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The evidence of language policies in a public school: I.E Diego Echavarría Masses

La evidencia de las políticas de idiomas en una escuela pública: I.E Diego echavarría Misas

Dilan Pino Granda*

Esteban Restrepo**

José Ignacio Grajales***

Jorge Córdoba****

Daniela Jaramillo Montoya*****

Abstract

Due to the influences of globalization during the past tense, Colombia has implemented different language policies for the improvement of education. Social reality has been an obstacle for stakeholders at the time to cope with English. Different programs have been formulated by the National Government in Colombia. Some of them are PNB 2004-2018 (National Bilingualism Plan), The National law of Bilingualism in 2013 (Bilingualism Law), PNI 2015-2025 (National English Program), and most recently Colombia Bilingüe 2014-2018. They all tried to offer different strategies in order to improve the English level in Colombia; However, many studies have criticized those programs because they have not yielded the expected results. Despite criticisms, the last ICFES results published in 2015-2016 have shown that certain institutions have achieved favorable results in English. As a result, this study wants to explore how I.E. Diego Echavarría Misas is implementing language policies to obtain good results in the English national test. To carry this out, data collection techniques will be applied to different participants who work in the institution.

Keywords

Bilingualism; Education system; Globalization; Language policy; National programs.

* Licenciando en Lenguas Extranjeras con énfasis en inglés, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, Medellín-Colombia. Correo electrónico: dilan.pinogr@amigo.edu.co Orcid: 0000-0002-3321-5943.

** Correo electrónico esteban.restrepohe@amigo.edu.co

*** Correo electrónico jose.grajalesga@amigo.edu.co Orcid: 0000-0003-4767-5913.

**** Correo electrónico jorge.cordobama@amigo.edu.co

***** Correo electrónico daniela.jaramillomo@amigo.edu.co

Docente asesor: Oscar Peláez. Licenciado en Educación de la Universidad Católica de Manizales, Especialista en la Enseñanza del Inglés, UPB, Magíster en Educación, UPB. Docente investigador de la Universidad Católica Luis Amigó. Asesor en la Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras y en la Maestría en Educación. Correo electrónico: oscar.pelaezhe@amigo.edu.co

Resumen

Durante las últimas décadas, Colombia ha estado influenciada por la globalización. Por lo tanto, ha puesto diversas políticas de la lengua en ejecución para la mejora de la educación. Realidad social ha sido un obstáculo para las partes interesadas a la hora de lidiar con el inglés. Diversos programas han sido formulados por el Gobierno Nacional en Colombia. Algunos de ellos son PNB 2004-2018 (Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo), The National law of Bilingualism in 2013 (Ley de Bilingüismo), PNI 2015-2025 (Programa Nacional de inglés), y el más reciente Colombia Bilingüe 2014-2018. Todos intentaron ofrecer diferentes estrategias con el fin de mejorar el nivel de inglés en Colombia; sin embargo, muchos estudios han criticado estos programas porque no tienen los resultados esperados. A pesar de las críticas, los últimos resultados ICFES publicados en 2015-2016 han demostrado que ciertas instituciones han logrado buenos resultados en inglés. De hecho, este estudio quiere explorar cómo la Institución Educativa Diego Echavarría Misas está implementando las políticas lingüísticas con el fin obtener buenos resultados en el examen nacional de inglés. Para realizar esto, las técnicas de la colección de datos serán aplicadas a diversos participantes que trabajen en la institución.

Palabras clave

Bilingüismo; Globalización; Política lingüística; Programas nacionales, Sistema educativo.

Introduction

Trying to respond to globalization, a topic that has considerably affected Colombia in many different ways, especially in economic and political aspects, Colombia tries to be updated to the international agendas, and that is why the government has designed different programs in order to respond to the globalized world regarding foreign language competences. These have had strong influences and consequences in the formulation of new language policies, as cited in Usma, 2015:

These changes have lead towards the adoption of international standards and models of reform connected to transnational economic and political agendas, a stronger control over school communities, a push towards instructional technologies and international languages such as English, and a higher state spending on education and foreign language teaching and learning (e.g. Ball, 2007; Cunningham & Hatoss, 2005; Guadarrama, 2006; Hargreaves, 2003; Hargreaves et al., 2001; Kaufman & Nelson, 2004; Lauder et al., 2006; Lipman, 2004; Meyer, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Stromquist, 2002; Tatto, 2007).

