



**UNIVERSIDAD
DE ANTIOQUIA**

Trabajo de investigación presentado como requisito parcial
para optar el título de:
Licenciado en Lenguas Extranjeras

Autor
Raúl Santiago Pinto Núñez

Universidad de Antioquia
Escuela de Idiomas
Medellín, Colombia
2021



Conclusions Drawn in Colombian Journals Regarding the Existing Relationship of Power that
the English Teaching Has in Our Context

Raúl Santiago Pinto Núñez

Universidad de Antioquia

Thesis, Research and Practicum Advisor

Lina María Londoño Metaute

Magister in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Medellín

December 2021

Abstract

The following literature review aims to find the way in which power relationships have influenced the teaching and learning of English in our country. To serve this purpose, eight articles from the Colombian journal PROFILE were chosen, ranging between the years 2008 and 2021. The findings suggest that power relationships have changed the way in which terms such as “Bilingualism” and “English” are defined, as well as the goals of education and the way teachers feel. They also show how teachers and students have attempted to resist agendas led by powerful institutions.

Key words: Power relationships, English teaching, resist the powerful

Degree Requirement

This literature review is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia.

Acknowledgements

Since I was a kid learning English at the English extension courses of the University of Antioquia, I always pictured myself studying a professional program there. Now that this Bachelor is about to conclude for me, there are so many people who I have to thank for arriving at this point. First of all, I would like to thank my family for the support and love that they have given me during my entire life. They are responsible to a large extent for the person that I am today.

Second of all, thanks to my highschool friends, who have shown me that friendship does exist and who have supported me and given me advice during years. Third of all, thanks to my advisor Lina Londoño and my cooperating teachers Adriana Pérez and Alba Palacio, for their advice, their dedication and their commitment to help me, especially in a year where things were crazier than usual in the world.

I also would like to thank my Bachelor classmates and friends for accompanying me and working with me throughout these six years, and for helping me become a better student and teacher. Last but not least, I would like to thank the School of Languages and its teachers, and also the University of Antioquia. I would not have had the opportunity of becoming a professional if it was not for public education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Degree Requirement.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Preface	6
Rationale for the Choosing of the Articles	7
Power Relationships and Their Consequences	8
Bilingualism Equals Speaking Spanish and English.....	9
English Is not Just a Language.....	10
Education to Serve the Interests of the Market	12
The British Council and how English Became a Product.....	14
Teachers as Powerless Beings.....	17
Resist the Powerful	18
Conclusions	21
Further Studies	23
References	25

Preface

It is undeniable that relationships of power are present in education. An institution such as the National Ministry of Education (from now on referred to as MEN, due to its initials in Spanish) given its nature of official institution “is entitled to exert power explicitly on the education community by means of decrees, laws, agreements, and other regulatory means” (Guerrero, 2010, p. 41). When it comes to the teaching of the English language, the reality is not that different because “any linguistic exchange implies a power relationship” (Bourdieu, 2003, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 38).

In Colombia, there have been multiple attempts to impose a nationwide program that regulates the teaching of English that can be traced back to the Law March 16th of 1826, and go until the Colombia Bilingüe program of 2015 (Bonilla & Tejada, 2016). The same authors claim that over history, language policy making in our country has not been changed due to the education’s ultimate goal, the creation of resourceful and critical citizens who could contribute to a global society, rather than for political changes. I agree with their statement and with the statements of other authors who have claimed that language policies in Colombia answer to the needs of the market and the agendas of economical potencies.

The purpose of the following literature review is to give an account of the findings that some authors who have written for a particular Colombian research journal have found about the relationships of power that influence the teaching of English in the country. To achieve this purpose, eight papers from the Colombian journal PROFILE have been chosen; whose dates of publication range from 2008 to 2021. This time frame is due to my intention of giving a review that is recent and that reaches the present year, and this particular publication was chosen because it is one of the most important journals of the country, which “welcomes papers from

different parts of the world, diverse educational levels and wide-ranging contexts” (PROFILE, n.d). In addition, the fact that it is managed by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, the most important public university of the state, says much about the rigurosity and the reliability of the journal, which makes it an ideal source of information for this review.

With that being said, I acknowledge that the amount of articles is too small to give an overall picture of the way in which power relationships and English teaching relate to each other. Nevertheless, I think that this paper could help the reader get a general understanding of this topic, in hopes of serving as a starting point and laying a path for people who are interested in it, to go more in depth in this subject.

