NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN COLOMBIA: A
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.

By

Carmen Helena Guerrero Nieto

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Carmen Helena Guerrero Nieto entitled National Standards for the Teaching of English in Colombia: A Critical Discourse Analysis and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Date: 04/30/09

Linda Waugh

Date: 04/30/09

Iliana Reyes

Date: 04/30/09

Richard Ruiz

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and I recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Date: 04/30/09

Dissertation Director: Linda Waugh

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED: Carmen Helena Guerrero Nieto

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	9
ABSTRACT.....	11
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	16
Discourse.....	17
Legitimization	20
Naturalization.....	23
Circulation of Discourse	27
Critical Discourse Analysis.....	31
History of CDA.....	32
The Goals of CDA	36
Symbolic Power	41
Linguistic Capital.....	44
Language as Symbolic Capital.....	49
Language as Symbolic Power	50
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	55
Object of Study	55
Research Questions.....	55
Research Methodology	58
Process of Data Analysis	63
Primary and Secondary Data Sources.....	64
CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALIZATION OF MULTILINGUISM IN COLOMBIA	67
Indigenous Languages	69
Afro-Caribbean Languages.....	75
Palenquero.....	76
San Andrés and Providence Creole English.	79

Spanish.....	85
English and Other Foreign Languages (but mainly English).....	92
Conclusion	101
CHAPTER 4: THE MEANING OF BILINGUALISM WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT	103
Bilingualism Means Speaking English.	104
Bilingualism is a Packed, Monolithic and Homogenous goal	116
Students as a Monolithic Population.....	116
All students will attain level B1, and along with that, they are recognized as legitimate users of the L2.....	122
All Students will be equally proficient	126
English Language has one single standard variety	132
Bilingualism is Constructed on Myths.....	143
Myth No. 1: Balanced bilingualism is the norm	144
Myth No. 2: It is possible to achieve full communicative competence	148
CHAPTER 5: THE SYMBOLIC POWER OF ENGLISH.....	155
English is a “Neutral” Language.....	156
Neutrality as a prescriptive approach.....	157
Neutrality as a denotative function	165
Neutrality as uniformity	172
English Gives “Equal” Access to the Wonders of the Modern World	179
Access to economic profits	180
Access an imagined community	185
Access to equality	191
Access to knowledge.....	199
Access to pluriculturalism.....	204
English Makes us (Colombians) “Smarter”	214
CHAPTER 6: TEACHERS.....	216

Teachers are Invisible	218
Teachers as Clerks	237
Teachers as Technicians/Marketers	250
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH	258
APPENDICES	284
APPENDIX A: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 1	284
APPENDIX B: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 2	285
APPENDIX C: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 3	286
APPENDIX D: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 6	287
APPENDIX E: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 8 & 16	288
APPENDIX F: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 9	289
APPENDIX G: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 11	290
APPENDIX H: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 12	291
APPENDIX I: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 13	292
APPENDIX J: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 14	293
APPENDIX K: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 15	294
APPENDIX L: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 19	295
APPENDIX M: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 20	296
APPENDIX N: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 21	297
REFERENCES	298

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Power Point Presentation given by Grimaldo, J.C (2005) Manager of the PNB,	106
Table 2: Excerpt of a Power Point presentation given by Cely, R (2005), MEN consultant,	109
Table 3: Some reasons why children do not attend school.....	119
Table 4: Example from an English textbook	160
Table 5: Lessons taken from the textbook Interchange 1.	166
Table 6: “Estandáres básicos de competencias en ciencias sociales y ciencias naturales” p. 103.....	169
Table 7: Reading instructions in a textbook.	176
Table 8: Excerpt of the invitation letter sent by the MEN to validate the standards	181
Table 9: Documents referring to the economic benefits of learning English in Colombia.	182
Table 10: List of countries offering scholarships for Colombians	193
Table 11: Standards for elementary school.....	196
Table 11: Standards for elementary school (Continued)	197
Table 12: Relationship between knowledge and economic gain	205
Table 13: People write their opinions about the result of an English test taken by elementary school teachers. Taken from “El Tiempo”(April 08/08) newspaper.....	220
Table 14: Presentation of the actions proposed by the MEN to improve English learning and teaching.	224
Table 15: Invitation letter to participate in a committee to formulate and validate the standards and response from the committee after the decision of the Ministry to choose the CEFRL.	229

Table 16: Letter of invitation sent by the MEN to Colombian academics, Bogota April 6ht 2005	233
Table 17: Bi-polar attitudes to teacher education	238
Table 18: “Teacher Development Programme” Course Guide, British Council.	241
Table 19: El Tiempo newspaper November 2/06	251
Table 20: Proyecto de acuerdo “Bogotá bilingüe en diez años”, p. 6.....	253
Table 21: People’s opinions about the result of an English test taken by elementary school teachers..	254

ABSTRACT

The spread of English in the world today is not only the result of colonizing campaigns (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Pennycook, 1994a, 1998a, 2000; Phillipson, 1992, 2000) but also of the compliance of the governments associated with the “expanding circle” (Kachru, 1986). In part, this compliance is a consequence of the different mechanisms of the circulation of discourse, in particular the idea that speaking English is a *sine qua non* condition to be a worldwide citizen. Colombia is a good example of this phenomenon, because its national government is implementing a National Bilingualism Project (PNB) where there is an explicit interest in the promotion of English over all other languages spoken in the country.

This dissertation is a critical discourse analysis of the handbook *Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras, el reto*” (Basic standards for competences in foreign languages: English. Teach in foreign languages: the challenge¹) published by the Ministry of Education of Colombia. This handbook is aimed at establishing the national standards for the teaching of English in Colombian public schools. The objective of the study is to offer an interpretation of the way in which **bilingualism**, **English**, and **teachers** are constructed through the language

¹ The translation is mine.

used in the handbook. The analysis of data follows Fairclough's textual analysis and is supported by other written texts and informed by scholarly articles.

The analysis of data shows that the official discourse creates a whole new meaning for "bilingualism" since it indexes exclusively the learning of English in Colombia. Along with this, the authors of the handbook perpetuate mainstream concepts and ideas about the symbolic power of English as the one and only necessary tool for academic and economic success. This is achieved by a redundant discourse on the neutrality of English on the one hand, and the benefits it brings to its speakers, on the other. In relation to the portrayal of teachers in this document, the data show that their role is either downplayed or made invisible, which also correlates with the low prestige that school teachers have in Colombia.

The study leads to the conclusion that a document that contains national standards for the teaching of a language should include multiple voices where local knowledge gets the same recognition as global knowledge, and where the diversity of the country is represented, respected and promoted. In that way, official institutions would be legislating to benefit the majority of the population, and not the small number of elites of the country.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As stated by Phillipson (1992, 2000), the British Council has worked in a campaign to spread the use of English around the world since the early years of the 20th century. This campaign has rendered the expected results, and today English is a widely spoken language; Crystal (2000) estimates that 1.5 billion people use it as a first, second, or foreign language, and the language has more non-native speakers than native speakers. Speaking English has been reified as an asset in the sense that it brings only benefits to those who learn it. The learning or speaking of English is associated with access to a modern world that is characterized by technology, wider communication, economic power, scientific knowledge, and the like (Francis & Ryan, 1998; Kachru, 1986; London, 2001; Maurais, 2003; Norton, 1989; Nunan, 2001; Pennycook, 1994a; Ramanathan, 1999).

Colombia, like other countries in Latin America and in the rest of the world, has adopted language policies aimed at the spread of English as a foreign language, one of the latest being an initiative sponsored by the British Council named “Colombia bilingüe en 10 años.” Many actions have been taken by the Secretary of Education (MEN) and the British Council to promote and run the project; among those actions, there are national

conferences, international guest lecturers, application of English proficiency tests to high school teachers and students, EFL/ESL teaching training programs, and the production of written documents. One of these documents, “Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras, el reto” (*Basic standards for competences in foreign languages: English. Teach in foreign languages: the challenge*²), published by the Secretary of Education in 2006, henceforth referred as “Estándares”, is the object of my analysis. The addressees of this document are school teachers, from elementary school to high school, and it describes some theoretical aspects of the policy, why teaching English is important, what the standards to be attained are, and how to do that.

Discourse and society are in a dialectical relationship in which one shapes the other (Cameron, 2005; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2001, 2003; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), so that discourse resembles society, but at the same time, it constructs it, and vice versa. For nation states, taking advantage of this relationship is crucial in maintaining social order, and they use official institutions to produce official discourse through various types of documents, speeches, messages, and the like to reach their goal. As with any other kind of text, the authors of official documents draw on discourses and genres that existed previously. As such, terminology, concepts, ideas, beliefs, and the like, become naturalized and create the ground for new views of the

² My translation

world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This ideology inspires the present study, the purpose of which is to explore how official discourse, through the aforementioned document, constructs and circulates concepts of bilingualism, English language, and Colombian English teachers. The critical perspective adopted in this study is informed, on the one hand, by critical discourse analysis considering that the linguistic choices made by the authors carry specific meanings, and on the other, by symbolic power, particularly in how language is an essential instrument to exert it.

Critical discourse analysis also serves as the research methodology, but using the approach developed by Fairclough (2001; 2003) which is described in Chapter 2. In order to contextualize the reader in the current Colombian linguistic panorama and to provide a better understanding of my interpretation of data, Chapter 3 presents a historical overview of the languages that have shaped our territory (Colombia) since the arrival of the Spanish conquerors to this day.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are devoted to the analysis of data to answer the questions of how bilingualism, English language, and Colombian English teachers are constructed in the “Estándares”; each of these chapters is informed by relevant literature on the specific topic. The last chapter presents the conclusions and implications as well as questions for further research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Textbooks are powerful ideological instruments (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Kress, 1989a; Pennycook, 1994a; Stubbs, 1996). The data of this study is a handbook that, given its origin and historic moment in which it is produced, serves the same purpose. In the search for an understanding of how certain ideologies get to be accepted by social groups, I draw on Bourdieu's concept of legitimization, Fairclough's development of naturalization of discourse, and Foucault's elaboration of circulation of discourse. Since all of them refer to discourse as a vital element in their conceptualization, this discussion starts with a set of definitions of discourse. Bearing in mind the constitutive nature of discourse, I will also discuss how certain discourses are legitimized (Bourdieu), naturalized (Fairclough) and distributed (Foucault) by those in power in order to represent and perpetuate a particular view of the world. The second part of the theoretical framework deals with Critical Discourse Analysis, its definition, goals and characteristics, and the final part is devoted to explaining how the concept of symbolic power unfolds from Bourdieu's concept of capital and how language can become a source of symbolic power.

Discourse

The term “discourse” is a crucial element in the present study considering that both the theoretical framework and the research methodology are informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Pinning down a straightforward concept has proven to be a difficult task because beyond the common sense definitions, scholars have attempted to provide a theoretical foundation for the term (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2005; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 2004; van Dijk, 1997). Within CDA, the concept of discourse has been strongly influenced by Foucault (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Jørgensen & Phillips; 2002; Kress; 1989; Mills, 2004) whose notion of discourse fluctuates from a “general domain of all statements” to “an individualizable group of statements” (Foucault, 1972, p. 80). The former definition implies that any utterance or text constitutes “discourse” while the latter implies that utterances can be grouped according certain internal characteristics that make them coherent; therefore, different types of discourse exist, like the discourse of femininity, or the discourse of imperialism, the discourse of war, and so on (Fairclough, 1992; Mills, 2004).

Kress (1989a) identifies himself with this latter view of discourse; he believes that the values and meanings of institutions and social groups are articulated in systematic ways via language. In this way, discourse functions as a medium to regulate society by determining, not only the topics which are possible to talk about, but also the ways in which people come to talk about them. Adding to this, Macdonnell (1986) considers that

the institutions and situations in which discourse takes place shape them and therefore they play an important role in the control, selection and distribution of discourses. Mills (2004) citing Pratt (1992) illustrates this same point with the example of the European botanists who, in the nineteenth century, traveled around the world to investigate plants. The plants they found in India and Africa were categorized according the European system, and "...this global Eurocentric knowledge did not simply rename a few plant species, but erased indigenous knowledge and transformed the knowledge about plants in non-European countries into colonial knowledge" (Mills, 2004, p. 48).

Besides having a constitutive nature, discourse is also constituted (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) in the sense that social structures shape and constrain discourse because they are in a constant dialectical relationship. As a result, "[s]pecific discourse events vary in their structural determination according to the particular social domain or institutional framework in which they are generated" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). This characterization of discourse as constitutive and as constituted is a crucial element in how it is conceptualized within CDA in the sense that discourse is not only the result of social structures but also is responsible for social change; this implies that subjects are not passive recipients of discourse (as in a deterministic view) but that they act upon it and make social transformation.

In addition to its dialectic relationship with social structures or social life, discourse arises also in its dialogue with other texts and not as a disembodied set of

statements; that is, discourses are the response to previous statements and the origin of new ones (Pechux cited in Mills, 2004; Gee, 2005). In the same line of thought, Bakhtin (1986) states that “[a]ny utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances,” (p. 69) and Halliday (1985) claims that texts do not happen in isolation but that they are background in previous texts and are the foreground for new texts. The consequence of this dialectical nature of discourse is that each discourse is partly shaped by its relationship with other discourses; the producer/speaker/writer of a discourse makes his/her language choices based on what was previously said and on the effect expected from the audience (Bakhtin, 1986). Kress (1989) adds that in this dialogue, discourses exist “within a larger system of sometimes opposing, contradictory, contending, or merely different discourses” (p. 7), and this means that discourses are in constant conflict with other discourses and are therefore sites for struggle between those in power and the powerless (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1972; Kress, 1989; Pecheux cited in Mills, 2004). For Foucault (1972), this conflict lies in the defense of what must be accepted as “truth”. This accepted “truth” is constructed by those in power and seeks recognition by less powerful groups; power is then recognized as a crucial element in the production and interpretation of discourse. Foucault (1972) thinks that power is dynamic in the sense that it is not a possession of anybody but that it fluctuates throughout social relations. This concept has been useful to explain the constitutive and constituted nature of discourse mentioned above in the sense that if it is true that discourse helps maintain social structures, it is also true that discourse leads to social change by means of resisting

and contesting forms of domination. The rights and recognition that formerly marginalized groups have achieved demonstrate the productive nature of discourse.

Power and truth have an intricate relationship in which our views of the world are constructed and transmitted by those in power; they determine or establish “the truth” and make sure it is spread, and this is the topic of the following section.

Legitimization

A crucial element in the exertion of symbolic power (presented below) has to do with the inculcation of a view of the world that comes to be understood by dominated groups as natural (Bourdieu, 1989; 2003; Swartz, 1997). Achieving the point of legitimizing a particular view of the world rests on two main conditions: on the one hand, it is founded in reality, and on the other hand, it depends on the symbolic capital accumulated by the agents who want to impose it.