In order to understand the particular conditions where this study is carried out, it is important to contextualize the educational system in Colombia. In this order of ideas, the Colombian Constitution of 1991 defined education as a right and a public service, and made it mandatory until the age of fifteen.

In regards to education, Colombia's government has been working hard to improve the English level, but our system has difficulties. Unfortunately, it sometimes favors the most privileged people, and the lows strata such as 1, 2, and 3 are left behind. Of course there have been some changes, but there are still more needs to cover. Colombia is characterized by poverty, violence, displacement, drug addiction, and some others issues that affect society. Therefore, the image of Colombia in the world is not the best one.

As a result, the issue we want to explore is in Institución Educativa Diego Echavarría Misas which is part of Medellín city, and it is affected by the context that was already mentioned. It is located in Florencia neighborhood, stratum 3. It has around 2.300 students (boys and girls). There are 6 English teachers in High School, the classes are taught in the morning and in the afternoon. The school has 4 blocks and 1 field, and it is also important because it is the place where we have done our practicum. This context is interesting because it is affected by many social and economic factors that may be inhibiting the development of English communicative competences in this school. However, this Institution has shown a considerable improvement in the English level in comparison with previous years. According to ICFES, the results got in 2015 shows that in a range of 470, the school was placed 197 in the test, which is a positive outcome.

Statement of the problem

Based on a critical socio-cultural perspective proposed by Peláez, & Usma, (2017), which acknowledges the multiple layers of governance and agents that interplay in policymaking processes, and looks at how different educational actors inside and outside schools play an active role in the final enactment of initial stated policies. From this standpoint, the entire policymaking process is conceptualized as social

and situated practice (Levinson et al., 2009) and a highly political, dynamic, and unpredictable process, in which initial policy texts interact with the individual and collective agency of the school actors, moving from processes of international policy transfer, and local policy formulation and reformulation, to processes of policy appropriation, reading, translation, transformation, and even resistance at the local community, school, and classroom level (Bray & Thomas, 1995; Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Taking into account this critical socio-cultural perspective of analyzing language policies in the country, but also, looking at the last ICFES results in English of the I.E. Diego Echavarría Misas, we are encouraged to know what factors are contributing to this institution to obtain certain results or even a good performance in English. This public school has not had a high performance in English tests, however, it has shown that something good may be happening regarding the implementation of language policies. Besides identifying these issues, it would be even more important to explore how this particular institution is dealing with language policies in order to obtain good results in the English national test.

Research question

How is I.E Diego Echavarría Misas implementing language policies to obtain good results in the national test?

Objectives

General objective

To explore how is I.E Diego Echavarría Misas implementing language policies to obtain good results in English national tests.

Specific objectives

To identify how language policies have contributed to obtain good results in English.

To describe the context where these language policies have taken place.

To evaluate how language policies have contributed to obtain good results in English.

Literature review

It is essential for this research to stand up on a clear definition of language policy. Spolsky (2004) states that "Language policy exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority" (p. 8). In fact, as we are carrying out this research inside a public institution, it is very important to understand a language policy as the direct and indirect conventions that are constantly conditioning the what, the

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when, and the how English language must be taught (Spolsky as cited in Peláez & Usma, 2017). This definition is wide and convenient for our research because it could be applied in different contexts where language teaching is taking place.

Moreover, it is important for this research to contextualize the programs proposed by the MEN (Ministerio de Educación Nacional) in order to improve foreign language teaching in Colombia. First, according to the MEN (2006), the National Bilingual program 2004-2019, was intended to improve the communicative competences in the mother tongue and at least a second language, in this case English; its goal was to have 100% of the students from 11th grade in B1 level by 2019. This program incorporated the CEFR [Common European Framework of Reference], standards, and certifications such as TKT [Teaching Knowledge Test], aiming to improve EFL teachers' professional development.