Rationale for the Choosing of the Articles

Most of the articles chosen (seven of them) are analysis that Colombian scholars have made of the language policies implemented in the time they wrote their papers, being the *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo* (National Bilingualism Program, or NBP for its initials) and some documents framed in it the most widely analyzed in the articles that I read. The remaining article (Guerrero & Quintero, 2021) besides being the most recent one, is a partial report on a focus group, where elementary teachers share their opinions and reactions to language policies in general. For that reason, it is a logical assumption to think that the NBP is included in those reactions, even if it is not mentioned explicitly there.

In addition, four of the chosen articles were written by the same author, Carmen Elena Guerrero, either by herself or in company of other authors (Guerrero, 2008; Guerrero & Quintero, 2009; Guerrero, 2010; Guerrero & Quintero, 2021). In order to find the articles for this literature review, I wrote either the words “power” or “power relationships” in PROFILE’S search engine. Then, I skimmed and scanned the articles that appeared in those searches, making

emphasis on their abstracts, their finding sections and their conclusions. From around the fifteen articles that I reviewed in this first phase, I chose the eight that I considered most relevant.

Afterwards, I read those eight thoroughly, which lead to the appearance of patterns that later became the two categories that will be presented in this paper and that encompass most of the information from the texts: The first category is called Power Relationships and Their Consequences, which in turn resulted in five subcategories: Bilingualism Equals Speaking Spanish and English, English Is not Just a Language, Education to Serve the Interests of the Market, The British Council and how English Became a Product, and Teachers as Powerless Beings. The second category is called Resist the Powerful.

Power Relationships and Their Consequences

Power is one of those practices that have a huge impact on education, but sometimes it escapes our attention in our own teaching practice (Escobar, 2013). Relationships of power have as a main purpose to “justify and reproduce limits between different group categories: gender, social class, nationality, etc. In other words, power is exerted to create division and to widen the gap in social groups” (Bernstein, 1998, as cited in Escobar, 2013, p. 50). When it comes to language, it is important to mention that “any linguistic exchange implies a power relationship” (Bourdieu, 2003, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 38). Having the latter in mind, we are going to explore the following 5 subcategories that arose from the analysis of the articles, which exemplify how power relationships have influenced, and even changed, the definition of certain concepts and how they have opened new business opportunities for some privileged groups of people and institutions.

Bilingualism Equals Speaking Spanish and English

Usma (2009) explains how the implementation of the NBP brought different regulations to the teaching of English in Colombia, including a limited notion of the term bilingualism, limiting it to only two languages: Spanish and English. Authors such as Guerrero support the previous statement. She and her colleagues made an extensive analysis of the language policies that have been applied in Colombia, mainly focusing on the NBP (Guerrero, 2008; Guerrero & Quintero, 2009; Guerrero, 2010). Their research has brought up some discrepancies between what the policy says and what is actually meant by it. To unveil those hidden messages, they heavily relied on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because the main objective of this framework is to “uncover hidden agendas in discourse in order to unveil power relationships” (Cameron, 2005, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 29). One of those hidden messages that the author refers to has to do with the concept of bilingualism, a term that Guerrero (2008) calls “very complex” (p.30). Nevertheless, she found that the MEN and the British Council want “bilingualism” to have a very specific meaning in our context. For example, with the help of the CDA, she found by analyzing the title of the Document *Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto!*, that even if they refer to “lenguas extranjeras”, for the Ministry and the British Council being bilingual means speaking Spanish and English.

Other researchers support the claim made by Guerrero and by Usma. For instance, Escobar (2013), analyzes the document *Educación: Visión 2019* using the CDA, and he concludes that this document, which was written by the MEN in alliance with the British Council, strategically reduces the concept of bilingualism, limiting it to speaking Spanish and English, excluding in that way a wide number of languages, including the other languages

spoken in the country. The same author argues that this standardization and homogenization have as a goal to devalorize the value of local knowledge, diversity and difference, serving as a tool for power and control, an idea that is supported by Usma (2009), who, speaking about indigenous languages, says they are silenced and ignored in the public sphere.

English Is not Just a Language

The online Cambridge dictionary defines the word English as “the language that is spoken in the UK, the US, and in many other countries” (Online Cambridge Dictionary, n.d). Personally, if someone would have asked me the definition of that same word seven or eight years ago, I probably would have given a similar answer. But this is a very simplistic definition, because the meaning of this term is way wider than that, according to the articles read for this review.

