: "Sharing knowledge with other people who are not from my group.... My worldview and the way I see the world.... But I think that what is ours must come first, knowing our own culture and customs, and afterwards that of others. I think that interculturalism allows us to understand each other and our mixed-race brothers and sisters" (Shipibo teacher, Ucayali).

Some mixed-race students participate in this fifth and sixth grade classroom. Researchers observed that the teacher takes advantage of community

events to help his students, Shipibo and mixed-race, to understand, affirm and appreciate the Shipibo culture. For example, a child died and everyone took part in the Shipibo funeral ceremonies. The next day, this teacher began the class by explaining in the Shipibo language that when someone dies in the Shipibo community, "a brother has died". On another occasion, he taught the use of capital letters by using Shipibo boys' and girls' names, and explained that "All our names come from animals". In this classroom, the researchers also observed the teacher's welcoming attitude towards people from different cultures: two trainee teachers from the Kunicuy (Purús) ethnic group, a young Swiss woman and a German woman, both volunteers who teach English at the school, none of whom speak Shipibo, so they speak Spanish. Using this experience, the teacher encourages his students: "We want to be trilingual. If I speak Shipibo, when I speak to the president I'll speak in Spanish; when I go to the U.S. I'll greet President Obama in English. That's what we want to be: global.".

During observation, researchers found that teachers who expressed their conceptualization of interculturalism more consistently, act in a manner more coherent with their views on it. Whereas those whose ideas were rather vague find it hard to put them into practice. It is striking that most of the actions or behaviors that are more coherent with what teachers say about interculturalism are not programmed in the learning units, especially in schools in Lima, but emerge more as informal actions, either in class or outside it.

Again, in line with the methodology, it is clear that in the Early and Primary Education learning unit analysis, in the Lima schools the competencies and skills that students must develop are those prescribed by the national curriculum. They are learning what all Peruvian children must learn, regardless of their ethnic origin or culture. However, the purpose of this school is clearly to preserve the Shipibo language in all grades of pre-school and primary, because the Second Language (L2) curriculum area teaches the Shipibo language. This coincides with the conceptualizations of interculturalism described by the teachers, who seek cultural affirmation through the learning or preservation of the indigenous language, and particularly considering that in these schools the students in the first grades are not native Shipibo speakers, as they were born in Lima.

It should also be noted that in the Lima schools, researchers found only two statements about developing a positive appreciation of Shipibo culture as a starting-point for the intercultural relations the teachers described. They found the following skill in the learning unit analyzed: "You relate interculturally with others based on your identity and you enrich each other" (mixed-race

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teacher, 3rd grade, Lima). Likewise, in another unit, the learning indicator states: Expresses pleasure and pride for the educational experience and manifestation and its community and for feeling part of these groups (Shipibo teacher, 2nd grade, Lima).

In Ucayali schools, Pre-school and Primary Education learning unit planning is governed by the Bilingual Intercultural Curriculum for the Indigenous Peoples of the Ucayali Region (CIBPIRU, 2013), which incorporates two new areas into the national curriculum: Territory and Identity and Spirituality. In this area, the skills that stand out are those related to knowledge of local history (people/community), and the organizational characteristics and decision-making mechanisms specific to the communities. It also recognizes original economic activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, gathering, making vessels and weaving). A skill that stands out in the Spirituality area is the ability of Shipibo people to establish a relationship with nature, based on reciprocity and respect, the search for balance in the coexistence with nature and their magical concept of nature.

Thus, in the Ucayali schools, the teachers' conceptualization of interculturalism that is present in all learning units is the affirmation of their own culture, linked to the capacity to preserve and value their language, worldview, spirituality and knowledge. It needs to be highlighted that both the regional curriculum and the learning units clearly appreciate the ancestral knowledge of the Shipibo community, without leaving aside the knowledge that comes from the (hegemonic) Western culture through the science content of the national curriculum. For example:

Science and Environment Curriculum area

> **Skill:** identifies animals in the ecosystem and researches people's stories about their origin, and classifies them according to habitat.

> **Skill:** Covers the important role that animals play in the ecosystem and identifies endangered species (Ucayali, 3rd and 4th grade of primary school: June teaching unit)

In summary, in the learning units analyzed, both in Lima and Ucayali one of the teachers' main purposes is to affirm Shipibo culture through studying the competencies and skills for learning or preserving the Shipibo language, and in Ucayali they recover the ancestral knowledge of the Shipibo culture, including specific skills in the areas covered by the regional curriculum.