In relation to the first condition, reality must be understood as the way the social world is now, that is how it has been structured since the beginning of times. In this structure individuals who share neighboring social spaces are exposed to similar conditions and develop similar dispositions about the world (*habitus*), and are likely to develop similar practices. The individual develops then a sense of their place and the

place of others within the social space, and that “sense” works to maintain the social order “to keep their distance, to maintain their rank, and not to get familiar” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17), and that is strengthened by social affiliations such as friendships, associations, marriage.

The distribution of individuals in this social space happens in relation to the different forms of capital (presented below) possessed by them and according to the recognition they have accumulated (symbolic capital). The place they occupy within the social space influences the points of view different groups construct; that is, depending on where they stand in this social order, their view of the world takes a particular form and has different chances to be imposed. The success in legitimizing a particular point of view lies in the ability to build on the “familiar world” to show that a particular view is a natural consequence or development of the former; in other words, its arbitrariness is misrecognized and therefore accepted. Bourdieu (1989) states:

legitimation [sic] of the social world is not, as some believe, the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; it results, rather, from the fact that agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of perception and appreciation which are issued out of these very structures and which tend to picture the world as evident. (p. 21)

The social structure (as in a closed circle) determines individuals' perception of the world because it produces in its members a habitus, or a set of dispositions that allow them to reproduce social practices and at the same time to apprehend the social world. This means that the way in which a person perceives the world is partly shaped by their social space, because they have a "world of common sense, a world that seems self evident" (Bourdieu, 1989); this human tendency to take for granted the familiar world facilitates the legitimization of a view of the world that appears to be natural

The second condition necessary to impose a view of the world has to do with the symbolic capital accumulated by the agents. As it will be seen below, symbolic capital can be obtained by means of the recognition of economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990); in the same way as the other forms of capital, symbolic capital weights differently depending on who holds it and how they obtained it. Therefore the more symbolic power held by a group (or individual) the easier the legitimization of their point of view.

Symbolic capital can also be officially determined by the State, which due to its nature of the power invested in them by the people who form it, has the authority to grant symbolic capital to its institutions such as schools and universities. These, in turn, are embodied with the right to legitimize the view of the world that should be taught and transmitted (and at the same time exclude all other views). A school diploma, then, grants recognition to its holder implying that their knowledge is valid in all markets (Bourdieu, 1986; 1989; Hanks, Jenkins, 1992).

By and large, providing that these two conditions come together, certain views of the world are legitimized and become the *status quo*, to the point that people do not resist or question them, but rather comply in their existence giving way to the exertion of symbolic power.

In this particular study, the two conditions converge: on the one hand, there is the construction of certain points of view that privilege the teaching of English, based on previously constructed discourses on that matter, and on the other hand, the handbook is written by two institutions invested with large amounts of symbolic capital, the Ministry of Education of Colombia and the British Council. To sum up, “[t]he successful exercise of power requires legitimation [sic]” (Swartz, 1997, p. 6).

Naturalization

Inspired by Bourdieu’s concept of legitimization, Fairclough (1995; 2001) develops his concept of naturalization. While Bourdieu considers misrecognition as a crucial condition in the legitimization of a view of the world, Fairclough considers the opacity of ideology as the key element in the naturalization of discourse. This means that when ideology stops being perceived as such is when it operates best and yields to naturalization. The effect of naturalization, as is the effect of legitimization, is to perceive happenings in the world as natural, familiar, or unproblematic. To understand how

naturalization unfolds within Fairclough's theory, I take my own route, taking as point of departure, his conception of society as a structured (and therefore constrained) system, and how it relates to the orders of discourse.

Fairclough (2001) states that society and social institutions operate under certain conventions that allow or limit what members of a group can or cannot do. The various social spheres that make up the society at large--called social orders by Fairclough, extrapolated from Foucault's 'orders of discourse' (discussed below)--are structured in different ways. In turn, social orders produce and demand specific discourse practices or orders of discourse; drawing from Foucault, Fairclough defines the orders of discourse as underlying conventions of discourse clustered in sets of networks.

The structure of discourses within a particular order of discourse is mediated by power relationships that exist in the social institution. Power relations are not permanent but objects of struggle and change, and whoever holds power controls the orders of discourse using ideology as one of the means to maintain harmony inside the social institution. Changes in political regimes are clear examples of the way discourse is controlled under the ruling of a specific ideological group.

Ideology becomes then a crucial factor in the naturalization of discourse. Fairclough (2001) presents ideology as the way to exert power through consent; that is, ideology is a vehicle used by dominant groups to convince dominated groups that certain practices are universal and "common sense". The role of discourse is to serve as the

means to transmit those practices, so the more people listen and circulate them, the more familiar they will become. Ideologies achieve this flow of circulation when they are least visible; in other words, when ideology plays with assumptions and “are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as background assumptions” (p. 71), the interpreter of a text draws on those assumptions and validates whatever is in the text. In this way, the interpreters of the text are themselves reproducing this or that ideology as “common sense.”

Ideology and power go hand in hand in the sense that the invisibility of ideology helps the maintenance of asymmetrical power relationships. Due to the fact that ideology usually originates in dominant groups, when institutional practices are taken for granted and accepted as common and natural practices, power struggles are likely to disappear because both parts (dominated and dominant) recognize them as unproblematic. As stated by Fairclough (2001) “[i]nstitutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations.” (p. 27),

The way naturalization of ideologies operates at the level of discourse is explained by Fairclough (2001) as follows: when facing a text, interpreters have to find the links between the elements of the text itself, and also between the text and the larger context in which it is produced; this two level connection is called “coherence.” In order to establish these connections, the interpreter draws on their assumptions and

expectations, described as being “implicit, backgrounded, taken for granted, not things that people are consciously aware of, rarely explicitly formulated or examined or questioned” (p.64).

All in all, assumptions and expectations are ideologies that have successfully hidden in social practices to become common sense, or as put by Fairclough (2001):

The more mechanical the functioning of an ideological assumption in the construction of coherent interpretations, the less likely it is to become a focus of conscious awareness, and hence the more secure its ideological status-which means also the more effectively it is reproduced by being drawn upon in discourse. (p.71)

The naturalization of discourse contributes to the perpetuation of certain ways to see the world, which are generally accompanied by forms of inequality and injustice, but because they are so difficult to uncover, they are equally difficult to fight (although not impossible).

Circulation of Discourse

To achieve the function of regulation, societies rely on certain procedures aimed at the control, selection and re/distribution of discourse (Foucault, 2005; Kress, 1989; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 2004). Foucault (2005) ascertains that these procedures can be grouped in three categories. The first one is *exclusion* whose main objective is to control the power of discourse. There are three forms of exclusion. The first is *Prohibition*: We know that we cannot speak about anything freely and in any circumstance because discourse is not just what expresses desire but it is also the object of desire “...el discurso no es solamente aquello que traduce las luchas o los sistemas de dominación, sino aquello por lo que, y por medio de lo cual se lucha, aquel poder del que quiere uno adueñarse” (p. 15)³. To this respect, Mills (2004) offers the example of the difficulty in some Western societies to talk about death or sex as a consequence of the ideology imposed by institutions in power that attached negative connotations to these kinds of topics.

A second form of exclusion is the *opposition between madness and reason* which operates as a separation and rejection. During the early Middle Ages, the mad person's discourse could not circulate like other persons'. Because their words were regarded as lacking truth and importance, nobody would be interested in listening; despite the fact

³ “...discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle” (Translation in Macdonell, 1986, p. 97)

that nowadays medicine and psychiatry are “listening” to the words of mad persons, their words are still censured while doctors’ and psychiatrists’ have credibility.

Opposition between truth and falseness is the third form of exclusion. This distinction is subjective and linked to power structures; therefore, it is rooted in a system of institutions that impose and exert them using certain degree of coercion or violence.

As stated by Foucault (1980):

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enables one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

The separation between truth and falseness has shaped our desire for knowledge in such a way that truth and knowledge are equated to one another; that is, something is evaluated as “knowledge” providing that it is considered “true, and vice versa, something is “true” if it comes from [sanctioned] knowledge. Davis (1983), cited in Mills (2004) illustrates this transformation with his findings on the separation of fact and fiction

during the eighteenth century with the production of “news,” a genre aimed at providing accurate representations of events. The government was keen to intervene and regulate the publication of any type of texts, marking the difference between novels and factual accounts.

Foucault ascribes institutions a crucial role in establishing or sanctioning what should be regarded as truth/knowledge (Foucault, 1989; 2005; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 2004), and by means of pedagogy, books, libraries, or laboratories they evaluated, select and distribute what counts as knowledge and truth (Foucault, 2005). The content of schools’ or universities’ curricula is the result of struggles over whose version of reality is imposed (Mills, 2004) or whose interests should be served.

A second group of procedures to control discourse, the objective which deals with the origin and circulation of discourse, are *commentary*, *author*, and the *organization of disciplines*. There are certain discourses that are considered valuable because they are viewed, in a way, as “hiding a secret or a treasure” (Foucault, 2005, p. 24); these discourses are commented upon by others, and in that very act, their value is established, as is their circulation. Foucault considers that an author (not the same as an individual who says or writes something) functions as the origin, unity and coherence of discourse; the author is an indicator of truthfulness especially in those disciplines like philosophy, literature, and science. The third procedure within this group, *the organization of disciplines* controls discourse by establishing what counts as true knowledge (and

therefore what should be excluded); this procedure allows the construction of new discourses as long as they comply with the structures set by a particular discipline.

The third group of mechanisms of control of discourse is aimed at establishing conditions of use so the access is not open to everybody. These mechanisms are *rituals*, *discourse societies*, *doctrines*, and *social adjustments of discourse*. Among *rituals*, there are religious discourses, judicial discourses, therapeutic discourses, and to a certain extent, political discourses. The ritual defines who speaks, the circumstances of the discourse, and its intended effect on those who listen. The aim of *discourse societies* is to circulate discourse only within a closed circle of members. In opposition to the number of people who have access to discourse in the previous mechanism, the *doctrine* is intended to spread a set of discourses to the biggest possible number of people; the only requirement on the part of the individuals is the acceptance of the same “truth.” The last mechanism is the *social adjustment of discourse*, which is achieved through education. In theory, education gives access to any individual to any kind of discourse, but in fact it is constrained by what is considered to be valid and worthy: “Todo sistema de educación es una forma política de mantener o de modificar la adecuación de los discursos, con los sabers y los poderes que implican” (Foucault, 2005, 45)⁴; therefore, education is a

⁴ “Every education system is a political way to maintain or modify the adjustment of discourses, along the knowledge and power these imply” (My translation)

powerful system for regulating the type of knowledge that circulates and becomes accepted as true.

The way Foucault understands discourse as constitutive of what we can call “reality” where power, knowledge, and institutions interact together has contributed greatly to the definition of discourse in CDA, particularly in Fairclough’s trend. Foucault (2005) states that reality is not a text that presents itself in front of our eyes to be read but that reality is constructed through discourse. A good illustration of this point is made by Jorgensen & Phillips (2002) about the flood after a river overflowing its banks. This event takes place irrespective of what people think, but when people ascribe meaning to this event, they will draw from different discourses: meteorological discourse, political discourse, environmentalist discourse, religious discourse, and so on. These different discourses will unchain a variety of effects which in turn will help maintain or change the world.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The study of discourse from a critical perspective has filled the pages of various publications and has been the subject of conferences around the world; in Latin America, this is an emergent field that started its consolidation with the creation in 1997 of the

“Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso” (ALED). CDA constitutes an important theory to frame my study because its goals and principles converge with my objectives of identifying how three key issues (bilingualism, English, and Colombian teachers) are constructed in the handbook “Estándares” and bring to the surface power struggles enacted there through these concepts and the types of relationships implied by them. In what follows, I will briefly present the history and goals of CDA.

History of CDA

The origins of Critical Discourse Analysis can be identified in the convergence of three settings: academic, historical, and ideological. The academic origin of CDA as a field can be placed in the early 1990s when a group of scholars met after a symposium in Amsterdam. These scholars were Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunter Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak; they shared their theories and methods of discourse analysis and, within their variety of approaches, they found similar goals. These scholars had been working independently in the analysis of discourse and found that the predominant linguistic paradigms conceived of language as an isolated system, and very little was done to tackle issues of social struggle and power relationships (Blommaert, 2005; Wodak, 2005). Aware of this lack of connection between discourse analysis and

the social nature of language, these scholars coincide in a perspective in which ideology and power are central.

Before the term Critical Discourse Analysis, along with its acronym CDA, was used in the 1970s, a group of scholars of the University of East Anglia worked in the development of Critical linguistics (CL). Their aim was to combine linguistic text analysis with social theory drawing from systemic linguistics (Blommaert, 2005; Fairclough, 1992; Fowler, 1996; van Dijk, 2005; Wodak, 2005), but CL had a strong emphasis on texts as products and little on how they are produced and interpreted, which, according to Fairclough (1992) are as important as the final text. Another criticism is that CL tends to see the effects of discourse only as reproduction of social structures and not as a possibility for struggle and change (Fairclough, 1992; Kress, 1989b). CDA arises to overcome the limitations of critical linguistics⁵, and Norman Fairclough was the first to introduce the rubric critical discourse analysis, CDA, in his edited book *Critical Language Awareness* in 1992b (Billing, 2003; Blommaert, 2005). In his earlier published book *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), he made an account of different approaches to the study of language and classified them in “critical” and “non-critical.” Fairclough (1992) states:

⁵ Wodak (2005) considers that CL and CDA embrace basically the same principles and that terms are used interchangeably, but Fairclough (1992) and Kress (1989b) make it clear that they are not the same.

Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants. (p. 12)

The historical context for the development of CDA can be set in the 80s and 90s when the social and political order that had been established after the Second World War radically changed. The fall of communism and the ending of the Cold War between USA and the Soviet Union enabled the spread of a new political consensus based on liberal democracy and free market capitalism (Blommaert, 2005; Cameron, 2005).

The spread of capitalism brought a change in the core of economy, which moved from “production to consumption and from manufacturing industries to service, leisure, and culture industries” (Fairclough & Woodak, 1998, p. 259). Having to compete in the selling of intangible goods made companies realized that the profitability of these new commodities relied on the nature of the language used in their relationship with customers; it motivated them to carefully design written and spoken discourse used by service personnel. Language became an element of power not only in the economic field, but also in the political and institutional ones which led to a critical interest in the

analysis of discourse and its relationship with modern life (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Ideologically, the common inheritance of critical disciplines like critical applied linguistics, critical pedagogy, critical psychology, and critical discourse analysis is the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, whose advocates believed that the task of academic work was to criticize existing conditions in order to transcend them (Billing, 2005; Cameron, 2005; van Dijk, 2005; Wodak, 2005). Furthermore, the critical stance of CDA is associated with Western Marxism and its conception that not only economy but also culture (ideology) has a crucial role in the establishment and reproduction of capitalist societies. The ideas of philosophers like Gramsci, Althusser, and Habermas have contributed to framing some of the postulates of CDA, like the notions of power, ideology, or reproduction (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Mills, 2004). van Dijk (2005) adds two more reasons for the emergence of the “critical” aspect in CDA. First, the “critical” orientation that sociolinguistics, psychology and the social sciences started to take in the late 1970s, and second, the reaction to the “asocial” or “uncritical” paradigms of the 60s and 70s. Furthermore the rediscovery of Bakhtin and the works of Foucault and Bourdieu have contributed to enrich the theoretical foundations of CDA (Blommaert, 2005) and likewise to inform the interpretation of data in the light of this discipline.