According to the MEN in its document *Visión 2019*, achieving social status and being socially successful require speaking English (Escobar, 2013). Since English in Colombia has always been associated with the privileged social classes, it means that the rich are the ones able to buy power (Escobar, 2013). In addition, speaking this language has been defined as an asset that can only bring benefits to the people who learn it, because it is the key to access the modern world, represented in economic power, communication with more people and the access to scientific knowledge (Maurais, 2003, as cited in Guerrero, 2008). Guerrero (2008) herself in her analysis of the document *Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto!*, which is attached to the NBP, exposes how that document makes an equivalence between the terms bilingualism and globalization, relating a speaker of this language with positive qualities of globalization such as “broader communication, economic power, capitalism, multinational companies, foreign investors, better jobs, better living

conditions, no geographical boundaries and so forth” (Tollefson, 2000; Valencia, n/d, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 32). According to the previous quotes, we can see how English serves as the key to access knowledge, but a key that is not accessible to everyone. If you do not have the resources, then you are left out, an example of what Usma (2009) calls “the stratification of languages, groups, and cultures and the systemic exclusion of less powerful groups and individuals” (p.134).

Escobar (2013) in his analysis of the document *Visión 2019* also exposes how, even though the MEN claims to embrace diversity, in reality it intends to implement a version of British English that is very homogenous, using the standards provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as the standards to follow to reach that goal. This means, according to this same author, that “English is learned and taught in a dynamic of servitude and subjugation through obeying foreign standards, catering to others’ interests, imitating, and replicating others’ values rather than as a way of existing in the world under ones’ own terms” (p.56). This idea is supported by Guerrero & Quintero (2009) when in their analysis of the *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés* found that the policy makers behind the NBP “aim to preserve the standard variety as pure as possible because that is the one sanctioned as valuable in the linguistic market” (Bourdieu, 1991, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2009, p. 141).

What I find very interesting about the previous paragraph is the fact that there are varieties of the English language that are being spread worldwide, being sold as the desirable ones, while there are others that are completely neglected. The right variant of the language is the “the variety sanctioned and evaluated by the dominant groups as the valuable one and transmitted through the education system” (Bourdieu, 2003, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 39).

In addition, in the documents read for this review, the word “English” is accompanied by some interesting adjectives, which may seem innocent at first, but that actually have much significance. For the NBP, English is described as the universal language (Guerrero, 2008), a statement that can be easily challenged in the Colombian context “where children in remote rural areas often suffer violence and displacement due to the country’s internal armed conflict. Thus, not all citizens of a low-income country such as Colombia may see English language proficiency as a priority” (Bruthiaux, 2002, as cited in Valencia, 2013, p. 33). English is also described by the NBP as a neutral language “based on the argument that by choosing English over all the local languages, conflicts would be avoided” (Myers-Scotton, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2009, p. 136). Guerrero & Quintero (2009) disagree with this apparent neutrality of English presented by the NBP because it is a prescriptive approach that shows that language as a set of rules that students need to follow, which means the focus is on form and not on the students’ ideas and opinions. They also disagree with neutrality because it serves a denotative function, which means that this language is used to talk about a perfect world, not allowing students to confront real life practices, encouraging them to be submissive. Finally, Guerrero & Quintero (2009) disagree with neutrality because it serves as uniformity tool, where English has a standard version which is the one that must be learned, promoting at the same time an vision of a perfect world, imposed by the dominant groups, that has to be followed and copied, instead of being debated.

Education to Serve the Interests of the Market

Government officials have faced over time policies that have not worked and the pressure to implement certain language policies that have to appeal to the international community (Usma, 2009). Guerrero & Quintero (2021) support the previous claim, saying that the

implementation of language policies has a clear monetary motivation behind them, prioritizing the demands of the market, a fact that “changes the humanistic nature of education for one that cares about the production of goods” (p.36).

One example that explains the latter very well was the implementation of the *Colombia Very Well* (CVW) language policy, which was the one that followed the NBP. Bonilla & Tejada (2016) explain how this document was written by a consulting agency called McKinsey & Co. “without apparent assistance from university departments of education, or experts in bilingualism” (p.187). What these authors found more salient was the fact that the language learning is a direct response to the industry’s needs to provide businesses with a workforce that speaks English (Reyes, 2015, as cited in Bonilla & Tejada, 2016). This means that with CVW, education does not become “a tool for social and personal empowerment, aiming to emancipate school and college graduates for social advancement” (Bonilla & Tejada, 2016, p. 189), rather than a way to fill call center franchises with workforce (Santos, 2014, as cited in Bonilla & Tejada, 2016).