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5. Discussion

In line with the research objectives and findings, this section offers some reflections based on the conceptualizations of interculturalism constructed by the participating teachers. It discusses four themes. The first two emerge consistently from the three sources of data collected: interviews, classroom observations and learning units: (1) the affirmation of one's own culture [Shipibo] as a condition for interculturalism; (2) interculturalism as cross-cultural exchange. The other two themes arise from analyzing these conceptualizations viz-a-viz the theoretical definitions of interculturalism presented in the conceptual framework of the study: (3) the predominance of a functional and normative perspective of interculturalism; and (4) interculturalism as a dynamic process.

5.1. The affirmation of one's own culture

The teachers, both in their discourse and in their practice, to a greater or lesser extent agree that cultural affirmation is a fundamental condition for establishing a dialogue with other cultures. In this process, the Shipibo language itself and learning the language are particularly important. This finding is consistent with the studies of León (2014) and Valdiviezo (2013) who found that teachers have a high appreciation of indigenous languages (Shipibo, Quechua) as an indispensable element for maintaining or reviving culture, which is very positive.

In the four schools, teachers include elements of Shipibo culture and language in the environment, classroom activities and learning units, geared to an appreciation of the indigenous culture. This is particularly so when the school is in a predominantly Shipibo cultural environment. In Ucayali, the regional curriculum has two important components for cultural affirmation in learning unit programming: the development of communication competences in the indigenous language, and the learning and recovery of Shipibo history, knowledge and cultural expressions in curriculum areas, especially Spirituality, Territory and Identity. Likewise, teachers use the Shipibo language to speak to students and parents outside the classroom (e.g., during breaks, celebrations, and meetings).

In contrast, cultural affirmation in the Lima schools poses an enormous challenge because they are in the midst of a hegemonic mixed-race culture and follow the national curriculum. In those circumstances, teaching Shipibo as a second language is crucial to the preservation of the culture because Shipibo is

not the mother tongue of the new generations (children of Shipibo migrants) who attend the schools. However, the efforts face constraints because, according to Shipibo and mixed-race teachers, they do not have the pedagogical tools to teach reading and writing in the Shipibo language or to incorporate Shipibo culture into curricular activities. To some extent, the schools of the Shipibo community in Lima could be "islands" of cultural preservation, isolated both from their indigenous community and from the city, despite the efforts of Shipibo migrant families to be part of Lima life by contributing to the city's economic and social activity. This situation highlights the need to implement intercultural education policies for all, since in Lima we find migrant populations with diverse languages and cultural practices, who face persistent discriminatory and racist attitudes and behaviors.

By proposing the affirmation of their own culture as a prior and fundamental condition for interculturalism (understood as respectful cross-cultural exchange), the teachers in this study recognize the unequal social relations between the Shipibo people and "the national culture", the term they use for the hegemonic mixed-race culture. Moreover, they assume Bilingual Intercultural Education as a vindication of their ethnic, cultural and linguistic rights (Zavala, Cuenca, and Córdova, 2005). However, none of the teachers mentioned the reasons for these unequal relationships.

The current National Curriculum for Regular Basic Education stipulates that on completing basic education "students should value, based on their individuality and interaction with their sociocultural and environmental surroundings, their own generational characteristics, the different identities that define them, and the historical and cultural roots that give them a sense of belonging" (Minedu 2017, p. 14). The classroom practices carried out for affirming Shipibo culture, which all the participating schools observe, help to achieve this goal.

The findings of this study affirm the need to take into account the teachers' contribution through their understanding of interculturalism as developed in their daily practice, in the classroom and in their community, instead of starting from a normative or ideal concept of interculturalism. De facto interculturalism should be the starting-point for working towards social change for the future (Zavala, Cuenca and Córdova, 2005).

5.2. Interculturalism as cross-cultural exchange

When interviewed in Ucayali and Lima, Shipibo and mixed-race teachers described interculturalism as cross-cultural exchange, understood as sharing

knowledge between different ethnic and cultural groups (from Peru and other countries). Their conceptualizations of interculturalism include respect, communication, willingness to learn from others and dialogue between cultures. These conceptualizations agree with positions that maintain that interculturalism is the relationship, communication and learning between people, groups, knowledge, values and different traditions, geared to creating, building and promoting mutual respect (Walsh, 2000); and that interculturalism is not a concept, but rather a behavior (Tubino, 2005). The study findings agree that it is a complex fact which cannot be reduced to a theoretical category, as it refers to a way of being in the world (Tubino, 2015). The teachers' conceptualizations also agree with the statement of the cross-cultural approach of interculturalism which the National Curriculum for Basic Education defines as a dynamic and permanent process of interaction and exchange between people from different cultures (Minedu, 2017). However, the idea of interculturalism described by teachers in the Lima and Ucayali schools is not consistently reflected in their classroom practices or in the learning units.