The Goals of CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis is now an established approach to discourse analysis that has been around since the early 1980s. Cameron (2005) considers that the main task of CDA is to uncover “hidden agendas” in discourse in order to unveil power relationships; this task is mediated by the ideological dimension of CDA that states that language not only reflects reality but also creates it (the constitutive and constituted nature of language acknowledged by Fairclough, 1992 and Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). She highlights that CDA has been especially concerned with the study of institutional discourse because it is an important site for the operation of the constitutive nature of discourse.

For van Dijk (2005) “CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social problems abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” (p. 352). He states that CDA has an explicit political position that seeks to resist inequality. Van Dijk does not find this explicit position problematic because he considers that there is no “value-free” science and that any scholarly discourse responds and shapes particular ideologies because any discourse is “situated.”

In CDA, social structures are seen as sites where dominant groups try to naturalize their views of the world and dominated groups struggle and resist unequal

power relationships. Due to the naturalization of discourse, dominated groups sometimes fail to recognize inequality and accept the ideology imposed by those in power. For this reason, Wodak (2005) affirms that “CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse).” (p. 2)

In the same line of thought, the denaturalization of discourse practices, that is, making visible how some discourses oppress particular groups in a society, is the main goal of CDA according to Kress (1990). For him, CDA has also the task of bringing change to those discursive practices as well as to the social structures that support them. Like the other CDA practitioners, Kress considers that the political agenda of CDA differs from the agenda of the so called objective science, in that it is open and does not hide whose interests it serves: those of the oppressed and powerless groups (Meyer, 2005; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak, 2005).

Sharing the same ideas about what CDA is, Fairclough (1995) maintains that CDA is:

...discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and

processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (pp. 132-133)

For Fairclough, as it is for the other CDA advocates presented above, a major problem that needs to be addressed by the field is the fact that the ways in which power is exerted through discourse is often so subtle that people are not aware of it and end up accepting the social order imposed by those in power. This understanding of power is very much in line with the concept of symbolic power developed by Bourdieu (which I will address below). This “opacity” as he calls it, needs to be uncovered so individuals can resist dominance and promote the change of social structures.

Although the main advocates of CDA have taken different approaches (van Dijk follows a cognitive approach, Wodak a historical approach, Kress and van Leeuwen a social semiotic, and Fairclough a textual approach), they share a similar set of assumptions, categorized by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) in five common features that underlie the field of CDA summarized below.

1) *The character of social and cultural processes and structures is partly linguistic-discursive.* The social world is partly shaped or constituted by one form of social practice,

that of discursive practices which are the ways in which texts are produced and consumed. The interaction between the creators of texts and those who receive and interpret them give way to social and cultural reproduction and/or change. This means that individuals play within certain long established structures where power struggles emerge, and through discursive practices, these structures can be challenged and changed (Fairclough, 1992); since discursive practices are not isolated, the way in which in some discourses are articulated with other discourses produce changes in the social structures (Meyer, 2005).

2) *Discourse is both constitutive and constituted*: This might be one of the most relevant features of discourse in CDA. There is a dialectical relationship between discourse and society; discourse shapes society (as shown in the previous feature), but at the same time, it is the result of social practices (Cameron, 2005; Fairclough, 2001; Kress, 1989b).

Fairclough (1992) distinguishes three domains of social life that are constituted by discourse: *representations of the world* (how the world is represented depending on the perspective of the speaker), *relations between people* (how hierarchies play a role in the role ascribed to each participant), and *people's social and personal identities* (how individuals construct their identities in relation to their interlocutor, the situation, the goals, etc). These same domains, in turn, constitute discourse, by determining ways of using language.

3) *Language use should be empirically analyzed within its social context*: Considering the important role of language in the structuring of society, its study needs to be rigorous and systematic. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has shown to serve this purpose due to its detailed level of analysis; in fact, SFL is one of the linguistic theories in which CDA scholars have founded their methodologies, like Fairclough's textual analysis which is discussed below.

4) *Discourse functions ideologically*: "Ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 275). In the Marxist tradition, inequality is related to social class struggle, but today unequal relationships result from differences in gender, ethnicity, language, and so on. In this asymmetry of relations, power is seen in the Foucauldian way, as a productive force that circulates, and not as a static property possessed by an individual and exerted over others. To understand how ideologies and power operate, analysts need to examine not only the texts per se but also how they are interpreted and their effects on the hearer/reader.

5) *Critical research*: CDA theorists do not claim political neutrality. On the contrary, they openly express their commitment to favor oppressed groups. Furthermore, they claim that other forms of scientific research are not neutral either (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1997) since they are rooted in particular ideologies that favor certain views of the

world. In the same way, they aim at producing social change in search for a more egalitarian society.

Symbolic Power

As stated earlier, unveiling power struggles and asymmetries is a key issue in critical discourse analysis. Therefore, power is understood as hegemony defined by Gramsci (1971) as the exertion of power with the partial consent of the dominated. The concept of symbolic power developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu shares the same belief, but he goes further to explain how the dominant groups achieve the compliance of the dominated in such a way that the exertion of power is almost imperceptible.

Symbolic power is inscribed within Bourdieu's definition of capital as the accumulation of labor; capital and the access to accumulate it are unequally distributed. Bourdieu (1986) considers that there are three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital is defined as money, goods, and properties. Cultural capital exists in three forms or states:

1) *Embodied state*. This type of capital is composed by ingrained dispositions of the body and the mind (*habitus*)⁶ and presupposes a personal investment of the investor in its accumulation. People acquire this capital by their interaction with parents, siblings, relatives, friends, school, for example. Whatever we do from learning how to greet according to the context, situation, time of the day, to mastering a skill and everything in between are part of this form of capital. Since the embodied state is inbuilt in the mind and the body of the person, it dies with the person, and therefore it cannot be handed to anybody.

2) *Objectified state*. Bourdieu calls this objectified because it refers to the different ways in which cultural capital materializes, like literary pieces, art work, buildings, monuments, and the like⁷. Because this form of capital takes a concrete shape, it can be transmitted from one person to another. To fully appropriate any production of this form of capital, the person needs the economic capital to possess it, and the embodied capital to know how to appreciate it, or how to operate it.

3) *Institutionalized state*: This refers to the fact that embodied capital is recognized by an institution in the way of academic qualifications. Being recognized by an institution gives the bearer the possibility to convert his/her cultural capital into economic capital,

⁶ I will deal with this concept below

⁷ Machines, in Bourdieu classification, would be a form of “objectified capital” whereas Coleman (1990) calls them “physical capital”.

depending on the symbolic capital accumulated by the granting institution. The more recognition the institution holds the more economic convertibility for the individual.

Besides economic and cultural capital, Bourdieu (1986) includes social capital, defined as the social networks an individual has access to. These social networks work as a kind of bank where the individual can obtain credit from. The word “credit” does not necessarily mean “money” but other forms of “loans” like gifts or favors. In relation to this, Portes (1998) criticizes Bourdieu because he concentrates only in the profits an individual can obtain from his/her social capital and stays away from the negative consequences of relying on social capital. Portes presents various examples to illustrate that the membership to a social network sometimes is more harmful than beneficial, like when the social network is a gang or a mafia.

In the same line of thought, Coleman (1990) defines social capital as social-structural resources that are assets for the individual: “Social capital is not a single entity but a variety of different entities that have two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (p. 302) He also states that the social capital that is useful in certain circumstances to certain people can be harmful for others.

Linguistic Capital

In the same line of thought Bourdieu (2003) adds “linguistic capital” to the taxonomy presented above. His idea emerged at a time when the leading paradigm in linguistics conceived language as separate from social life, inspired by Saussure’s structuralist approach and Chomsky’s linguistic competence. Bourdieu (2003) critiques Saussure’s concept of language as a “treasure” that belongs to a homogeneous community of speakers because it assumes that everybody has the same access to that treasure, that is, that there are no different varieties and that they are not valued differently.

In relation to Chomsky’s conception of language, Bourdieu finds problematic his theory of the “ideal” speaker-listener, who is able to produce unlimited number of grammatically correct sentences. Chomsky fails to recognize that speakers are all different and different circumstances constrain their speaking possibilities; a speaker can produce a perfect sentence, grammatically speaking, but it may be completely out of context. Also, the listener might not recognize the speaker as legitimate and therefore act uncooperatively.

Bourdieu concludes that both, Saussure and Chomsky, neglect to see that language is set in social, historical, political, cultural conditions that affect how it is acquired and used. Their views have influenced mainstream linguists who consider that

any linguistic exchange is an intellectual operation of encoding and decoding sentences that are grammatically correct, when in fact every linguistic exchange is mediated by power relationships (Thompson, 2003), where the right to speak and the right to be heard have to be recognized by the others. Ignoring that linguistic exchanges happen between real people in real contexts and spreading the linguistic models of *langue* as the perfect linguistic system and of the ideal speaker bring as a consequence the conception that language should be perfect and homogenous. This conception has set the basis for the judgment of what can be considered legitimate or authorized language, which in some contexts is the so called “standard.”

To explain why legitimate language (or linguistic capital), as any other form of capital, is not readily available to everybody, Bourdieu (2003) uses his “linguistic habitus” and “linguistic market” concepts. The former results from his definition of habitus as:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being

all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of the conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72)

Elsewhere he adds: “Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). This means that habitus enables individuals to act, behave, believe, in a certain way, what Bourdieu (1989) calls a “sense of one’s place,” and at the same time it enables individuals to perceive the practices of others. In connection with language, Bourdieu (2003) defines linguistic habitus as “a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things (the expressive interest) and a certain capacity to speak, which involves both the linguistic capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in a determinate situation” (p. 37). Hanks (2005) elaborates on Bourdieu’s definition stating that “[f]or language, the habitus bears on the social definition of the speaker, mentally and physically, on routine ways of speaking, on gesture and embodied communicative actions, and on the perspectives inculcated through ordinary referential practice in a given language” (p. 69).

Linguistic habitus is then a form of “embodied state” of cultural capital, and it is determined by the social environment in which the person grows (Bourdieu, 1986). In this sense, the linguistic habitus of an individual will depend very much on the access they have to other forms of capital (cultural, social, and economic). The social class in

which a person is raised and is a member of will determine their linguistic capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Hanks, 2005). That is, the differences in the position of the individual within the social and economic field influence the way their linguistic habitus is inculcated. From this perspective, language usage does not “obey” rules but is actualized in speech (Hanks, 2005). In a society whose material and symbolic resources are unequally distributed, language is not an exception and having access to the right sort of linguistic capital marks its convertibility into economic capital which might lead to holding some sort of power (Bourdieu, 2003; Goke-Pariola, 1993; Bhatt, 2001, Hanks, 2005).

Linguistic capital is acquired by an extended exposure to the legitimate language and the main sources for this exposure are family and school. Bourdieu (2003) states:

The laws of the transmission of linguistic capital are a particular case of the laws of the legitimate transmission of cultural capital between the generations, and it may therefore be posited that the linguistic competence measured by academic criteria depends, like the other dimensions of cultural capital, on the level of education (measured in terms of qualifications obtained) and on the social trajectory. (p. 61)

Academic institutions determine who has the linguistic competence and who does not, which is usually compared against the legitimate, official, or authorized language.

The prestige of the linguistic capital is dictated by the “linguistic market” defined as the “social domains within which language use is valued; they determine the specific value of that capital at a given time and place” (Collins, 1993, p. 118). The linguistic market dictates what variety or what language is accepted/recognized as legitimate or authorized, which most of the times are the variety or language spoken by those in power. Generally the nomination of “official,” “legitimate,” “authorized” language is institutionalized by the State through the school system by the creation of a “unified linguistic market in which a single language becomes the norm for legitimate speech and all other forms of speech become devalued (as dialects or patois, or simply as “foreign,” and categorically unintelligible)” (Collins, 1993, p. 119). The legitimate language becomes the standard in the understanding that a particular variety is shared by all the members of a community and hence it is intelligible. But what lies behind standardization is a network of power relations between economic and political institutions (Hanks, 2005) that want to impose their own view of the world, which is supposedly shared and recognized by everybody (Bourdieu, 1989).

The school system is then one of the main vehicles to impose the standard language (others might be advertisement, institutional forms, intellectual production, etc), where certain linguistic styles, varieties and practices are praised and reproduced, while

others are devalued and silenced (Hanks, 2005). For this reason, school is considered by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) as a site “for the reproduction of legitimate culture” (p. 101) and a site where there is unequal distribution of the knowledge and use of the language but equal distribution of the recognition of that language as legitimate (Bourdieu, 2003).

Language as Symbolic Capital

Linguistic capital eventually becomes symbolic capital given that it complies with two conditions: first that it is “perceived and recognized as legitimate” Bourdieu (1989: 17) and second that its economic interest is denied or misrecognized (Bourdieu, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1990; Swartz, 1997). When a language or a variety of language gains legitimization through a greater value, individuals see its acquisition as a way to access formal education that in the long term will allow them to move upward in the social hierarchy (Chouliarki and Fairclough, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002). Being competent in the standard converts into symbolic capital because it is considered the proper way of speaking, a belief that does not result from the relationship between the individual and the language itself, but from power relations, which, through a long exposure to the inculcation that this is true, ends up being that way (Hanks, 2005).

Language as Symbolic Power

Now, symbolic capital can in turn convert into symbolic power. Bourdieu developed the concept of symbolic capital during his studies of Kabilya (Swartz, 1997), in which gift exchange was a recurrent practice aimed at engaging the receiver in a counter-gift/favor relationship. The concept is still effective in western societies where gift exchanges presupposes a tacit agreement between the giver and the receiver in which the latter is obliged to return a gift of the same characteristics of the one received or of a better quality or value (Coleman, 1990; Portes, 1998). In this tacit agreement the economic interest of the exchange is hidden (Bourdieu, 1977b) and operates as a form to exert power in asymmetrical relationships.

This way of exerting power, that is, power in a covert way, is what Bourdieu (2003) calls symbolic power and which he defines 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.” (p. 164). Symbolic power, in order to be effective, rests on two conditions: 1) it is based on symbolic capital, this means that only the ones who have recognition (accumulated from previous struggles) can demand recognition and consequently can count on the other’s belief that the view of the world presented by the dominant groups is the legitimate one; 2) it depends on the validity of the view of the world the dominant groups want to impose; this means, their view of the

world must be founded in reality (Bourdieu, 1989). In a further explanation of symbolic power, Bourdieu (1977b) states:

Symbolic power, being the power to constitute the given by stating it, to create appearances and belief, to confirm or transform the vision of the world and thereby action in the world, and therefore the world itself, this quasi-magical power which makes it possible to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained by force (physical or economic) thanks to the specific mobilizing effect is only effective if it is recognized as legitimate (that is to say, if it is not recognized as arbitrary) (p. 117)

According to this, Bourdieu (1989) concludes that “symbolic power is the power to make things with words” (p. 23) and he explains it with the fact that a group, a class, a region a nation, starts to exist when they are recognized as such by receiving a name, by being differentiated from others.