Another example was the implementation of the NBP, which was introduced when Colombia was negotiating trade agreements with different countries, recognizing the importance that English has to allow a country to compete in the global market (Usma, 2009). In this regard, Valencia (2013) goes beyond and says that this language policy and the reform to tertiary education that was proposed during that same time had as a goal to serve the agenda of multinational corporations that require two types of workers: highly skilled and less skilled. The students that can attend the elite private schools are the ones that could get the former jobs and the students with less economic resources are the ones that could access the latter jobs (Valencia 2013). This last part is a good example of what Usma (2009) calls the stratification and exclusion

of a group. If schools are in service of the powerful's agenda, then they are exerting symbolic power, because people cannot challenge what they do not perceive as unfair (Bourdieu, 1989, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2009).

Valencia (2013) also exposes that for the government, the success of the country depends “on alliances between private and government owned industries, as well as transnational companies such as British Petroleum, Fox, Microsoft, Dreamworks, Pixar, Sony, Shell, among many others” (p.38). The same author claims that this is the reason behind the implementation of the NBP. In the end, the ultimate goal of the powerful is making profit, and to reach that goal they promote English as the superior language (Bruno, 2007; Shohamy, 2009, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2021).

The British Council and how English Became a Product

The British Council is an international organization that answers to the United Kingdom, whose objective, according to its webpage, is to “enhance the reputation of the UK in the world as a valued partner” (British Council website, n.d). Its presence in Colombia can be traced back to 1940, which means that they have been in our country over eighty years promoting education “and cultural relations to enhance the reputation of the UK in Colombia, running programmes in the arts, education, governance and English language” (British Council website, n.d).

Its claimed belief is that “the culture, creativity, languages and way of life of a nation can be shared abroad as a means of strengthening mutual understanding and collaboration” (British Council website, n.d). The latter sounds very nice, because, after all, is not that the ideal scenario when two or more cultures interact with each other? But the reality seems to be very different, at least according to the articles that were analyzed. For example, authors such as Guerrero & Quintero (2009) claim that the presence of the British Council in developing countries such as

Colombia, meddling with projects such as the NBP “represents a political issue that has little to do with language per se” (p.137). Guerrero (2010) in a following article says that the goal of this organization is to spread English around the world, selling it as the key factor to be successful and privileged. Precisely in that previous sentence the key word can be found: selling. As Escobar (2010) says in his article, English becomes a product that can be produced using standardized procedures, turning education into a market where the highest bidder can afford the access to knowledge, and those who do not have the economic resources are excluded. Programs such as the NBP become “the doorway to a market where only a few high-class, well-off citizens can afford the textbooks, materials, preparation courses, and international exams” (García León & García León, 2012, as cited in Bonilla & Tejada, 2016, p. 191).

The meddling of the British Council on the language policies of our country not only has had external financial motivations, like it was discussed in the previous subcategory, it has also represented a very good business opportunity for this organization. For example, Usma (2009) states that the basis for the implementation of the NBP were three diagnostic studies carried out in private and public schools of the main cities of the country, that evaluated the English level of students and English teachers, and the content and pedagogical knowledge of the latter. The interesting part is to see that the two tests used to measure the teachers’ performance were products offered by the British Council itself: The Quick Placement Test and the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT). It is logical to conclude that this organization received a very good amount of money for the 3422 teachers that took the first exam and for the 243 teachers that, according to Usma (2009), had to take the second one.

But the profits do not stop there. According to the same author, the need for people to be certified becomes a very good business for the institutions that sell said certifications. In the case

of the British Council, the profits that test administrators get from materials to practice for the tests, preparatory courses that have the same objective, and tests themselves, would equal Colombia's 2008 budget for research, multiplied by 5 (Usma, 2009). These examples are a very clear illustration of what Bourdieu calls institutionalized cultural capital, the most prestigious one in our society, that requires that knowledge is certified by an institution in order to be valid, which is dangerous because those institutions answer to what dominant groups consider as valid knowledge (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Guerrero, 2010).