Then, a new program was designed to reinforce the PNB [Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo]. Its name was PFDCLE [Programa para el Fortalecimiento de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras] and its objective, according to the MEN (2012), was to develop communicative competences in English for both educators and students to facilitate the insertion of human capital in the knowledge economy and the globalized labor market; its goal was to have 40% of Colombian population in B1 English level by 2014. This program aimed to improve teachers' professional development, and it also incorporated ICT's [Information Communication and Technology] support for the first time and invested in the immersion of local and international agencies.

During the implementation of this last program, the national government of Colombia designed the National Law of Bilingualism in 2013 (Ley 1651), which modified 9 articles (n°13, 20, 21, 22, 30 and 38) from the General Law of Education (Ley 115, Ley General de Educación). Some aspects of this policy are more accurately described because they talk a little bit more about the competences in the language. However, it is not clear whether they are talking about a foreign language or only English as it was expressed in the article 8 of this law.

Later, a new program called PNI [Programa Nacional de Inglés: Colombia very well 2015-2025] was designed seeking to make of Colombia the most educated country of Latin America and the country with the best English level in South America by 2025 (MEN, 2014); its goal was to have 50% of the population in B1 English level by 2025 as mentioned before. This program was also in charge of implementing some resources for English teaching; one of them was the book "English please" for secondary students.

Recently, the current English program designed by the national government of Colombia is Colombia Bilingüe 2014-2016; its main objective is to help students communicate better in English. Therefore, they could be inserted in the working market and interact with other people around the world through English. This program remarks that the domain of this language in Colombia will allow both students and teachers to have access to scholarships in other countries. Moreover, they may look for better mobility and job opportunities, even in Colombia (MEN, 2016); its goal is to have 8% of the population with B1 English level by 2018. Some of the strategies of this program are: the incorporation of the BLR [Basic Learning Rights], the fellowship program, and reforms related to teacher educational programs. To sum up, the expectations have been reduced since the implementation of the first programs, but the managers of this program have set the same expectations: using English as an economic strategy for the country.

Nonetheless, some studies in the country have shown the unfortunate failure of these policies. On one hand, studies like the ones made by Correa D.; Usma J. and Montoya J.C, (2014) and Peláez and Usma (2017) show that these policies have not worked for the stakeholders who work in rural areas of Antioquia. Studies show that these teachers do not have a clear idea about the programs. However, they argued that the actions and implementations made by the government are not sufficient to accomplish the proposed objectives (Correa, D., Usma, J., & Montoya, J.C., 2014). In addition, “language policies have not had any significant impact in this region because formulation and enactment of language policies by government officials ignore the role played by educational actors as they are in the core of the educational system, and finally they are who determine the way policies discourses are enacted” (Peláez & Usma, 2017 p.24).

Moreover, according to the findings emerged from the study carried out by Roldan & Peláez (2017), people who live in Yarumal (a town in Antioquia as well) refused the fact that the government is using English as a strategy for competitiveness. Besides, they do not see English as something important for their lives because it is not required or needed for their jobs. Some of them were even able to argue that these policies are totally decontextualized (Peláez & Roldan, 2017).

It is well known that many scholars have criticized all these policies and its implementation in the country, they particularly complain about the issues regarding the PNB and the concept of “bilingualism” that has been adopted in Colombia (Ayala & Álvarez, 2005; Cárdenas, 2006; Sánchez & Obando, 2008 cited in Peláez & Usma 2017). Furthermore, the stratification of the language is discriminating a big part of the indigenous people as it does not take into account that there are “about 44 million people in the whole country, about one million speak one or more of the 65 Amerindian languages in the country; about 33.000 members of the African descendant communities in Palenque and San Andrés and Providencia use Spanish- and English -based creoles varieties, whereas 8.000 of the Rom or Gipsy communities speak Romanés” (Gamboa as cited in Usma, 2015, p.80). Some authors (Gonzales & Quintero as cited in Usma, 2009) state that its top down adoption approach neglects the recognition of local knowledge and efforts for school improvement and professional development. In addition, Genesee (2007) also stated that these programs have little validity as students in Colombia have low contact or immersion with the target language. “Despite the high controversy that these reforms have triggered among local scholars, there has not been systematic studies that talk about how these reforms are being interpreted and appropriated by different educational actors within and across schools and cities in the country” (Usma, 2015, p. 13).