He is cautious, though, by claiming that words do not have power by themselves; it is not enough to utter something to make it become a reality. The power of words come from outside language; someone else has to have decided that a particular person has the authority to make things happen by uttering a sentence, and this recognition stems from

the symbolic capital that a group has accumulated and has authorized someone to perform on behalf of the group. In addition, to make things happen with words, it is not enough that they are uttered by an authorized person; the sentence will have power as long as it is recognized by the audience as such. It must be uttered in a legitimate situation, and it must be uttered according to a legitimate form or genre.

In this line of thought, language and specifically linguistic capital, converts into a tool to exert symbolic power and does so in two ways. First, language is used by those in power to create and legitimize their vision of the world. This is possible because language is, as stated by Bourdieu (2003), a structuring structure along with the other symbolic systems (art, myth, and science)⁸, which means that language is used to structure a vision of the world. Through different means of exposure to a determinate conception of the world, and by extension to its structures, the individual acquires a habitus that leads them to perceive it as natural (Bourdieu, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1989; Hanks, 2005).

When this perception is achieved, that is, when disadvantaged groups accept the vision of the world as natural, dominant groups can exert symbolic power and obtain better results than if they had used force in any way. The dominated groups acquiesce to

⁸ Bourdieu draws from Durkheim and his “symbolic forms” or forms of classification to state his theory of symbolic systems as structuring structures (Bourdieu, 2005)

being dominated because they misrecognize the arbitrariness of power and recognize it as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu, 2003, Thompson, 2003).

The second way in which language converts into a symbolic power tool is by the value and legitimacy attributed to it by the dominant group; language as a symbolic system is a structured structure, whose value and legitimacy, as shown above, is socially constructed depending on the linguistic market. Therefore, when people accept a variety of language (linguistic capital) and believe in its legitimacy, those who possess that linguistic capital decide who has the right to speak and who should remain silent (Hanks, 2005).

Thompson (2003) states that the emergence of a language variety as the dominant and legitimate one is the result of complex historical conflicts and struggles where other varieties and dialects are bound to have less prestige and be subordinated to the official language. Historical and political contexts like unification of nations, separation of nations, origin of new nations, nationalist projects, imperialist projects, etc. require the implementation of language policies and what usually happens is that States decide for the standard variety, that is, the variety sanctioned as legitimate. The educational system and the labor market play a crucial role in the consolidation of the linguistic policies that function as sites for reproduction of social structures and therefore of linguistic practices. A situation like this is particularly favorable for the dominant groups who already possess the linguistic capital promoted in school and required in the labor market while the ones

who speak other varieties or dialects are destined to accept the symbolic power exerted by the dominant groups. As stated by Hanks (2005) “[d]ifferences in social and economic position tend to be reproduced in unequal knowledge of legitimate language, which in turn reinforces constraints on access to power.” (p. 117)

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

Object of Study

The object of the present study is to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the handbook “Estándares” mentioned above. The document is part of a series of handbooks published by the Ministry of Education of Colombia within their program “Revolución Educativa”, one of the leading projects of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, the current president of the country (2006-2010). The main objective of this series is to set standards for the core areas of the curriculum which are Spanish, Mathematics, and Social and Natural Science. Although English is not a core area, it became part of the series because of the implementation of the national bilingualism program (PNB, for its initials in Spanish).

Research Questions

The formulation of the research questions respond to my own position as a teacher educator and as a researcher. As a teacher educator in Colombia, I brought my own background, experience and knowledge of the context to make a decision in relation

to the issues to explore in this study. As a researcher, I share with numerous others the idea that no text is neutral (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2001; Heller, 1992; Kress, 1989a; 1989b; Pennycook, 1998; van Dijk, 1997, 2005; Wodak, 2005), that institutions play a crucial role in the distribution, control, and circulation of discourse (Foucault, 2005; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 2004), and that textbooks (in this case a handbook) are vehicles used by institutions to direct people's behavior (Kress, 1989a; Stubbs, 1996). These set of beliefs guided the formulation of the following research questions:

1. How is the concept of “bilingualism” (re)constructed for the Colombian context?

In Colombia, the term “bilingualism” was traditionally used to refer to both elite bilingualism which is present in bilingual schools where international languages such as French, German, or English are taught to upper class students, and folk bilingualism which is the naturally occurring bilingualism in which minority language speakers have Spanish as their L2 (indigenous peoples and creole speakers) (De Mejía, 1998, 2005, 2006). But within the PNB, ‘bilingualism’ is (re) constructed in a different way. With this question, I wanted to examine what these new meanings are and how they are naturalized and legitimized in the Colombian context.

2. How is English, as a language, presented in the text “Estandares”?

With this question, I intended to analyze how the official voices (Ministry of Education and the British Council) construct a concept of what English as an L2 means **in** and **for** the Colombian context. By unpacking the selection of words, the structuring of sentences and the intended meanings, I wanted to unveil the ideologies that underlie the written discourse presented in the document. The concept of language as symbolic power will be a key element in answering this question.

3. What are the images of English teachers held by the Ministry of Education and the BC?

The handbook is addressed to school teachers, and considering that they are key players in the implementation of the PNB, or as Giroux (1988) states, the success or failure of a policy depends very much on teachers' actions, it was my interest to examine how they are portrayed in the “Estándares”. Put in other words, what are the images the MEN and the BC, as authors of the document, hold about Colombian teachers?

Research Methodology

The analysis of data was illuminated by CDA, specifically the methodology of textual analysis proposed by Fairclough (1995, 2001, and 2003). The justification for selecting Fairclough's textual analysis approach lies in two aspects. One aspect has to do with the structure of this approach: it is considered the most developed and systematic methodology in CDA (Jorgensen & Martin, 2002). Using this is central to bring trustworthiness to my interpretation of discourse, because although I bring my own biases to the analysis of data, I would not allow them to blind my judgment. The second aspect resides in the relevance that the theoretical assumptions of this approach might have in Colombian teachers. In textual analysis, discourse is defined as both constitutive and constituted. This means that in the dialectical relationship between texts and social life, the former not only reflects the latter but texts can also contest social life and therefore reshape it.

In Colombia, there is a need to examine language policies critically particularly in this historic moment when one language (English) is taking over and a great deal of human and economic resources are being allocated in the implementation of the project "Colombia Bilingual in 10 years". The education system in Colombia is designed in such a way that students learn to assign a value of truth to everything that is written. We grow up with the idea that it is wrong to question the written word. The Ministry of Education and the British Council capitalize on this *habitus* and produce a document to inculcate

their view of the world which at the same time serves their own interests. If teachers, the main consumers of this handbook, are aware first of how certain ideologies are being naturalized and second that it is possible to contest them, they can take action to bring change to the social structures constructed and favored by those in power.

Fairclough's approach aims at bridging a gap between discourse analysis inspired by social theory on the one hand, and pure linguistic analysis on the other. The former pays little attention to the linguistic analysis of texts, and the latter examines language in detail but fails to connect this with social issues. In a textual analysis approach, these two perspectives are put together to offer a more comprehensive picture of the analysis of a text. To achieve his goal, Fairclough (2003) draws from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

Different from Chomskyan approaches to linguistics where language is conceived of as an isolated system in abstraction from context, SFL acknowledges the relationship between texts and social life. Every type of text we produce, either spoken, written or visual, is motivated; texts happen in a context. Halliday (1985) defines *context* as the environment where a text unfolds. The context is made up of other texts and of the situation in which they are produced, that is, the social life, in Fairclough's (1995) words. The way in which a text is constructed responds to different elements like whom it is addressed to, what the purpose of the text is, how it is going to be delivered, what information will be included (and excluded), what register is going to be used, what

motivates the text, and others of this sort. This implies that the selection of language and linguistic structures is not random but rather that they are put together to fulfill a goal; therefore, form and content are equally important in the interpretation of texts.

By combining SFL and CDA, Fairclough (2003) develops what he calls a “transdisciplinary” approach. In his model of textual analysis, Fairclough (1995, 2003) uses both linguistic analysis and intertextuality in an understanding of the strong relationship between the form of the language in a particular text and the context in which it is produced; that is, linguistic analysis gives an account of how texts draw upon linguistic systems to create meaning, and the intertextual analysis shows “how texts draw upon, incorporate, **recontextualize** and dialogue with other texts” (Fairclough, 2003: 17).

In a SFL approach, Halliday (1974) establishes three main functions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational function serves to express the speaker’s relation to the external world, the interpersonal allows them to express relations among participants in the context of situation, and the textual expresses the situation of a particular text in a broader context of preceding and following texts and the social context. Fairclough (1992, 2003) draws from these functions but introduces a more explicit social element for each one and proposes *identity*, *relational* and *ideational* functions of language:

The identity function relates to the ways in which social identities are set up in discourse, the relational function to how social relations between discourse participants are enacted and negotiated, the ideational function to ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities and relations (2003: 64).

To unpack how these functions are enacted in discourse, Fairclough (2001) designed a methodology that consists of three stages: *Description*, *interpretation*, and *explanation*. *Description* deals with the linguistic analysis; Fairclough divides it in three broad categories (vocabulary, grammar and text structures) accompanied by questions that aim at finding fine-grained explanations of how the language choices presented in the text resemble or contest particular ideology/ies. The second stage, *interpretation*, has to do with an analysis of the text in its relationship with other texts, other discourses, and the background in which it is produced and will be interpreted. This stage of the analysis brings together the formal features of the text and combines it with the analyst's own set of beliefs, assumptions, experiences and background to unveil the meaning of the texts. *Explanation* is the third stage, and it is concerned with the analysis of the relationship between texts and the social context to explain how a text can reproduce or contest social structures, especially with regard to struggles over power. These three levels of analysis complement each other and allow the researcher to unpack ideologies that are not apparent to the consumers of these texts.

Textual analysis is more productive when analyzing small amounts of data, but in need of using this approach to analyze larger amounts, the researcher can adapt the level of analysis and select specific features of the text (Fairclough, 2003). Bearing this constraint in mind, I focused my analysis on the three topics mentioned in the research questions, as stated by Fairclough (2003) “textual analysis is inevitably selective,” (p. 14) in that the researcher decides what questions to ask depending their motivation for conducting a particular study. The motivation might be influenced by the researcher’s own ideology or beliefs about certain aspects of social life. In my case, my motivation arises from my own belief that throughout the handbook, the official voice of the State embodied in the Ministry of Education and with the British Council acting as expert consultants promotes an ideological position regarding the role of English in the world, in society, and particularly in Colombia. I agree with Fairclough (2003) that ideology is a modality of power that can be identified in texts, and in this case, the very nature of the handbook implies a purpose of “directing” or “guiding” teachers’ practice towards a specific goal: achieving certain standards in English.

Process of Data Analysis

I conducted this analysis manually, meaning that I did not run any data analysis software. In order to answer my research questions, I followed these steps:

1. Familiarize myself with the data. Read thoroughly and start making notes on salient aspects that might respond to the research questions.
2. Focus on one research question at a time; pay close attention to language choices, linguistic strategies, semantic relations, and other linguistic details and establish relations with the larger context in which they are produced. Read literature that might be relevant to interpret the data (foreign and local authors) and search for other public texts that are connected to the broad topic or to specific aspects of it that can support my analysis.
3. Identify commonalities and group them into form categories. Provide a name for each broad category and then break them into subcategories. Define or describe what each category means, and then offer my interpretation supported by excerpts taken from the data. Eventually find other texts and bring them as secondary data to give more strength to my analysis.

Primary and Secondary Data Sources

The primary data source is the handbook aforementioned “Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras, el reto” (*Basic standards for competences in foreign languages: English. Teach in foreign languages: the challenge*⁹). This is a public document published by the Ministry of Education of Colombia. It is intended as a guideline for teachers of English in elementary and secondary schools of the public sector (from first grade to eleventh). The document is available both in print and online in the Ministry of Education web site: www.mineducacion.gov.co.

There are 41 pages in total. The first page includes the title; the second states the collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the British Council, and there are the names of the people involved in the publication of the handbook. On page number four, there is the table of contents. Page number five is a letter signed by the Minister of education Cecilia María Vélez White.

From page five until page nine, the section starts with the title: “Algunos conceptos clave en el programa nacional de bilingüismo” (*Some key concepts in the*

⁹ My translation

*national bilingualism program*¹⁰). In this section, the authors highlight the importance of being bilingual, provide a definition of bilingualism, describe the difference between foreign language and second language, and give reasons for the adoption of English as a foreign language in Colombia.

Page six starts with the heading: “Los estándares en el contexto del programa nacional de bilingüismo” (*The standards in the context of the national bilingualism program*). Here the authors explain why they adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) and present a table with the description of the goals in terms of language proficiency for the year 2019.

The following three pages include an explanation of why to teach English in Colombia, which is the title of the section (“¿Por qué enseñar inglés en Colombia?”). They emphasize the role of English in the international context, how learning another language helps personal development, and what some of the reasons to learn English are. From page ten to thirteen, under the title “Fundamentos que subyacen a la organización de los estándares” (*Underlying foundations of the organization of the standards*), there is an explanation of how the standards were organized, what communicative competence is, and what other competences students should know in order to learn English.

¹⁰ My translation

On pages 14, 15, 16 and 17, there is a description of the general layout of the standards; from page 18 to 27 there are the actual descriptors, organized in five skills: “Escucha” (*listening*), “Lectura” (*Reading*), “Escritura” (*Writing*), “Monólogos” (*Monologues*), and “Conversación” (*Conversation*). These are accompanied by a cartoon-like picture on the top of each page in which the characters enunciate some of the descriptors.

The following section starts on page 28 with the heading “Recomendaciones para la apropiación de los estándares” (*Recommendations for the appropriation of the standards*). Here there is differentiation between acquisition and learning, as well as definitions of other second language acquisition related terminology. The final section, on page 32 is titled “Los estándares en la práctica cotidiana” (*The standards in the everyday practice*). In this section, the authors present two examples of how to work successfully with the standards in the school.

On page 38, there is a list of 24 references; page 39 is the acknowledgments; and pages 40 and 41 include a list of institutions who participated in the project. In order to give strength to my interpretation of data, a great number of public documents were used as secondary data sources. Among them there are open letters, power point presentations posted on line, newspaper articles found on the web, textbooks, decrees, and other types of information published by reliable sources.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALIZATION OF MULTILINGUISM IN COLOMBIA

The Ministry of Education of Colombia has produced a series of guidelines to establish the national standards for the core areas of the Colombian curriculum which are Spanish, Mathematics, Social and Natural sciences, and Citizenship Competences. To these series the MEN added the “Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto!” as part of its “Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (PNB)” (*National Bilingualism Program*). The production of these standards is inscribed within the government proposal of the current President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe Velez called “La revolución educativa” (*Educational revolution*).