Regarding classroom curriculum programming, it may seem that as the disposition for intercultural dialogue and respect for other cultures is a matter of attitude learning, it cannot be planned in the learning unit and is left to the sphere of training through modeling on daily interactions between teachers and students. This coincides with the observation that the activities that are closest to intercultural practices take place in informal settings, inside or outside the classroom. However, it is still a constraint on the implementation of intercultural education, because if learning sessions for developing cross-cultural exchange or dialogue skills are not intentionally planned, the opportunities for raising awareness, reflection and discussion with students, and even among teachers, are lost.

5.3. The normative and functional vision of interculturalism

The researchers found that a normative perspective of interculturalism predominates in the teachers' conceptualizations, a "should be" narrative, based on a utopia to be built. Tubino (2004) warns that, although this narrative signals to teachers where to direct their efforts, it also jeopardizes their ability to perceive and question the situations and conditions of inequality that interfere with and prevent progress towards desirable intercultural attitudes and relations. This predominance could explain why the existence of social inequalities or ethno-cultural conflicts were not explicitly included either in

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the practice observed or the learning units analyzed. When the conflict is made invisible, it is harder to achieve the goal of interculturalism, because the factors that impede it (marginalization, racism) are not critically addressed (Peschiera, 2010).

Similarly, as shown in the studies by Valdiviezo and Valdiviezo (2008) and Peschiera (2010), most of the teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism are closer to the functional perspective which, as defined by Tubino (2004) and Walsh (2009), advocates dialogue, coexistence and tolerance without questioning the structural causes of social, political and economic inequalities between cultures, as proposed by the critical perspective of interculturalism.

5.4. Interculturalism as a dynamic process

The teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism shape an image of a "spiral continuum" in the development of interculturalism as a process that involves the affirmation of one's own culture and the encounter between cultures and cross-cultural exchange, respecting the identity of the cultures of origin. It is a process through which people affirm their own culture and their respect for the culture of others, the need for mutual recognition in a context of equality, the willingness to learn from others and, at the same time, to help others learn. It is not a static state that is definitively achieved, but a new way of perceiving ourselves and living together.

Interculturalism seen like this can be very useful for working with teachers in implementing intercultural education for all, based on the critical approach to interculturalism (Walsh, 2009). It would thus be a process involving a permanent dynamic of search and encounter, and the construction of a sphere of intercultural coexistence where plurality is the norm and where the issues that threaten such coexistence are identified and dealt with individually and collectively (Leiva, 2010).

It involves enhancing the positive appreciation of interculturalism, so that it is no longer seen to be something good that people wish to see in schools but becomes a national social, cultural, ethical and political plan to which all may contribute.

6. conclusions

The researchers believe that this study fulfilled the purpose of examining teachers' conceptualizations of interculturalism and describing the extent to

which these are reflected in teachers' daily classroom practice and classroom curriculum planning. These are their conclusions:

Teachers in both Lima and in Ucayali recognize that a fundamental condition for cross-cultural exchange is the affirmation of one's own culture, on which intercultural relations are built. In the observations and learning unit analysis, the researchers found cultural affirmation and a high appreciation of Shipibo culture, especially the preservation of the Shipibo language. This cultural affirmation varies in form and intensity in each school, which can be explained by the different geographic and socio-cultural environments, and by the presence of Shipibo and non-Shipibo teachers in each case.

The teachers are convinced of the need to affirm their own culture, but also understand that interculturalism encompasses the exchange between Amazonian and Andean peoples, the national culture and other world cultures. They also point to the importance of learning other languages to facilitate communication.

The study found that teachers understand interculturalism and have a positive attitude towards it, and try to include this in their classroom practice. However, they do not yet consistently reflect the scope expressed in their conceptualizations. They said that they need to broaden their knowledge and have the pedagogical tools to teach the first and second language, to bring different cultures into dialogue in each curriculum area and to address interculturalism as a cross-cutting issue (Escarbajal and Leiva, 2017).

Although researchers recognize a predominantly normative perspective of interculturalism in the conceptualizations of the teachers participating in the research, a perspective geared to describing how interculturalism should be, Utopian in nature, they can also recognize the unequal relations between ethnic groups and their cultures, which hamper intercultural relations. This shows that the teachers' conceptualizations include some critique. The researchers therefore believe that educational policies developed in dialogue with teachers' conceptualizations could help teachers and students to further and consolidate their conceptualizations and practices from a critical intercultural perspective.

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