According to what we have reviewed in these previous paragraphs, we can see how the people of the British Council have a clear financial motivation to keep having a presence in our country. . Basically, what they do is to participate in the creation of projects such as the NBP and offer their own products to facilitate its implementation, in order to sell the products that they offer. They create the demand and they fill it themselves. A very good business, if you ask me.

At the same time, this “marketization and standardization of the language” (Usma, 2009, p.135) has led this organization to be able to position and sell their own products, which come from British publishing houses and even have a certification of quality (Guerrero & Quintero, 2009). This last part leads to suggest that any textbook or test that comes from elsewhere or that is developed locally is not a quality product, supporting the statement that local knowledge is not trustworthy, archaic or silly (Canagarajah, 2005, as cited in Escobar, 2013).

By doing all of this, the British Council is able to spread “British cultural propaganda in the form of learning materials, teaching training, assessment, proficiency evaluation as well as books” (González, 2007, as cited in Bonilla & Tejada, 2016, p. 189). Those textbooks are known to present an aseptic view of reality (Pennycook, 1994, as cited in Guerrero, 2009) and that neutrality allows them to be sold all around the world (Pennycook, 1994; Valencia-Giraldo,

2006, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2009). In addition, these textbooks are very very ethnocentric and only show the bright side of the Anglo North American cultures, which means that students will end up seeing the world in black and white (Pennycook, 1994, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2009) or as I understand it, they will perceive the foreign as “good”, and the local as “bad”.

Another consequence of the pervasive presence of this organization is that it holds back the creation and the validity of a language policy that is created by a local community (González 2007, as cited in Guerrero, 2010). Nevertheless, there have been attempts to fight this constant interference, which will be discussed in the last category of this document, called “Resist the Powerful”.

Teachers as Powerless Beings

When we think about the concept of banking education (Freire, 2005), we picture teachers as powerful beings, because they are the ones who possess the knowledge and have to deposit it in the students, who in contraposition are the powerless ones forced to absorb it. This may be true, but when we widen the view to see the big picture, we realize that teachers are also helpless. In Colombia, it is evident that the Ministry of Education exerts its power over teachers. An example of this uneven relationship of power can be found in Guerrero (2010), as she explains how the MEN perceives teachers as mere instructors, while it sees itself and the British Council as the experts. The consequence of this is that teachers are not regarded as “valid interlocutors whose knowledge can contribute to enrich the teaching-learning process” (Guerrero, 2010, p.47). In that way, teachers find themselves deskilled, stripped of their expertise, abilities and knowledge (Sayer, 2012, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2021)

As a consequence of this low image that teachers have, they are perceived as mediocre, lazy, unintelligent and problematic (Guerrero, 2010). They are also shown by the media, that by the way in this country is owned by powerful conglomerates, as the ones responsible for the lack of success of the language policies and for the poor performance of the students (Valencia, 2013). What the media fails to report are the multiple challenges that they have to face in order to reach the policies' goals (Valencia, 2013). This is an excellent example of the "manufacture of consent", which explains how the media is used to create public opinion that serves the political purposes of the social order (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, as cited in Valencia, 2013)

This difference of power between the Ministry of Education and teachers leaves the latter always in a losing position. If the policies are successful, then the merit is not of the teachers, who are only seen as technicians (Guerrero, 2010) that apply the policies of the experts, in this case the MEN and the British Council (Guerrero, 2010); and if the policies are unsuccessful, then as Valencia (2013) puts it, "teachers appear as the culprits of students' poor performance" (p.35), leaving the so called experts free of any guilt.

But not everything is lost. Teachers and students find ways to resist (or at least try to), the agendas of the powerful. Said attempts will be discussed in the following category, called "Resist the Powerful".

Resist the Powerful

Noam Chomsky (2004) says that "it only makes sense to seek out and identify structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life, and to challenge them; unless a justification for them can be given, they are illegitimate, and should be dismantled, to increase the scope of human freedom" (p. 775). In the previous pages was presented an overview of how power relationships influence and change notions such as the meaning of bilingualism, the

purpose of education and how they leave teachers feeling powerless. But now we are going to explore some of the actions that not so powerful people take to, at least try to counter the agendas of the powerful.

All the articles I read were very critical of the way in which language policies were being applied in our context, and most of them mention examples of how either scholars, students or teachers oppose to the powerfuls' agendas, or their authors made the invitation to resist themselves. For example, Guerrero (2010) says that she is pleased to see that some Colombian universities are contributing to the spread of teachers' intellectual production, as a form to counter the notion of institutionalized cultural capital that was discussed previously in this paper. Guerrero (2010) also says that teachers' intellectual production "shows that their understanding of the profession goes beyond grammar; and their application of theories serves not only to inform their teaching practices but also to explore who Colombian students are and what they need" (p.46).