The goal of the educational revolution is to improve the quality of education and extend access to education in order to promote the social and economic development of the country and better the living conditions of Colombians. To reach this objective, the national government set three basic policies: 1) Extend education coverage, 2) Improve the quality of education, and 3) Improve the efficiency of education. (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, n/d, p. 8). Despite the fact that, initially, favoring the teaching of English was neither included in any of these policies nor in the “Plan decenal de educación 1996-2005”, a document that establishes the direction of education for ten

years, it was added later as a national policy in the “Plan sectorial 2006-2010”.

All of these documents state a deep interest in the improvement of the quality of education in Colombia, and the need to favor less privileged groups; nevertheless, there is a lack of coherence between the sociolinguistic reality in Colombia and the projects undertaken by the Ministry of Education. In the National Constitution of 1991 (in effect today), Colombia is acknowledged as a multicultural and multilingual nation where there is a convergence of indigenous languages, creoles, several foreign languages, and Spanish. In this chapter, I would like to bring to the surface the existence of multilingualism in Colombia and relate it to language policies. My main objective here is to raise awareness of the fact that these languages are real, have real speakers and are alive today. It is not new that multilingualism (especially the type that is related to indigenous languages and creoles) has been permanently overshadowed by monolingual ideologies and poor language policies, but the launch of the PNB has affected (and will continue to affect) negatively the value, recognition, use, study, teaching and learning of these and all the other languages different from English, that share the Colombian territory.

Indigenous Languages

According to the “Departamento Nacional de Planeación, (DNP)”, the official organism in charge of tracing the directions of all national policies, the indigenous population in Colombia is 1.378.884, they represent 3.3% of the national populace, and they live in the 33 departments of Colombia. Although a small percentage of this population is monolingual in Spanish, the majority of them speak any of the sixty-six languages that are alive today (Landaburu , 2005; Pineda Camacho, 1997). This is a small number of indigenous languages compared to the large number of languages found by the Spaniards when they first arrived in America.

The multilingualism found by the Spanish conquistadors provoked a negative impression, so that they referred to the large number of languages spoken by the indigenous peoples as an “illness” that was spread along all the different groups found in the new world. Also, the missionaries said it was a huge problem that made evangelization very hard to the point of becoming a test of their true vocation. There was such disregard (or ignorance) for our indigenous languages that Christopher Columbus re-named as many things as he could, seeking inspiration in religion and monarchy at first; later, the new names were motivated by direct resemblance. For example, he re-named the island of *Guanahani* (name given by the Indians) as *San Salvador*; other islands were named *Santa María de Concepción*, *Fernandina*, *Isabella*, and *Juana*. Other

places were named *Cabo de Palmas* (a cape covered with palm trees), *Rio de Oro*, *Monte de Plata*, *Punta Seca*, to name a few. He even rebaptized two Indians he took back to Spain with the names of *Don Juan de Castilla* and *Don Fernando de Aragón* (Patiño Rosselli, 2000; Todorov, 1984). But despite their rejection of indigenous languages, these languages still impacted Spaniards, and some new words started to circulate in Spain, like “canoa”, the first word registered by Nebrija in his dictionary of Castilian (Pineda Camacho, 2000). This account of the first encounters of the colonizers with the natives gives evidence that the prevalent ideology of devaluing our indigenous peoples and everything related to them has deep roots in our historic past.

The linguistic diversity was a problem not only for the missionaries but also for business, so from the beginning, the Spanish policy was to teach indigenous peoples to speak Castilian. In 1512, the Spanish Crown ordered the colonizers to teach Castilian to the children of the indigenous chiefs, as well as Catholicism, and government skills (Pineda Camacho, 2000). The Church realized that aborigines were reciting prayers but did not understand their meaning, so they promoted the learning of indigenous languages among its missionaries so they could evangelize indigenous peoples in their native languages. The Spanish Crown, in the head of Philip II, supported this initiative but only for evangelization purposes while at the same time it encouraged the spread of Castilian, which was clearly a policy of transitional bilingualism (De Mejía, 2005; Patiño Rosselli, 2000; Pineda Camacho, 2000). Given that there were so many indigenous languages, the

Spaniards selected the more prestigious or the more widely spoken (at that time Náhuatl, Quechua and Chibcha) to spread Christian faith and European values; vocabulary and grammar books were produced for the missionaries to learn those languages.

All of this period was characterized by a struggle within the Church (at that time the Church had strong power over the government); some missionaries, especially “mestizos” (children of Spaniards and Indigenous peoples), wanted to keep the indigenous languages (which they spoke) but the Spanish missionaries wanted to conduct evangelization only in Spanish. The discrepancy in the application of linguistic policies generated resulted in some aborigines learning Spanish and some not, which led to segregation ordered by the "Ordenanzas" (people in power in the new Colony) (Pineda Camacho, 2000)

Years later, during the government of Charles III, this policy changed drastically; indigenous languages were prohibited, and Castilian was declared the only accepted language (Landaburu, 2005; Mar-Molinero, 2000; Patiño Rosselli, 2000). The development of maritime commerce conducted in Spanish, and the insurgency of Tupac Amaru in 1780-1781 triggered the interest of Charles III to forbid the indigenous languages. This policy continued during the rest of the colonization period, and speaking Spanish (Castilian) was required in order to obtain citizenship in the new colonies.

During the era of the republic, when a great number of the population was “Criolla” (Creole, the name given to children of Spaniards born in America), the spread

of Spanish continued in some areas. It was not always successful because the “Criollos” wanted to keep the aborigines marginalized linguistically and culturally for three main reasons: 1) it was a control mechanism, 2) the “Criollos” thought that if the indigenous peoples learned Spanish they would become lazy and corrupted, and 3) the “Criollos” wanted the linguistic difference as a way of discrimination (Pineda Camacho, 2000). Adding to this, feeling left out from society, the aborigines did not see a purpose of speaking Spanish.

Some years after the independence from Spain, in 1886, the new republic called then “La Gran Colombia” wrote its first constitution. In it, Spanish was assumed as the official and only language. This constitution was characterized by a strong sense of cohesion and homogeneity, evidenced by the fact that it did not acknowledge the multiculturalism or multilingualism of the country (Pineda Camacho, 2000); the natural implication for indigenous populations (and afro-desendents) was that they should drop their languages (that at the time, and until recently, were not recognized as languages but as “dialects”) and speak Spanish instead. This policy succeeded for more than one hundred years and was strengthened by the fact that the education of indigenous groups was in the hands of Catholic missionaries who conducted it in Spanish (De Mejía, 2005).

In 1962, the first hint of official interest in indigenous languages happened when the national government asked the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) to study them. Motivated more by a political interest than by a legitimate linguistic one, the government

expected the SIL to evangelize the indigenous peoples as a way of transition towards the modernization of the State. Nevertheless, there was a positive outcome from the work conducted by the SIL in that they raised indigenous populations' awareness about the importance of developing a writing system of their languages (Landaburu, 2005).

The early 70s witnessed the emergence of indigenous group organizations whose purpose of reclaiming their lands was accompanied latter by a demand for the acknowledgment of their culture and languages. In 1982, the OINIC ("Organización Indígena de Colombia") was founded to represent the interest of all the indigenous organizations already formed (Landaburu, 2005).

Although bringing the SIL to Colombia to work with the indigenous groups and their languages was an official initiative, it was in 1978 when for the first time the Ministry of Education with the issue of Decree 1142 recognized that indigenous populations had the right to be educated in their own languages and design a curriculum that addressed their contexts and needs (de Mejía, 2005; Jiménez, 1998; Landaburu, 2005). The indigenous movements of the 70s rendered positive outcomes that translated into the support given by the national government plus resources coming from international cooperation agencies to create the "Centro Colombiano de estudios de lenguas aborígenes" (*Colombian Center for the study of aborigines languages*). The main objective of the center was to train linguists in knowing and researching about indigenous languages. In fact, indigenous groups sent some of their members to develop a writing

system in order to produce educational and cultural materials (Landaburu, 2005).

The critical conditions of the nation during the 80s due to widespread violence came from various fronts (guerrilla, drug dealers, drug cartels, and corruption) and generated the need to search for a new institutional order. A group of students led the organization of a referendum that mandated the modification of the constitution of 1886, and gave rise to the constitution of 1991. By then, the indigenous groups had gained national recognition and support and participated in the writing of the new constitution. This time Colombia was acknowledged as a multicultural and multilingual nation with the recognition of indigenous communities and minority groups as legitimate Colombian citizens. Spanish was still designated as the official language of the country, but the indigenous languages were included as official in the indigenous territories, which implied that the state would guarantee bilingual education and respect for their cultural identity (Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991).

With the issue of Law 115 in 1994, the National Government ratified the rights of indigenous groups and recognized the need for ethno-education. Ethno-education in this context means the right to foster the culture and language of the indigenous peoples. To ensure this, their education will be conducted in their mother tongue and in Spanish and teachers should be bilingual and preferably, members of the same indigenous community.

Indigenous languages have gained recognition little by little after 500 years after the discovery of America, but still there is a long way towards the concretization of some

of the objectives registered in the Constitution and Law 115. It is still uncertain what will happen with the indigenous languages in the years to come, considering that in the past the competition for prestige and resources was only against Spanish, but now, with the launching of the PNB, English enters as a new and powerful player. What is clear is that more decisive governmental efforts and investment is necessary in order to preserve the language and culture of our indigenous groups in Colombia. Unfortunately, as Omoniyi (2003) states: “Language policies sometimes never rise beyond the page of the document on which they are printed.” (p. 16)

Afro-Caribbean Languages

Besides the more than sixty-six indigenous languages that exist today in Colombia, there are two afro-Caribbean languages that have developed since the colonial times: “Palenquero”, a Spanish-based creole spoken in San Basilio de Palenque, and an English-based creole spoken on San Andrés Island. It seems that these creoles developed due to two main reasons: 1) The practice of slavery: Spaniards brought a large number of Africans to work in agriculture, mines, and sugar cane plantations (Holm, 1984; Patiño Rosselli, 1992) and 2) “Cimarronismo” (*maroons*) (Patiño Rosselli, 1998). Until very recently, these two languages were invisible in Colombia, and very little was known

about them. The Ministry of Culture has started a project led by Jon Landaburu to revive and maintain these and the indigenous languages spoken in Colombia.

Palenquero

During the colonial period, Spain brought a huge number of Africans to enslave them and send them to work in agriculture and mines, particularly in the Caribbean region. Africans never accepted their condition as slaves and always sought ways to recover their freedom which motivated them to escape and settle in isolated areas. San Basilio de Palenque is one of more than forty settlements and where “Palenquero” was originated.

This small village is located about 60 km from Cartagena and 200 km from Barranquilla on the north coast of the country. It is not clear when exactly San Basilio de Palenque was founded; Morton (2005) and Schwegler & Morton (2003) state that it must have been between 1650 and 1700, but Lipski (1987) places it around 1599 and Megenney (1986) in 1608. Despite the discrepancies in dates, they all agree that it was Domingo Bioho, an African slave who claimed to be King Benkos from an African Royal family, who led a rebellion and was followed by thirty other slaves and escaped from Cartagena; together they built a fortified site and founded a community of maroons

(“cimarrones”). They built these fortified settlements with sticks (“palos”), hence the name “Palenqueros”, to resist the attempts of the Spaniards to recapture them and also to keep whatever they had built in their short period of freedom (Morton, 2005; Colombia Aprende, 2008; de Mejía, 2005; Patiño Rosselli, 1992; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

By 1603, the official reports warned about the increasing number of “Palenques” near Cartagena (capital city of Bolivar), and this motivated the Governor of Bolivar to sign an agreement with the inhabitants of Palenque de San Basilio in which the former acknowledged the independence of the “Palenqueros” as long as the latter did not encourage “cimarronaje” and did not take in more escapees. Despite this agreement, for almost a century the “Palenqueros” had to fight the colonizers to keep their freedom and their lands until 1691 when the King of Spain agreed to confer them the lands they had cultivated and where they had built their towns (Patiño Rosselli, 1998; Pineda Camacho, 2000). According to Morton (2005), this type of agreement took place only with Palenque de San Basilio, which in a way determined the unique “linguistic and cultural evolution of this village” (p. 34).

These communities of “Palenqueros” communicated in Spanish and their native languages or in a pidgin used in the African coast which originated the “Palenquero” (Patiño Rosselli, 1991; 1998; Pineda Camacho, 2000; Oceanic linguistics special publication, 1975: 125-127), and it has been reported as the only Spanish-based Creole that has survived in the Caribbean (Dieck, 1998; McWhorter, 1995; Patiño Rosselli,

1991, 1992; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

Different from indigenous peoples, African slaves were kept marginalized from formal education; their only instruction was aimed towards their conversion to Catholicism. This isolation propitiated their frequent use of their own Creole and of a variety of Spanish that was very different from the norm (Pineda Camacho, 2000). The marginalizing attitude has continued until today in such a way that black color of skin has been related to poverty, backwardness, and underdevelopment; being perceived in this negative way has granted “Palenqueros” a stigmatization that has affected the interest of new generations to speak their language. (Schwegler, 1998; Schwegler & Morton, 2003)

During the Republican years, the spread of Castilian (or Spanish) became stronger, and it forced “Palenquero” to be restricted to the area of San Basilio. Since then, the inhabitants of San Basilio de Palenque have been bilingual in “Palenquero” and Spanish, using the former as their first and home language (de Mejía, 2005; Pineda Camacho, 2000), but this is an asymmetrical bilingualism because while everybody understands and speaks Spanish, young people and children understand “Palenquero” but do not speak it fluently or do not speak it at all (Lipski, 1987; Patiño Rosselli, 1992).

“Palenquero” was documented for the first time by Ochoa Franco in 1945 and recognized as Creole by Bickerton and Escalante in 1970. (De Mejía, 2005; Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications, 1975, p. 132-133; Schwegler, 1998). Due to its unique characteristics, it has been regarded as a linguistic relic, but it was only until mid 1980s

when the Government started to take actions to give “Palenquero” official status through the program ‘Education for identity’. Thanks to this initiative, the language is being used at school, and there are projects running to produce a Palenquero-Spanish bilingual dictionary as well as other printed materials (de Mejía, 2005; Patiño Rosselli, 1992; Pineda Camacho, 2000). In 2005, San Basilio de Palenque was declared a “Masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” by UNESCO which has triggered more interest from the National Government towards the preservation of the language.

San Andrés and Providence Creole English.

San Andrés and Providence make up the Caribbean archipelago which is the smallest Colombian “departamento”. Its population is approximately 62,000 and about half is of African descent (Decker & Keener, 2001; Morren, 2001).