After having mentioned the different programs proposed by the National Government in order to make of Colombia a bilingual country (emphasizing on English), it is not difficult to notice the desire of having competent citizens in English, so much so that they have thought about English as a second language. For this reason, intended goals are more difficult to achieve. As a result, English in Colombia is not seen as an opportunity to interact with other people, to know other cultures, and to enrich knowledge in different ways; rather, it is seen as an instrumental tool that can be very useful to be successful in terms of money (Usma, 2015); this is what the government has fostered for many years. The interest seems to be a matter of making connections and business around the world. Some authors (Peláez & Usma 2017; Roldan & Peláez 2017; Usma 2009) have declared that these programs and strategies have not worked as they have not been adapted to the Colombian context but adopted, these programs have not had coherent goals (they have been very ambitious), and not all teachers have been well prepared for the implementa-

tion of these language policies. Nonetheless, there are certain schools in Colombia that have improved the English level during the last years; one of these institutions is I.E Diego Echavarría Misas, and we want to explore how is this institution implementing language policies to improve English performance.

Methodology

This report is the result of a research conducted by a group of students guided by Mg. Oscar A. Peláez, as a requirement for graduation. The methodology used was a case-study that implies the investigation of a current phenomenon to understand the main issues that are directly affecting or changing a society (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2003). We want to investigate what has actually worked for the different institutions, where we do our practicum, to obtain good results in English tests. We followed the guidelines of a qualitative approach.

Population

As we want to understand the reality of I.E Diego Echavarría Misas regarding good results in English, it is proper to investigate those factors which have had a strong relationship with the last results showed in ICFES. During this research, we interviewed the coordinator of the institution, as she is the one in charge of supervising the main issues around the school. Moreover, we decided to interview two English teachers of the institution. One from 11° grade and another from 10° grade, that way we could have a better understanding of the process made by students and teachers. Finally, we interviewed students from 9°, 10° and 11° grade to see what other strategies are being used to obtain the expected results.

Data collection

To have a better understanding of what is helping this institution to obtain good results in English, we selected different types of methods to gather the data.

Observation

We observed how different English classes were taught, and then we came up with conclusions which allow us to have a better understanding of the reality. Here we want to describe the context, participants, relations, and some other relevant information that can emerge.

Interviews

We designed different types of interviews for all the participants who make part of this research. We wanted to find out the relation that they have with the established issue. We implemented semi-structured interviews to conduct this method (Sampieri, 2010).

Document analysis

We want to explore the importance and influence of the written documents (language policies) that have been incorporated in the Institution. This will help to obtain relevant information about the policies inside the school, and also the language policies that may be influencing the ideologies of the institution. Furthermore, we want to see if there is any relation between these written documents and what is being practiced in the school.

Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data. The use of multiple collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data. This practice is commonly called triangulation, a term taken from surveying and navigation (Glesne, 2006, p. 36).

Data analysis

The data for this research were collected inductively through code systematization that allowed us to identify, describe, and evaluate how this particular institution is dealing with language policies to obtain good results in English. With the support of our advisor, we established some categories before collecting the data; these categories were: language policies, process of implementation, and impact. Additionally, the following categories arose:

Language policies: National policies; Local policies; Institutional policies

Process of implementation: Directives; Teachers-resources-strategies; Curriculum; Student-motivation

Impact: Positive; Negative

During the process of data collection, two new categories emerged: teachers' training and suggestions offered by participants.

First, according to Spolsky (2004), as cited in Pelaez & Usma (2017), language policies can be defined "as those implicit and explicit norms or regulations that shape what, when and how languages, and in this case, foreign language, are taught and learned in the school system". For this reason, we want to identify which language policies are being implemented in the institution. We classified them into: National (in the country), local (in the municipality), institutional (Policies established by the same institution) and quotes, which is a category where any relevant specific information or statements regarding language policies expressed by stakeholders will be transcribed.