This opens a new perspective where teachers are not completely powerless. In fact, teachers feel powerful in their own classrooms (Quintero & Guerrero, 2013, as cited in Guerrero & Quintero, 2021) because it is the place where "they feel their knowledge matters, and they feel they are really in charge and can make their own decisions" (Guerrero & Quintero, 2021, p.34). In fact, despite feeling silenced and mistreated by policy makers, teachers are capable to resist the practices brought by neoliberalism, in order to fight for their ideals and for a better future for their students (Guerrero & Quintero, 2021).

There have also been calls to contest the overseas standards of evaluation implemented in the country. Usma (2009) says that embracing foreign models of education enforced by organizations like the British Council has led to "an amalgam of international discourses

adopted, adapted, and resisted at the local level, while past efforts and failures are politically resolved by borrowing from others and downgrading the local” (p.132). Bonilla & Tejada (2016) say in this regard that governments should be able to design their own bilingualism or multilingualism program appointing teachers, scholars and researchers to lead the process; without accepting the influence of overseas institutions whose goal “is cultural display in the form of books, learning materials, teaching training and assessment, as well as proficiency evaluation” (Pennycook, 2013, as cited in Bonilla & Tejada, 2016, p. 194). These two authors also claim that the countries that want to give to their citizens a better quality of life should strive to give them “the means to hold linguistic membership to as many cultures and views of the world as possible” (p.194), rather than educating “bi-literate, low-tier, minimum-wage workers” (p.194).

It is also important to mention that the students resist as well. Valencia (2013) shares the example of how the Colombian university students were able to avoid the approval of a reform to tertiary education that followed the agenda of multinational corporations. The Colombian students took inspiration from their Chilean counterparts (Valencia, 2013).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge how the very writing and publication of these articles could be considered as an act of resistance on its own, because it fights symbolic power. Symbolic power can be defined as “that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu, 1989; 2003, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 29). This means that not knowing that we are subject to these power relationships is part of the problem, and these authors by writing these articles do their part to raise awareness in the public about it, even if in this case that public is a very limited audience, as it is stated in PROFILE’S webpage this

journal “is addressed to an international readership of pre- and in-service teachers” (PROFILE, n.d).

That is why it is not a coincidence that in four of the eight articles reviewed (Guerrero 2008; Guerrero & Quintero, 2009; Guerrero, 2010; Escobar, 2013) Critical Discourse Analysis played a major role in the development of the texts, because the main objective of this framework “is to denaturalize ideologies that have become so naturalized that individuals are not aware of them” (Fairclough, 1995, as cited in Guerrero, 2008, p. 29). In addition, another article (Valencia, 2013) uses Critical Language Policy (CLP) to guide its analysis, because “CLP analyzes the practices that become invisible because society often regards them as natural and they commonly occur without being questioned” (Tollefson, 2006, as cited in Valencia, 2013, p. 30).

Here we have seen some examples of how the powerful can be confronted. The next section will present some general conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of the articles that were read.

Conclusions

The objective of this text was to give an account of the way in which power relationships have influenced the teaching of English in Colombia during the recent years. The articles have given us a general overview of some language policies that have been applied in the country, making a clear emphasis on the National Bilingualism Program and its attached documents. Power relationships have had huge consequences in the way the term bilingualism is understood, in the way that the English language is perceived and on the purpose of teaching it, and in the way that key players such as English teachers feel regarding language policies.

Authors such as Usma (2009), Guerrero (2008), Guerrero (2010) and Escobar (2013) agree on the fact that the NBP reduced the notion of bilingualism to speaking two languages in particular: Spanish and English. This reduced notion of bilingualism is presented “at the expense of the full recognition of all other indigenous languages and the multilingual nature of the country” (Bonilla & Tejada, 2016, p.190).

In regards to the English language, authors like Guerrero (2008) and Escobar (2013) agree with my statement that English is not just a language. According to the analysis of the NBP policy made by Escobar (2008), English is necessary to achieve social status and for being socially successful. This author also says that this language in our country has always been associated with the privileged classes, who are the ones able to buy power. Guerrero (2008) found in her analysis that there is an equivalence between globalization and bilingualism in the same policy, English is shown as the key to access the world. It is also shown as a universal language (Guerrero, 2008) and as an neutral language that serves a prescriptive, denotative and uniformity function (Guerrero & Quintero, 2009).