The situation of San Andrés and Providence is the result of the negligence of the State and the role of Church in education. Spain took possession of the islands of San Andrés and Providence in 1641, but by then, a large number of Puritan colonists had arrived in the island (Morren, 2001); in addition, during the early 18th century, immigrants from Jamaica and other English speaking countries settled there, and Spain lost control of the island (Decker and Keener, 2001; Forbes, 2005; Holm, 1984; Patiño

Rosselli, 1992; Pineda Camacho, 2000). In 1786, a treaty ceded the islands back to Spain, but English inhabitants were allowed to stay as long as they swore allegiance to the Spanish Crown, converted to Catholicism and spoke Spanish (De Mejía, 2005).

Despite these requests and due to the presence of a large population of English speaking settlers, most people in the island spoke only English which led the governor in 1803 to ask the central government to bring Irish missionaries to evangelize the inhabitants in that language, but it was never granted.

After the independence of New Granada from Spain, in 1822, the inhabitants of the island adhered to the Colombian republic (Morren, 2001; Pineda Camacho, 2000). In 1845, Philip Beekman Livingston Jr., a Baptist pastor, arrived in the island and started to teach slaves reading and writing in English (this activity was rejected by white people of the island). Two years later, he founded the Baptist church and established a school. Both the Church and the school used English as the language of instruction, which helped in the spread of this religious group and English. By 1850, most islanders had converted to the Baptist religion and a significant number of them could read and write in English in addition to speaking their own languages (Morren, 2001; Patiño Rosselli, 1992; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

In 1869, the President of Colombia, Santos Acosta, signed a decree in which San Andrés and Providence's English was acknowledged as a language. This decree ordered the translation of the National Constitution in effect at that time, "Constitución de Río

Negro”, and the appointment of translators for official events. This situation did not last because with the writing of the National Constitution of 1886 that aimed at creating a sense of nation by homogenizing as much as possible the cultural practices of Colombians, it was declared that Catholicism was the official religion of the country and that education should follow the principles of catholic dogma. Although Spanish was not explicitly designated as the official language, it was actualized as such in the whole Colombian territory. This constitution was harmful to San Andrés and Providence’s inhabitants because they were forced to adopt a new religion and a new language. By 1926, due to the pressure of Catholic Church, many islanders converted to Catholicism; one year later, Law 17 of 1927 prohibited the use of English to designate public places, and some years after, in 1943, the use of the vernacular language was prohibited to designate public places, to be used in schools, or to be used in the official documents of the island (Pineda Camacho, 2000). Nevertheless islanders continued using Standard English for school and Church and Caribbean Creole English for oral communication (Grimes, 2000).

Despite the requests made to the national government in several reports by educational inspectors (from 1912 to 1937) to implement a bilingual program in the island that responded to the sociolinguistic characteristics of the population, the response of the government was to eliminate English from schools and place it as a second language subject in high school, as in the rest of the country. The consequences of this

policy were very negative because students did not master Standard English, and this put them in a disadvantageous academic situation (Dittmann, 1992).

The Colombian government, led by General Rojas Pinilla, then President, declared San Andrés and Providence a free port in 1953 and promised the construction of an airport, roads, and the arrival of progress. This caused a tremendous change in the economy and demographics of the islands because it attracted the interest of a lot of mainland Colombians. Due to their superior knowledge of Spanish, Colombian laws, and business experience, they soon owned most business on the island. Their presence also produced a change in language use, and Spanish replaced English and Creole in official events, mass media, business transactions, and of course, Church and education. Since 1954, as part of the national program to “colombianizar” the islanders, Spanish became the official language. However, Baptist churches still prefer English for their services, and for their schools, they use both English and Spanish as the medium of instruction (MOI); at home most native islanders use Creole English as well for interaction with friends. (Dittman, 1992; Forbes, 2005; Morren, 2001; Patiño Rosselli, 1992).

Today in San Andrés and Providence, three languages converge: Creole, English and Spanish. At the same time, conflict emerges as each of these languages is perceived and valued differently by various groups. Most religious leaders (who have a strong influence in the island due to their historical presence there) think that Islander English (or Creole) is a legitimate language while Spanish is an imposition that threatens

islanders' native language, culture, and identity. Political leaders have a different opinion and consider that Islander English is broken English or degraded English and should be eradicated (Morren, 2001; Pineda Camacho, 2000). And in a different group, some teachers think that there is a lack of articulation between school and the community and demand the inclusion of English as a MOI probably based on the continuum that exists between Creole English and English (Dittman, 1992; Morren, 2001; Holm, 1984; Patiño Rosselli, 1992).

In 1980, the National government issued Decree 2347 whose purpose was to mandate the professionalization of high school bilingual graduates of the island to incorporate them as teachers in an experimental bilingual program that was running in some elementary schools in the archipelago. The project was coordinated by the “Centro Experimental Piloto de las Islas” with the advice of the “Centro Electrónico de Idiomas”, an annex of the Ministry of Education in charge of English teaching in the country at the time, and the British Council. (Dittmann, 1992). The project was adopted officially by the Secretary of Education in 1988; seven primary and three secondary schools have been recognized as bilingual schools where Standard Caribbean English and Spanish are used as the MOI; Creole English is, however, marginalized from school and used only for informal interaction (De Mejía, 2005).

Although the national constitution of 1991 acknowledges the right of ethnic groups to conduct education in their own languages, it refers more to indigenous peoples;

afro-descents are only mentioned in article 55 which states that in two years from 1991, the government will create a special commission to study the situation of black communities who have lived on the pacific coast and in other areas of the national territory in order to grant them the rights to land, protection of their cultural identity, and support for their economic and social development. In 1993, the national government issued Law 70 to officially acknowledge black communities of the country and establish measures to grant them the rights to land, identity, culture, and social development. Specifically Chapter VI of this law refers to protection of cultural identity and sets the bases of the autonomy of afro-descents communities to design a curriculum that responds to their particular needs. Despite this, there is no explicit mention of San Andrés Creole English, and Standard Caribbean English.

As a consequence of the convergence of different historical events and national policies, today, bilingual education is permitted in the island but is not observed completely due to several factors such as lack of instructional materials, lack of teachers' training in bilingual education, the large number of Spanish monolingual teachers, and the importance of Spanish for the economy of the island (Decker & Keener, 2001).

With the National Bilingualism Project, there has been a renewed interest in San Andrés as a potential site for immersion courses (Grimaldo, 2007); the results are still to be seen because the language attitudes of mainland Spanish speakers in Colombia still think of San Andres' English as broken English, hence a variety of very low prestige.

Spanish

The linguistic policies related to the Spanish language started in Spain right before the “discovery” of America. The original name of Spanish is Castilian, which was a dialect spoken in the province of Burgos, and after the reconquest of Muslim territories, it was spread in other provinces and displaced other Hispanic-romance languages. It had the favor of the monarchy and was adopted as the language of the Peninsula except for Portugal.

On August 18th 1492, Antonio Nebrija published his “Grammar of the Castilian language” inspired by Queen Elizabeth of Castilian who had previously ordered the publication of the “Universal vocabulario en latin y romance”. His main interest in the publication of his grammar was to set the rules of Castilian and protect it from corruption.

Two months later, Christopher Colombus ‘discovered’ America, in October 1492. For three centuries, Spaniards settled in Central and South America, and as a result, Spanish became the official language of most countries and islands of the American continent (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Pineda-Camacho, 2000). As stated above, the linguistic policies shifted according to the prevailing interests of the Spanish crown and the church.

The way in which the colonization process was carried out in Central and South

America was strongly influenced by the shared power of the monarchy and the church. The main interest of the former was to take as much advantage as possible of the wealth of the New World (natural resources, gold, gemstones, silver, etc) and new shorter trade routes in order to position Spain as one of the great European empires. On the other hand, the main objective of the Church was to convert all the natives to Catholicism. The interests of these two bodies, sometimes converging sometimes diverging, shaped the linguistic configuration of Central and South America (Mar Molinero, 2000).

With the arrival of the conquerors, their Spanish was imposed in daily life practices. Something that helped the consolidation of Spanish was first its condition as of those in the language power, and second, the existence of a written form which was used in government documents, chronicles, letters, and religious texts (Mar-Molinero, 2000). This approach soon changed due to political, cultural-religious and linguistic reasons, and in 1550, the Spanish Crown ordered the teaching of Spanish to the natives of the New world (Pineda Camacho, 2000). Politically it was convenient for Spain to look for unity and centralization, and this could be achieved through imposing the use of only one language: Spanish. The cultural-religious rationale was that if indigenous population were allowed to function in their native languages, they would remain outside Christian values. And the linguistic reason considered indigenous languages inferior, and therefore the complexities of the Christian thought could not be expressed in those languages (Cerrón-Palomino, 1989).

The order of the Spanish crown took two directions. The “encomenderos” (representative of the King of Spain in the New World who fulfilled administrative functions) ignored the regulation because if they taught Indians to speak, read, and write Spanish, they could turn against the power. The Church, on the other hand founded a school to teach indigenous peoples reading, writing, grammar, and counting. It seems this school did not function because fifteen years later the founders requested the establishment of a school with the same purpose in Bogota (Pineda Camacho, 2000). Philip II was aware of the failure of his policy and switched it back to allow the use of vernacular languages.

Since the process of Castilianization had not produced the results expected by the Spanish crown, Philip IV issued a law (“cédula real”) in 1634 in which he ordered that all the indigenous peoples should learn Spanish along with Catholic faith to save their souls. To fulfill this mandate, the missionaries organized age groups to teach the catechism during the week, so after mass, the natives would repeat the rosary and all other prayers learned during the teaching sessions (Pineda Camacho, 2000).

Despite these measures and the fact that the pressure to which indigenous peoples were submitted led to the eventual loss of some of their languages, during the early years of the 18th century, many of them still used vernacular languages; to counter the situation, Charles III ordered that administrative matters as well as education should be conducted in Castilian and that should apply to both Spain and the New World. The policy was, yet

again, not very successful at the beginning because there was a lack of resources to implement full-scale education for indigenous peoples and because landowners could easily manipulate and marginalize them if they did not speak Castilian. The Church, in its own right, had a divided response; part of the clergy was happy to evangelize Indians in Spanish and not bother learning their languages whilst Jesuits had the opposite opinion. They were convinced that the best way to reach the natives' faith was speaking their languages, and in fact, many Jesuit missionaries had learned the languages of the natives (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Patiño Rosselli, 2000; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

Nevertheless, by the second part of the eighteenth century, Spanish was the dominant language, the elites were monolingual in Spanish, others were functionally bilingual, and although a large number were still monolingual in an indigenous language, most indigenous languages had disappeared. The fact that the Jesuits had been expelled contributed to the loss of many indigenous languages along with the linguistic work they had conducted about them (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

The spread of Spanish was strengthened by the publication of the first newspapers of the New World: "Aviso del Terremoto" in 1785, and "Papel Periódico de la ciudad de Santafé" and by the displacement of Latin as the language to teach the humanities in universities. Years later, some of the future independence leaders defended their theses in Spanish and not Latin which was the custom (Pineda Camacho, 2000).

During the early nineteenth century, the majority of Spanish colonies fought

Spaniards and obtained their independence; in this process, new countries were born and with them the need to create a sense of “nation”. They faced a paradoxical situation because on the one hand, Spanish was the language of the colonizer who looked down to the colonized, but on the other, it was by then the language of a vast majority of the colonized (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

Some of the Creole leaders who led America towards its independence had been educated in Europe and influenced by the French Revolution. Simon Bolivar, the most important of such leaders, was highly influenced by Rousseau and believed in a nation based on equality. To achieve this, sharing the same language was paramount, so Spanish was chosen as the language of the emergent republics; this decision contributed to promoting monolingualism and monoculturalism, as the ideal of a civilized society (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Pineda Camacho, 2000).

During the early years of the republic, the ideals of an egalitarian society motivated Bolivar and Santander to issue laws that attempted to dignify indigenous peoples providing for them the rights to land, work for a salary, and education. However, their project did not include the right to speak their languages because all forms of education used Spanish as the medium of instruction. A lot of Spanish grammar courses were created across the new republic from 1822 to 1835 (Pineda Camacho, 2000).

The Spanish language became the “lengua patria”, and as early as 1824 various voices emerged with a concern for the preservation and valorization of the Spanish

language (Patiño Rosselli, 2000; Pineda Camacho, 2000). There was a proposal to create an American Language Academy whose task would be to control and set rules for American Spanish. One of the most ferocious defendants of the language was Andrés Bello, who warned about the danger of the degeneration of Spanish into a kind of French-Spanish dialect due to the strong influence of French culture and thought on the Creole leaders of the new republics (Pineda Camacho, 1997; 2000).

The enthusiasm for the Spanish language, its orthography, grammar, rhetoric, and poetry that started in the independence (and is still alive today) was evident in the amount of publications that aimed at prescribing the correct uses of Spanish (Patiño Rosselli, 1998). The most important of these publications was the “Gramática de la lengua española” written by Andrés Bello in 1847 which constituted a paradigm of the national identity for Colombians and for the rest of the Hispanic world. Other publications of the same kind followed, and Spanish continued to be constructed as the language of the new republic. These publications contributed to accelerating the foundation, in 1875, of the Colombian Language Academy, the first of its kind in the new world (Pineda Camacho, 2000).

Years later, in 1886 a new constitution was written, and although Spanish was not mentioned as the official language, it was implicit that it was so. During the years to come, the preoccupation of maintain the language as pure as possible was evident among elitist politicians, writers, and grammarians who published dictionaries, grammars, and

journals. A good command of the language was regarded as a desirable quality in anyone who wanted to become a good politician, and for this reason, there was a strong emphasis on oratory. The devotion to the Spanish language was even more palpable when in 1936, the Colombian Language Academy created “El día del idioma” (Language day), which is still celebrated today on April 23.

The constitution of 1886 ruled the country until 1991 when a new constitution was written. Due to the boom of the indigenous organizations, in the new constitution Spanish was declared the official language but also indigenous languages in the territories where they were spoken. For the first time Colombia was acknowledged as a multilingual and multicultural nation (Pineda Camacho, 1997). Nevertheless, it is a unidirectional multilingualism when it refers to indigenous languages or afro-Colombian languages because, while minorities do have to be bilingual in their languages and Spanish to function and survive, the rest of the population does not.

Despite the ruthless colonization process carried out by the Spaniards, Hispanic America has developed pride of being Spanish speakers. In Colombia, there is an abundance of studies that describe (and even prescribe) the uses of Spanish in the different regions of the country (See Patiño Rosselli, 2000 and Pineda Camacho, 2000 for an extensive description of such studies). From radio programs to scholarly articles, there are constant heated debates about the appropriateness of certain words or expressions, and I could adventure to state that there is a conservative tendency towards preserving

our variety to be as “pure” as possible, one that has been considered the “best Spanish” of Latinamerica (Albor, 2001; Lipski, 1994; Montes, 1992; Patiño Rosselli, 1998; 2000).