Second, Process of implementation of these language policies. Here we classify the information that participants could give about how these language policies have been implemented in the curriculum of the institution, but also how the institution is implementing resources provided by the MEN. Moreover, it is important to see how these language policies are being implemented by participants like coordinators, teachers and students.

Third, impact regarding any positive or negative reaction of these language policies stated by any of the participants.

After the immersion in the context, and while analyzing the information provided by the participants, two new categories emerged. These are:

Suggestions and teachers' training

Here we gather information given by teachers regarding their academic formation where some of them actually stated to be in current training.

In this study, several actions were taken into account in order to increase both validity and reliability. To enhance the trustworthiness of this research, we used 3 types of triangulation. First, a methodological triangulation was used to increase the reliability of the information. As mentioned before, we used 3 types of methods to gather data: interviews, observation, and document analysis. Consequently, observations and interviews were carried out in different moments (within-method triangulation); however, this process was guided through what is called "between-method triangulation" which implies the use of different methods with the same objective. Additionally, research triangulation was implemented with the main objective of collecting and interpreting data. Hence, it is important to highlight that data triangulation was carried out while gathering it; it implied the use of multiple data sources. For instance, during this study, every researcher had to apply different methods in different moments (different times of data collection). Finally, member checking was necessary to confirm that the data collected was accurately and properly captured. This process implied coming back to the research field and confirm the data with the participants.

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Findings

Surprisingly, it was found that some of these expectations were actually connected to what we found during the research process. On the other hand, it was found that the others were all the way around to what we expected.

After having implemented different methods (interviews, observation, and document analysis) and triangulation processes to collect and analyze data, we conclude that the main finding for this research is that I.E is aligned to government expectations for English teaching. Moreover, it was found that there were several evidences that support it (1) focused on well trained teachers (2) Making emphasis on the implementation of TICS in order to improve teaching and learning processes (3) The imaginary created by language policies on population is that English is fundamental to success (4) focused on results.

Focusing on well trained teachers:

During the last decades in Colombia, different programs (PNB, PFDCLC, PNI, Colombia Bilingüe) as we have already explained in the literature, have highlighted the importance of having well trained teachers in order to have a better development of the communicative competence of the population. For instance, the current national program, Colombia Bilingüe, has a project called “Teaching English”, “cuyo objetivo es fortalecer las competencias pedagógicas de los docentes de inglés del sector oficial.” (Colombia Aprende: MEN).

Consequently, the institution is making emphasizing on having qualified teachers who can better prepare students in English. It is well known that teachers in public schools usually do not have the appropriate preparation to cope with the government expectations. Nonetheless, through different observations and interviews carried out along this study, we evidenced a very good performance of teachers during their corresponding English classes. According to participant 1.

La institución tiene una ventaja y es que es certificada por el ICONTEC, tenemos certificación en la norma ISO (9001/2009), estamos mirando en este momento en la 2015, o sea, lo profes de nosotros están certificados por una norma internacional de calidad que certifica el ICONTEC.

Actually, we can reaffirm that I.E Diego Echavarría Misas is not only hiring well trained teachers but also offering different ways to continue training and updating to the new government demands for teaching English. This is how the institution is aiming to increase their teachers’ professional development and hence students’ performance.

Moreover, this particular school was one of the selected ones for the implementation of the fellowship program. “The ETF program sponsors fellows to work alongside Colombian teachers in order to strengthen the English abilities of teachers and students of the public sector” (Participant 2). This institution has had a positive impact from this program since some of the participants declared to have a nice experience with the fellow teachers. For instance, according to a participant, “con la experiencia de los profesores que llegaron al país a los colegios hubo como una gran acogida de parte de los estudiantes, es mucho más como despierta motivación y como un cierto curiosidad” (Participant 3). Confirming the reaction of the students about this program implemented by Colombia Bilingüe. In addition, teachers suggested that any implementation of a program or material that aims to improve English teaching has to be covered from the very first grades in order to improve the whole cycle of education and generate more positive aspects regarding English learning.