English also serves the needs of the market. As Guerrero & Quintero (2021) put it, language policy implementation have a monetary motivation behind it, which can be seen in the fact that “discourses that include lexical choices like indicators, quality assurance, efficiency and efficacy, client, budget and others have been naturalized by schools” (p. 36).

In all the eight articles, without exception, the name of the British Council appears, a fact that says much about the power of this organization and its campaign to spread the use of the English language around the world since the 20th century (Phillipson, 1992, 2000, as cited in Guerrero, 2008). The NBP, which was also mentioned in the eight articles, just as other language policies that have been implemented in the country such as *Colombia Very Well* and *Colombia*

Bilingüe, had a big influence of the British Council (Bonilla & Tejada, 2016). Their involvement in Colombia has given them much economic profit (Usma, 2009) and has allowed them to spread “British cultural propaganda in the form of learning materials, teaching training, assessment, proficiency evaluation as well as books” (González, 2007, as cited in Bonilla & Tejada, 2016, p.189).

Finally, it is important to say that even though English teachers feel mistreated by agencies that are more powerful than them, they still find the way to resist for their students’ sake (Guerrero & Quintero, 2021) Students themselves are capable to resist too, like the Colombian student movement that managed to stop a very controversial reform to tertiary education (Valencia, 2013).

The eight articles that are included in this literature review present a very pessimistic view of how power relationships affect the teaching and learning of English in Colombia. To be honest, I expected this kind of results when I embarked myself in this reading and writing process, but not to this point. It is evident that changing the situation and making education less utilitarian (if it is even possible) will take much time. Nevertheless, it gives me hope for the future to read about these sprouts of resistance. After all, they could be the first step to something bigger.

Further Studies

According to the articles that I read, there are still some gaps in the literature that could be addressed in future research. For example how more scholars have reacted to the language policies that came after the *National Bilingualism Program*, such as *Colombia Very Well* and *Colombia Bilingüe*. I also consider important to explore deeper in the perceptions and effects that

these language policies have on English teachers, like Guerrero & Quintero (2021) did in their paper, but also focusing on other actors such as secondary and tertiary level students.

Finally, I think it would be nice to see research in a future that focuses on how all these powerless characters organize themselves in order to resist the agendas of the powerful.

References

- Bonilla, C. A., & Tejada-Sanchez, I. (2016). Unanswered Questions in Colombia's Foreign Language Education Policy. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 18(1), 185-201. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v18n1.51996>
- British Council. (n.d). *Our history*. Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.co/en/about/history>
- Chomsky, N. (2004). *Language and Politics*. Canadá: AK Press. Retrieved from: https://books.google.com.co/books?id=11CwP-RNExkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=es&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- English. (n.d.). *In Cambridge.org dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles-espanol/english?q=English>
- Escobar, W. Y. (2013). Identity-Forming Discourses: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Policy Making Processes Concerning English Language Teaching in Colombia. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 15(1), 45-60. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/37861>
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. United States: Continuum.
- Guerrero, C. H. (2008). Bilingual Colombia: What does it mean to be bilingual within the framework of the National Plan of Bilingualism? *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 10, 27-45. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/10563>
- Guerrero, C. H., & Quintero, A. H. (2009). English as a Neutral Language in the Colombian National Standards: A Constituent of Dominance in English Language Education.

- Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 11(2), 135-150. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/11447>
- Guerrero, C. H. (2010). The Portrayal of EFL Teachers in Official Discourse: The Perpetuation of Disdain. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 12(2), 33-49. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/17669>
- Guerrero-Nieto, C. H., & Quintero, A. (2021). Elementary School Teachers in Neoliberal Times: The Silent Voices That Make Educational Policies Work. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 23(1), 27-40. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v23n1.83052>
- Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development. (n.d). *About the journal*. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/about>
- Usma, J. A. (2009). Education and Language Policy in Colombia: Exploring Processes of Inclusion, Exclusion, and Stratification in Times of Global Reform. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 11(1), 123-141. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/10551>
- Valencia, M. (2013). Language Policy and the Manufacturing of Consent for Foreign Intervention in Colombia. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 15(1), 27-43. Retrieved from <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/37859>