English and Other Foreign Languages (but mainly English)

The first foreign language taught in the New Granada (besides Spanish at that time) was Latin. Since 1599, religious communities implemented the teaching of Latin to the children of the colonizers, excluding African descendants and indigenous children. (Pineda Camacho, 2000; Zuluaga, 1996). Throughout the 17th century, with the creation of three important universities in Bogotá—which are still prestigious today: Universidad Javeriana, Universidad Santo Tomás, and Colegio del Rosario, all run by Catholic religious communities, Latin continued to be considered an important language to be learned. Nevertheless, due to the new ideologies that started to emerge in the New World, particularly from those who would later lead the independence, Latin was displaced by Spanish to be the language of instruction with the aim of giving access to knowledge to everyone (Pineda Camacho, 2000).

After the independence from Spain in 1828, Simon Bolivar signed a decree to mandate, among other dispositions, the offering of courses in French and English, provided there were enough financial resources. This disposition disappeared during the

19th century due to large number of educational reforms. Before that, in 1824 a law ordered the creation of a language class at San Bartolomé School to teach translation, reading, writing, and speaking in French and English. These classes should be available to the general population, not only to registered students. During that time, there was a strong influence of British culture in Bogota on the elites to the point that the newspaper “El Constitucional” was published in Spanish and in English, women from Bogota mirrored the fashion produced in London, men developed a hobby for horse racing, and the measure system was replaced by the English one (Pineda Camacho, 2000). The prevalence and inclusion of these languages changed as ideologies changed and for a long time were taught only in private schools.

The teaching of English was introduced in Colombia right after the Second World War and was mandatory from the 6th grade to the 11th grade of secondary education as well as in higher education (de Mejía, 2005). This decision was grounded on the “economic expansion, social, political and economic influence and the technological development of the United States” (Zuluaga, 1996, p. 34).

After the visit of the Colombian President at that time to France, the National Government issued a decree in which English was mandatory in 6 and 7 grades and French in 10 and 11. In 8 and 9 grades students could opt for English or French. The reality was that most schools chose to teach English from 6 to 9, and French in 10 and 11 grades.

In 1981 with the decree 3731, the Ministry of Education ruled the teaching of English in secondary school, that is, French was excluded from this policy. Its main purpose was to develop reading comprehension skills due to the amount of written information produced and the lack of effectiveness of the audio-lingual method used earlier.

In 1994, the Ministry of Education issued the General Education Law; this law stated as compulsory the teaching of a foreign language in elementary school, starting from grade 3. It did not state that it should be English, but most (if not all) public elementary schools implemented the teaching of English. The emphasis should be on the acquisition of conversation and reading skills. In order to facilitate the implementation of this policy, the National Government took two main actions. In 1996-1997, 3200 elementary and secondary school teachers were selected and trained for 3 months in the United States and Canada in English and computers (De Mejía, 2005; Zuluaga, 1996). At the same time, they set up 1500 multimedia classrooms and purchased software to teach English. The second action took place in 1999 when the Ministry of Education asked a group of university teachers, linguists, sociologists, sociolinguists, and experts in testing and evaluation to design the Colombian Curricular Guidelines for the teaching of foreign languages.

The latest language policy implemented by the Ministry of Education is “Colombia bilingüe en 10 años”. This policy was launched in 2003 and came into effect

in 2004. According to the British Council, the aim of the project is that “in ten years Colombians will speak English as a second language which will allow them to participate actively and productively in a globalized world¹¹” (British Council web page). In order to achieve their objectives, the Ministry of Education and the British Council have carried out several actions; among them, they conducted a diagnostic test to measure the proficiency of English teachers in public schools, they conducted a training course for teachers of English and a final test to determine teachers’ proficiency.

The origin of the project “Colombia bilingüe en diez años” could be traced back with the creation of the “Agendas Regionales de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación” by COLCIENCIAS (the national research institute in Colombia). These “agendas” were groups of official servants and private companies’ leaders whose main objective was to develop action plans towards the scientific and technological development of their regions. Each one of the “departamentos” of the country had its own “agenda” (COLCIENCIAS, 2008).

Within the “Agenda Regional de Competitividad para Bogotá y Cundinamarca 2003-2013” (designed by the City of Bogotá, the Governor of Cundinamarca, the “Comité Asesor de la Región en Comercio Exterior (CARCE)”, and the Chamber of Commerce in Bogotá), its members stated that their main objective was to promote the

¹¹ The translation is mine

economic growth of the region, and among the strategies to reach that goal, the master of foreign languages was a must, English being the first one to be implemented (Castillo, 2003; Concejo de Bogotá, 2006).

In 2004, the “Comité Asesor de la Región en Comercio Exterior (CARCE)”, and the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce submitted a document in which they established as one of their goals towards the internationalization of regional companies, the design and implementation of a bilingual project in the schools of Bogotá and Cundinamarca (Cámara de Comercio, 2004; Concejo de Bogotá, 2006).

Before the events mentioned above took place, in July 2001 there was an agreement signed by the Secretary of Foreign Commerce, the Governor of Cundinamarca, the Mayor of Bogotá, the “Comité Asesor de la Región en Comercio Exterior (CARCE)”, and the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of this agreement was to develop an action plan in order to have a bilingual population in the region. This event marks the initiation of the project “Bogotá y Cundinamarca bilingües en diez años”.

The project was officially launched on September 11th 2003, and more than 700 invitees attended. According to Castillo (2003), a group called “grupo gestor” worked for fourteen months in the program before its launching. In this group, there were representatives from Javeriana University, Externado de Colombia University, National University, Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, Bilingual schools association, “Comité

Asesor de la Región en Comercio Exterior (CARCE)”, “Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA)”, “Compensar”, Secretary of Education, and the British Council. During the event, an agreement was signed by the same institutions who signed the agreement in July 2001, except for the Secretary of Foreign Commerce. In that agreement, the signers established seven points which would help in the implementation of the project. From these points, they decided to adopt the “Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment”, because they thought it was important to adopt standards instituted internationally. According to these standards, 100% of teachers and principals of schools should attain level B2 of the common European framework standards; 100% of high school students should attain B1 Level; and 80% of employees hired by companies set in the region must be certified as bilingual (British Council, 2006; Concejo de Bogota, 2006).

Simultaneously, the Secretary of Education had the same interest and structured a National bilingualism program whose main objective is to educate citizens in the mastering of English so that they are able to communicate in English according to international standards. Their goal is to insert Colombia into the global economy and international culture; in this way, the country will become a competitive nation, and its citizens will have better life conditions (Concejo de Bogotá, 2006).

By walking back through this path of available official documents, it can be concluded that the project “Colombia bilingüe en diez años” arose first, as a regional

project for Bogotá and Cundinamarca with the purpose of promoting economic growth. This is not new considering that educational policies in Colombia are closely linked to the demands of economic organizations like the International Monetary Fund, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), and World Bank (Valencia Giraldo, not dated). These organizations have exerted influence about how to structure the educational system in Colombia in such a way that the country serves the interests of multinational companies and organizations. At the national level, the Ministry of Education considered that the whole country should “benefit” from a project like this and decided to promote the implementation of the project “Colombia bilingüe en diez años” around the country. Currently there are ten cities and “departamentos” participating in the project; these are San Andrés, Cartagena, Cali, Bucaramanga, Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Soacha, Medellín, Antioquia and Manizales. The British Council has been designated by the Ministry of Education as the organization responsible for the training of English teachers in teaching methodologies with the program “Tutor training programme participants” (Colombia Aprende, 2008). But according to an invitation letter sent by the Secretary of Education to various teachers and scholars to participate in the project, the responsibilities of the British Council were much more than the teacher training program. The Ministry of Education nominated the BC as the organism in charge of coordinating the whole process and gives them freedom to sign all the necessary contracts for the implementation of the project:

- 1 *El Ministerio de Educación designa al Consejo Británico para la interlocución y coordinación en todo el proceso.* (The Ministry of Education designates the British Council to coordinate the whole Project.)
- 2 *Para la gestión del proceso y la conformación del comité el Consejo Británico suscribirá los contratos o acuerdos necesarios en el marco del presente convenio.*
(To carry out the project, the British Council will sign all contracts or necessary agreements.)

The objectives of the National bilingualism program are very similar to those of “Bogotá and Cundinamarca bilingües en diez años”. In 2019 the levels that should be attained are the following (Cárdenas, 2006a): Teachers of English in levels 1-11: B2; Primary teachers and teachers of other areas: A2; Students who finish high school (11th grade): B2; Graduate language teachers: B2-C1; Students who finish higher education: B2.

In the invitation letter mentioned above, the Ministry of Education set ten meetings to complete the elaboration of the guidelines for the implementation of the standards in elementary and secondary school, based on the Common European Framework. The result of these meetings is the handbook “Estándares.”

There is a slight difference in the formulation of these two sets of guides. According to the information provided in the website of the Ministry (MEN) (Ministerio

de Educacion Nacional, 2006), the former was the result of the work of the MEN along with ASCOFADE (the Colombian Association of Schools of Education), meaning that the standards were designed by the ASCOFADE. On the other hand, the “Estándares” for English responded to the unilateral decision of the MEN to adopt a foreign model: The Common European framework of reference for languages, where very little and restricted discussion took place to inform that decision (Ayala & Alvarez, 2004; Cárdenas, 2006; González, 2007; Sánchez & Obando, 2008).

The interest of the MEN to set and implement standards in the different subjects of the curriculum is not random but rather responds to the pressures of international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF, as stated above (Valencia-Girlado, n/d). According to Ayala & Alvarez (2005), the concept of “standard” emerges from the marketing field that became popular in other areas as a way to measure the quality of products. Education, in particular language teaching, is one of the areas in which standards are being designed to define what should be learned, taught, and how that should be done¹².

¹² At the time of finishing this chapter (December 2008), a forum lead by the Ministry of Culture is taking place in Colombia. The main objective is to discuss language policies to acknowledge and protect the indigenous languages and the creoles spoken in Colombia. It remains to be seen what the results of this forum are. Information available: <http://www.elespectador.com/impreso/cultura/articuloimpreso99953-se-habla-mucho-mas-espanol> and <http://www.mincultura.gov.co/eContent/newsdetail.asp?id=1385&idcompany=3>

Conclusion

Since the Spanish colonization, language policies in Colombia have been marked by a constant asymmetry that values the language of the powerful and disregards the languages of the powerless. More than 500 years after the so-called discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, the situation is not very different. While during the colonial years Spanish was favored and perceived as the language of modernization and progress, today English is the language associated with those characteristics. And yesterday, as today, indigenous languages and creoles are treated as second class languages.

Also relevant is the way in which the official discourse, no matter the epoch, has constructed attitudes towards minority languages to the point that mainstream Colombians do not consider learning one of our languages as a second language. The State has a crucial responsibility in this lack of interest because it not only does not promote the study of our languages but discourages people who speak them from converting them into cultural or linguistic capital. Anecdotal evidence shows that in graduate programs where people need to demonstrate proficiency in a second language, people who speak an indigenous language have had to struggle to get their languages accepted to fulfill that requirement.

It is too early to predict the outcomes of the national bilingualism program set by the MEN, but it is worrisome to see how this project is repeating the same patterns of inequality, discrimination, marginalization, and segregation that imposed Spanish more

than five hundred years ago.

CHAPTER 4: THE MEANING OF BILINGUALISM WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT

Bilingualism as a concept and as a practice is very complex. In a review of the literature about it, one finds multiple issues related to it such as what is bilingualism, how it can be measured, what are the types of bilingualism, who can be called bilingual, what the effects of bilingualism are, what bilingual education is, whose interests bilingual education serves, and so on and so forth. These issues are examined from different fields like linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, education, and psycholinguistics; also different ideological positions influence the way bilingualism is conceived of, planned for, or constructed (Baker, 2001; Baker & Jones, 1998; Bialystock, 2001; Butler & Hakuta, 2004; Cárdenas, 2006b; De Mejia, 2002; Grosjean, 1982, 1994; Hakuta, 1986; Romaine, 1989).

This complexity has a double effect in the analysis of data because on the one hand it provides a full range of points of view from which to examine what bilingualism means for the Ministry of Education (MEN) and the British Council (BC), or in other words, what they want it to mean in the Colombian context, especially considering that Colombia is a multilingual country whose main contributing languages are indigenous languages, Afro-American creoles, and Spanish (De Mejia, 2005; Patiño Rosselli, 1998; 2000). On the other hand, this same wide range becomes a constraint because it is not

possible, given the time, data, and objectives of this dissertation, to deal with all the aspects involved in this matter. Bearing this in mind, the analysis presented below is by no means exhaustive. As such, I concentrated only on some aspects of bilingualism, and the door is open to continue working on the interpretation of further elements.

Regarding the question that originates in this chapter, How is the concept of bilingualism constructed for the Colombian context in the “Estándares”?, three main categories emerged: 1) Bilingualism means speaking English; 2) Bilingualism is a packed, monolithic and homogeneous concept; and 3) Bilingualism is based on a set of myths.

Bilingualism Means Speaking English.

Starting from the title of the handbook “Estándares”, the idea the authors want to institutionalize is that the foreign language to be taught, learned and therefore used by Colombians is English:

1) Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés. (“Estándares” Cover)

Basic standards of competence in foreign languages: English.

2) Formar en lenguas extranjeras: el reto! Inglés (“Estándares” Cover)

Teaching foreign languages: the challenge! English

Having “English” after the colon might mean two things: First that there are more handbooks in the series that will deal with other foreign languages like French, German, Italian, Chinese, or Hebrew which are the languages usually taught in Colombia (De Mejia, 2006; Zuluaga, 1996). Notice that by saying “foreign languages” the possibility of “second languages” is excluded, which in Colombia could be any of the indigenous languages or the Creoles¹³. This is the first hint that for the MEN, the multilingualism represented by these languages do not represent any sort of capital, in Bourdieu’s terms, and are henceforth, not worthy of investment, incentives, promotion, etc. Table 1 below is an example of the mismatch between the discourse of MEN and the actions proposed. They acknowledge the existence of other languages in Colombia, as shown in the first slide, but concentrate all the actions on promoting English, as shown in the second slide.

The second possible meaning for the presence of the colon in that sentence is that English encapsulates and represents the ideal of foreign languages and that working on it and ignoring other languages is more than enough (Cárdenas, 2006b; Gonzalez, 2008; Velez-Rendón, 2003). The second meaning is the one that has been more pervasive. As documented by Velez-Rendón (2003), despite the fact that Law 115 of 1994 mandates the teaching of a foreign language, most people involved in education, assume that Law 115 states that English is, by default, the foreign language to be taught. The same discourse

¹³ Within the “Estándares,” the authors state the difference between foreign and second language. The former is the L2 that is not spoken in the immediate context, usually only in the classroom; the latter is the L2 used for every activity outside the classroom.

circulates in Japan, where foreign language teaching unambiguously means English language teaching (Kubota, 2002; Liddicoat, 2007). By and large, disguised in the label of bilingualism, what is being promoted worldwide is monolingualism in English (Cárdenas, 2006b; Simounet-Geigel, 2004). Judging from the context in which this handbook is produced in Colombia, within the framework of the “Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (PNB)”, more likely the intended meaning is the second (Cf. Revolución Educativa: Plan Sectorial 2006-2010). Additionally, there are no more handbooks in these series that deal with any other foreign language.