To conclude, it can be said that I.E Diego Echavarría Misas is actually making emphasis on hiring well trained teachers. This institution gives profound importance to teachers with at least a bachelor degree. So much so, that even preschool teachers have their emphasis on English. The importance of having these well trained teachers may be one of the factors that help this particular institution to obtain good results in the English national test. Hence, it can be stated that the institution is aligned to one of the expectations or requirements proposed in most of the national language programs that the country has tried to implement so far.

Making emphasis on the implementations of TICS in order to improve teaching and learning processes

Nowadays, the current national program (Colombia Bilingüe) is trying to implement a strategy to improve teaching and learning processes outside the classroom through the use of the new technologies. The project is called “Inglés fuera del aula” and it is made for students to have an easy access to different activities and tasks that they would be able to develop through their mobile devices; its purpose is to “lograr procesos de articulación y alianzas entre el sector académico, los medios de comunicación y las industrias de contenidos y plataformas digitales, para el diseño de modelos de producción de contenidos audiovisuales, multimedia, audio y escritos (digitales y análogos) en inglés.”

(Colombia Aprende: MEN).

Another important factor that could be identified during the data analysis is the importance that participants give to the implementations of TICS to optimize learning and teaching processes, especially in the English field. According to one of the participants:

Los maestros tienen las herramientas para usar las nuevas tecnologías. Todos los maestros tienen un computador portátil con ingreso a internet en todas las aulas, cada maestro tiene su computador y tiene un televisor que puede utilizar pues...para proyectarle a todos los estudiantes. Ellos tienen la tecnología, además tienen las dos salas de sistemas y la biblioteca que la pueden utilizar como una herramienta.” (Participant 2).

It means that, in spite of being a public school, it is taking care of education of new generations encouraging the use of new technologies that favor teachers’ purposes.

Some of the participants affirm that their classes have improved a lot since these new technologies have been implemented. They highlight the impact that these audio-visual supports have given to students who can barely pay attention. The participants consider that these technologies are comfortable, practical and easy to use. Even some of the participants declared that TICS are very important and fundamental nowadays for English teaching.

Another example that proves this particular school is working on some programs developed by the local government in Medellín is the particular project called Semilla Bilingüe.

Este es un programa del municipio de Medellín que está buscando impulsar el bilingüismo en todos los colegios de Medellín, en el momento, sólo está disponible para transición y 5° pero la idea de ese programa es que vaya hasta 11, o sea que los estudiantes cuando acaben tengan muy buenas competencias de un segundo idioma inglés” (Participant 1).

As it can be seen, I.E Diego Echavarría Misas is working on the implementation of new technologies with the main objective of covering more spaces where both learning and teaching processes can be carried out in a more effective way. Consequently, it is expected that students can improve their English level of proficiency.

Moreover, to make English learning more accessible for students, the school has developed and organized friendly websites and online platforms so that they can access through different mobile devices (cell-phones, tablets, among others). According to a participant, “A estas plataformas se puede acceder desde cualquier dispositivo, ellos tienen una clave de acceso; estamos sensibilizando a los papás para que cuando el muchacho esté utilizando la herramienta tecnológica en la casa, miren de que no siempre es por mal, que revisen qué están haciendo.” (Participant 1). This participant is not only highlighting what the program offers to students but also to parents; namely, this institutional policy is also trying to create awareness on parents and teachers to see these technological tools or devices as an advantage to favor learning processes.

To sum up, it was found that MEN is providing the school with resources as mentioned before, and as one of the participants interviewed confirmed, “El ministerio de educación tiene convenios con el ministerio de las TIC, han hecho implementación de tablets, de computadores para educar...muchas cosas, vamos en ese proceso, estamos iniciando...” (Participant 1). Confirming this way, the MEN has been one of the biggest supports to obtain the necessary materials, tools, sources, and well trained teachers to improve learning and teaching processes (especially in the English field). In fact, we could affirm that this has been one of the main reasons why this particular institution is currently achieving the expected results of the government.

The imaginary created by language policies on population is that English is fundamental to succeed

During this research, a positive impact regarding the need of knowing English was found in students in order to be successful in the country. In fact, some of the participants a positive impact regarding the need of knowing English was found in students in order to be external courses in order to improve their language performance. Nonetheless, it is not that easy for parents to pay these courses in a context like this:

Los anexos estadísticos del Dane indican que la incidencia de pobreza multidimensional se explica en el departamento (Antioquia) por carencia en aspectos asociadas, en su orden, a educación (36,2 %), trabajo (29,8 %), condiciones de niñez y juventud (14,3 %), vivienda (11,7 %) y, en último lugar, de salud (7,9 %), en línea con las razones que explican la tasa nacional.” (El Colombiano, 2017).

Taking this reality into account, it can be inferred that families from socio-economic strata 1 to 3 are the most affected; the context of this particular institution belongs to a medium-low class. Consequently, the jobs of all these parents are not enough to meet the basic needs of their kids. If we take into account that most of the students come from public institutions, it can be inferred that this is a very common reality in many families who live in the main cities of the country, in this case, Medellín. Surprisingly, despite this complicated situation, we found that parents in one way or another try to invest on private institutions for their kids to study English.

In addition, it can be said that language policies in Colombia have convinced a considerable amount of the population that English is fundamental to be successful in the future. For instance, one of the participants emphasized on the importance of this language. She stated that:

a mí me motiva tener buenos resultados porque es mi futuro, ¿por qué? porque el inglés ya va ser parte fundamental de todo, es más, yo estudio desarrollo de software y el lenguaje en que nosotros vemos programación es en inglés. Entonces el inglés es algo súper necesario, pues en lo que yo tengo mi proyecto de vida” (Participant 4).

According to this, people in Colombia do not usually see the language as an opportunity to know other cultures and understand what others can give through the use of communication; rather, they see the language itself only as a tool for getting something they want. In this context, it means that people are perceiving English as an opportunity to make money and to become more competitive in a globalized world (Usma, 2015). The point of view previously stated by the participant highlights and confirms that English is becoming more important for the future of people in Colombia. Accordingly, parents and students continue investing in English as a strategy of ensuring better job opportunities and other welfare for their future; in this way, they end up doing what the government demands for its citizens, in this case, English.

Focusing on results

Nowadays, the government requires that public schools show good English performance in the national tests to ensure a quality education. For instance, the objective of the current language policy in Colombia (Colombia Bilingüe) is “Contribuir a que los estudiantes del sistema educativo se comuniquen mejor en inglés. (...) el dominio de este idioma les permitirá a los estudiantes y docentes colombianos tener acceso a becas en otros países, mayor movilidad y mejores oportunidades laborales, inclusive en Colombia.” (MEN 2016). Accordingly, it is possible to see that this is one of the objectives by which this particular institution works, and at the same time, it shows the interest to be aligned to what the government actually wants.

Something to highlight during the process of the data collection in this research is that several participants mentioned the importance of the national test. This test is definitely very important for the institution since they actually believe that it really measures students’ English level of proficiency. In fact, they are preparing students since 10th grade in order to have good results (in English) in the national test in 11th grade. As a matter of fact, being prepared for the national test, 2 years before it, may be one of the factors that is helping students to get good results in English.

For instance, one of the participants (teacher) of this institution clearly expressed a wish of preparing students since 10^o grade. She stated:

De hecho, por eso este año como les digo yo pedí dar en décimo, porque en 11 llegan a las pruebas, y las pruebas cada vez son más rápido, entonces no daba tiempo de uno prepararlos con estas pruebas ICFES, y por eso...o las pruebas saber que se llaman ahora, entonces yo por eso pedí dar en décimo para irlos preparando desde ya para que en 11 esas pruebas de pronto les vaya un poquito mejor “(Participant 2).

This participant shows significant interest in creating different alternatives to prepare students for the national test, she wants to do it since 10th grade as she is aware that preparation is not an easy but rigorous process; she expresses that she is willing to do it in order to get good results in the English national test. It clearly shows that the institution is actually focused on getting good results in external tests.

Moreover, one participant also confirmed the importance of improving the English performance in the institution. It was said that:

No podemos dejar quietos a los de 10 y 11 porque el año pasado en las pruebas Saber 11 el colegio tuvo en todas las áreas del conocimiento puntaje por encima del país en Lengua Caste... en Lectura crítica, en ciencias naturales, en matemáticas, en competencias ciudadanas y sociales y en segunda lengua en inglés estuvimos por encima del país, pero en Medellín estuvimos un poquito abajo en el promedio de la ciudad en el puntaje de inglés, entonces el consejo académico dijo: ¡vamos a apuntar a eso!" (Participant 1).

As shown, the majority of members from the learning community are thinking about external examination so that the institution can be recognized for its quality.

Discussion

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Based on the objective of our research which is to explore how is this particular institution is implementing language policies to obtain good results in English, it can be said that the information collected was satisfactory. It was found that this institution is making considerable efforts to improve the English performance since they see it as a fundamental tool for competitiveness in the city and the country. Besides, language policies have considerably influenced this institution since it is striving to be aligned with what the government demands. Therefore, two main points emerged to reflect upon:

Emphasizing on results:

The school has emphasized on getting good results, not only in English but also in all the subjects which are taught. One way or another, everybody works and expects some results, and institutions are not the exception. They all have the need to show good results to the National government so it can see that institutions are actually doing their best for being considered highly qualified.

In the case of I.E. Diego Echavarría Misas, it was found that this school is committed on teaching for getting good results in the national test; it is totally linked, connected, and aligned to government expectations not only for teaching English but also for what teachers must have to carry out learning and teaching processes (the teacher training). Apparently, the school has proved that it may be actually working. Nevertheless, it is evident that these institutions that follow government expectations are working under decontextualized policies; namely, policies that were created in other places where English is spoken every day and it is necessary for communication. As a consequence, the expected goals are increasingly difficult to meet and those who are able to accomplish it are the ones who have access to higher education, here is where we reflect about the process of stratification where the best quality of ed-

education can only be accessed by the most privileged people (Usma, 2015). Accordingly, current education in Colombia is not helping to improve the integral development of the human being. English practices and policies' goals are not meaningful due to their focus on results.

Instrumentalization of the language:

We found that language policies are not only influencing official institutions, but also most of the families in Medellín. Consequently, parents are beginning to spend on external courses for their kids in order to ensure a future full of job opportunities and competitiveness where their kids can be accomplishing the government demands. As Usma (2015) said:

They are seeing the language as a tool that serves economic, practical, industrial, and military purposes. It means that the implementation of English in the country is just an strategy to get a better job and become more competitive. Therefore, people in Colombia do not see the language as an opportunity of breaking barriers to meet other people and know their culture; they do not use the language to develop different ways of thinking, understand, and seeing the World (p. 24).

Again, this is something very worrying for current Education. What can we expect from students if they're being taught only to sell and receive? Is the current education in Colombia becoming nothing more than a business? That's what language policies' goals make it look like. Somehow, this way of thinking has been deeply introduced in many of the official schools of the country. In fact, English is being seen as a fundamental tool. Nonetheless, the focus may not be the most appropriate because the language might be losing its sense of humanity.

This research allowed us to identify, describe, and evaluate how language policies (national, local and institutional) are having positive influences in the students' English performance. Consequently, we found out that our expectations were not too far from reality. Nonetheless, there were findings that were not expected and allowed us to understand how this particular institution is implementing language policies to improve English performance.

The results of this research have been satisfactory. In fact, there is the possibility that these findings can be shown to other official institutions so that they can realize how language policies in Colombia can be helpful for them in order to improve English performance in both teachers and students. In this way new questions for further researches emerged:

Conclusion

Is current education in Colombia becoming nothing more than a business?

What can we expect from students if they are being taught to only sell and receive?

When the government is focusing on results, is it diminishing the integral formation of the human being. Perhaps this is one of the upcoming issues we see in our educational system nowadays. We teachers and education actors in general, need to start changing this paradigm in schools.

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