Table 1: Power Point Presentation given by Grimaldo, J.C (2005) Manager of the PNB, to Colombian teachers. ¹⁴

¹⁴ See Appendix A for translation.

<div> <div>Ministerio de Educación Nacional</div> <div>República de Colombia</div> <div>Libertad y Orden</div> </div>		
METAS DEL PROYECTO	METAS 2007-2010	METAS 2019
Mejorar el nivel de competencia comunicativa en inglés de los estudiantes de básica y media	•30% de los estudiantes de grado 11 con el nivel intermedio (B1) de competencia en inglés	•100% de los estudiantes de grado 11 con el nivel intermedio (B1) de competencia en inglés
Mejorar el nivel de competencia comunicativa y metodología en inglés de los docentes del área	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •45% de los docentes de inglés alcanzan el nivel intermedio (B1) en inglés •55% de los docentes de inglés alcanzan el nivel intermedio-avanzado (B2) en inglés 	•100% de los docentes de inglés alcanzan el nivel intermedio-avanzado (B2) en inglés
Mejorar el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes de Licenciatura en Idiomas (futuros profesores de inglés)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25% estudiantes en el nivel avanzado (C1) •75% estudiantes en nivel intermedio-avanzado (B2) 	•100% de los nuevos egresados con nivel avanzado (C1)

The concept that being bilingual means speaking English is further emphasized as these excerpts demonstrate:

3) Ser bilingüe es esencial en el mundo globalizado (“Estándares” p. 5)

Being bilingual is essential in the globalized world.

4) En el contexto colombiano y para los alcances de esta propuesta, el inglés tiene carácter de lengua extranjera. Dada su importancia como lengua universal, el Ministerio de Educación ha establecido como uno de los ejes de la política educativa mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza del inglés...” (“Estándares” p. 5)

In the Colombian context and in the scope of this proposal, English is a foreign language. Given its importance as a universal language, the Ministry of Education has established as one of the main goals of educational policy to improve the quality of teaching English ...

5) El Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo se orienta a “lograr ciudadanos y ciudadanas capaces de comunicarse en inglés, de tal forma que puedan insertar al país en los procesos de comunicación universal, en la economía global y en la apertura cultural con estándares internacionalmente comparables” (“Estándares” p. 6)

The National Bilingual Program aims to "ensure that citizens are able to communicate in English, so they can insert the country into the universal communication processes in the global economy and cultural opening with comparable international standards.

In excerpt number 3), the collocation of the phrases “being bilingual” and “globalized world” trigger the idea of replacing the first phrase by “speaking English” because that is the way it is usually structured. The author/s are equating bilingualism with globalization, playing with the assumption that being a speaker of English carries with it the positive meanings ascribed to globalization like wider communication, economic power, capitalism, multinational companies, foreign investors, better jobs, better living conditions, no geographical boundaries and so forth (Simounet-Geigel, 2004; Tollefson, 2000; Valencia, n/d).

In excerpts 4) and 5), although the connection between being bilingual and speaking English is made explicit, the authors still rely on assumptions to reinforce their point. Fairclough (2003) defines “assumptions” as how particulars come to be represented as universals. That means that while for some people something might be true, for others it is not. English is portrayed here as the “universal” language, but as stated by Barletta (2007), this is a naïve construction that ignores the fact that in certain parts of the world, English is not the first choice as a second or foreign language. In a

similar way, the “universality” of English can be challenged within the same Colombian context; a peasant child in a remote rural area in Colombia might not consider English as the universal language because their universe differs from the universe in which English is the only language. Table 2 below is an example of the actions taken by the MEN in which English is by default equated with “bilingualism.”

Table 2: Excerpt of a Power Point presentation given by Cely, R (2005), MEN consultant, to Colombian teachers¹⁵

<div> <div> Ministerio de Educación Nacional República de Colombia </div> </div>	
Evaluación	
Acciones	Instituciones
Diagnósticos Línea de base (regiones) (Quick Placement Test, Teaching Knowledge Test) Aplicación y elaboración informes	Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, Centro Colombo Americano (Medellín), Universidad del Norte, Universidad Nacional (Manizales), Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina, UPTC (Tunja), British Council
Colombian Benchmarking Test (8 th , 10 th , last year university students) Desarrollo y logística	University of Cambridge, ICFES, MEN
Evaluación de estudiantes de último año Lic. en Lenguas (First Certificate in English) Fases 1 y 2	2005 , 280 estudiantes de Nacional, Pedagógica, UPTC, Distrital, Javeriana, Salle, Nariño, Valle, Antioquia, Andes, Gran Colombia, Bolivariana 2006 : 400 estudiantes, 22 universidades

¹⁵ See Appendix B for translation.

One important characteristic of assumptions is that the authors of a text establish relationships with “what has been said or written somewhere else, with the ‘elsewhere’ left vague” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 40). This is what the authors of the “Estándares” do when they draw on discourses that associate English with “globalization,” “modern world,” “technology,” and the like. The double function of this assumption is that on the one hand, it serves to strengthen this association as a “universal truth,” and on the other, the wording in each one of the five excerpts presented above, which are agentless, helps to liberate the authors from the responsibility of being the creators of that association; it was already there, they are just repeating what everybody knows. The same happens with the following quote that starts with “the current world is characterized”; by not having an agent, the authors take for granted that the modern world has its current state because it is natural and not because of the influence of various power structures that have legitimized their views of the world.

6) El mundo actual se caracteriza por la comunicación intercultural, por el creciente ritmo de los avances científicos y tecnológicos y por los programas de internacionalización. Estas circunstancias plantean la necesidad de un idioma común que le permita a la sociedad internacional acceder a este nuevo mundo globalizado” (Estándares, p. 7)

The modern world is characterized by intercultural communication, by the increasing pace of scientific and technological discoveries and by internationalization programs. These circumstances raise the need for a common language that allows access to the international society to this new globalized world.

The assumption here is fortified by a semantic relationship of the “problem-solution” type (Hoey, 1983; Fairclough, 2003) in which the authors of the text start by

describing “today’s world” from a very partial angle, where the current world responds to only one characteristic: scientific and technological progress. Other characteristics of the modern world like war, famine, extreme poverty, new forms of slavery produced by savage capitalism, and others are not included in this account of “today’s world.” In the second sentence, they introduce the problem and at the same time hint at the solution: we have to gain access to that world through a common language and that common language is English. In the same page, third paragraph, the authors add force to this assertion by explicitly mentioning English as the language that will give Colombians the opportunity to enter the modern world.

In direct opposition to this association of English with the modern world, the other implication is that even though Spanish is the third language with more speakers in the world (antedeceded by English and Arabic), which makes it one of the languages of wider communication (Grey Thomason, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001), it is not enough for Colombians to have access to the “current world.”

This assumption made by the authors of the “Estándares” contributes to the perpetuation of certain attitudes towards languages, for example that English is superior (and everything associated to it) and other languages are inferior (and everything associated to them). Grosjean (1982) reports a study about language attitudes conducted by Lambert and colleagues in 1960 in Montreal. They asked one group of English-speaking students and one group of French-speaking students to listen to some recordings

in English and some in French; both recordings were made by the same persons who were balanced bilinguals. The results showed that both groups evaluated the English speakers more favorably than the French speakers. As the nature of the experiment shows, these evaluations do not respond to any inherent characteristic of either language but are the result of socially constructed ideas about the speakers of each language. Ideas like these have been around for centuries and have influenced or shaped people's opinions (Pennycook, 1998a, 2000; Phillipson, 1992, 2000). (I will deal with this issue further in the following chapter about the conception of English within the "Estándares.")

Besides the strategies discussed above, the authors of the "Estándares" reinforce the idea that being bilingual equates speaking English by excluding other languages from their bilingual project. The first big absentees are our indigenous languages. Starting from the title (example number 1), the challenge is to teach "foreign languages." No mention is made about the potentiality and profitability of teaching any of the more than sixty indigenous languages spoken in Colombia at this moment (except in the first page where they are briefly referred to). This type of enrichment bilingualism (Fishman, 1976a, 1977; Hornberger, 1991) is neither considered nor promoted within this project, which is nothing new, if we take into account the fact that since the Spanish colonization of the Americas, the policy has been to make natives speak Spanish; the same policy prevailed after independence when the new republics felt the strong need to construct their national identity, and since the independence leaders were monolingual in Spanish, they adopted

the philosophy spread by von Humboldt in 1820s of one nation/one language, and Spanish was promoted as a national identity marker (Escobar, 2004; Mar-Molinero, 2000). Finally, despite the fact that as recent as 1991 in the new National Constitution, indigenous communities and minority groups were recognized as legitimate Colombian citizens and their languages recognized as official in the indigenous territories, there is no stimulus for Spanish speakers to learn indigenous languages. By and large, if indigenous languages were not promoted during those times where their main competition was Spanish, within this new project, their possibilities are even less. In the same way, the two Creoles spoken in Colombia have been underlooked in this project, as seen in the previous chapter.

The other group that has been excluded from this project, and which strengthens the concept of “bilingualism equals speaking English,” is formed by the other foreign languages that have been taught in Colombian schools and universities, which are French, German, Italian and Hebrew (de Mejia, 2005) and a growing interest in Mandarin. These languages seem to be included in the title, but very soon in the “Estándares,” the authors make it clear that the language chosen is English:

7) En el contexto colombiano y para los alcances de esta propuesta, el inglés tiene el carácter de lengua extranjera. Dada su importancia como lengua universal, el Ministerio de Educación ha establecido como uno de los ejes de la política educativa mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza del inglés, permitiendo mejores niveles de desempeño en este idioma (Estándares, p. 1).

In the Colombian context and the scope of this proposal, English has the character of a foreign language. Given its importance as a universal language, the Ministry of Education has established as one of the main lines of its educational policy to improve the quality of the teaching of English, enabling higher levels of performance in this language.

Some pages further, the authors state:

8) Teniendo en cuenta esta reglamentación y haciendo uso de su autonomía, las instituciones educativas colombianas han optado por ofrecer a sus estudiantes la oportunidad de aprender el inglés como lengua extranjera. Con ello pretenden brindar una herramienta útil que permita a niños, niñas, y jóvenes mayor acceso al mundo de hoy. Este hecho se ve confirmado por los datos suministrados por el Icfes respecto a las pruebas del 2004, según los cuales el noventa y nueve por ciento de los estudiantes seleccionaron el inglés en el examen de estado (Estándares, pg. 7).

Taking into account these rules and making use of their autonomy, the Colombian educational institutions have chosen to offer their students the opportunity to learn English as a foreign language, thus providing a useful tool intended to enable children and young people greater access to the world today. This is confirmed by data provided by ICFES about the tests of 2004, in which ninety-nine percent of students selected English in the state examination.

The regulations referred to in this excerpt is Law 115 issued in 1994, in which one of the objectives of elementary and secondary education is to be able to speak and read in at least one foreign language. The text of the example number 8 is constructed in what Fairclough (2003) calls the logic of appearances, which he defines as the tendency of certain types of texts to portray things as given, unquestionable, and inevitable. In example number 8, the authors of the “Estándares” present two events as unquestionable facts: 1) Schools made a free choice because they are autonomous; this meaning is accentuated by the other words used in the sentence: “han optado” (*have chosen*), “por ofrecer” (to offer), “la oportunidad” (*the chance, the opportunity*), all of them loaded with a sense of freedom and choice. 2) Ninety-nine percent of students chose English in the

national standardized test¹⁶. A look at the local context in which these two events took place demonstrates that neither schools nor students have much of a choice.

The teaching of English started informally in Colombia after the end of the Second World War and it became official in 1974. By decree, the teaching of English was established in all levels of secondary school—that is from 6th grade to 11th grade. For a short period of time, French was taught in 10th and 11th grade, but then English took over again (De Mejía, 2005). Schools of education, within their modern languages programs, prepared mainly teachers of English. Therefore, when Law 115 was issued, schools had to choose English because that was the language their teachers could teach. For students, when the option of a foreign language was open, ninety-nine percent selected English because this was the language they studied in school. The remaining one percent left might be composed of students who attended other private bilingual schools (French-Spanish, German-Spanish, Italian-Spanish, or Hebrew-Spanish). All in all, the reasons exposed by the MEN to support their decision to select English for their bilingual project prove to be based on a vicious circle where the cause originates the effect and the effect is the origin of the cause.

¹⁶ Icfes stands for “Instituto Colombiano para el fomento de la educación superior”. They are responsible, among other things, of national standardized tests. One of them is also known as the “Icfes” or “Examen de Estado”. It has to be taken by all students in 11th grade (last year of secondary education). The exam has obligatory areas, and optional ones. Among the optional areas students can choose a foreign language.

Bilingualism is a Packed, Monolithic and Homogenous goal

The previous category showed that for the promoters of the PNB, being bilingual meant speaking English; the promoters of the project oversimplified the amount of languages that could be learned in a bilingual program and reduce it to one. This same pattern of oversimplification can be found in the way this so-called bilingual project is set as a packed, monolithic and homogenous goal in mainly two areas: who this project is addressed to (and who is not) and what is expected to be achieved with it. In what follows, I will unpack these monolithic assumptions.

Students as a Monolithic Population

In relation to the question of who is this project addressed to, on the surface it seems that it is for all Colombian school-aged children, as can be seen in the excerpts below:

9) Así pues, se pretende que los estudiantes al egresar del sistema escolar, logren un nivel de competencia en inglés B1 (“Estándares”, p. 6).

Thus, it is intended that students graduating from the school system achieve a level of competence in English B.

10) Los estándares presentados se articulan con esas metas, estableciendo lo que los estudiantes deben saber y poder hacer para demostrar un dominio B1, al finalizar el Undécimo Grado (“Estándares”, p. 6).

The standards presented are aligned with these goals, establishing what students should know and be able to do to demonstrate a B1 at the end of the eleventh grade.

11) Como ya se explicó en la página 6, el Marco Común Europeo propone seis niveles de desempeño. En la Educación Básica y Media, nos concentraremos en llevar a los estudiantes a alcanzar el nivel B1 (“Estándares”, p. 10).

As explained on page 6, the Common European Framework proposes six levels of performance. In primary and secondary education, we will focus on elevating students to reach the B1 level.

The lexical choices in these paragraphs deserve attention. The use of the word “student” within the context of elementary and secondary education (“egresar del sistema escolar”, “finalizar Undécimo Grado”, “Educación Básica y Media”) triggers two main assumptions: First, that in Colombia every child between five and seventeen or eighteen years old is a student, and second, that every student has the access to a good quality education (in the form of time, material and human resources, location, conditions, environment, and the like) and therefore that every child must be able to attain level B1 at the end of their high school.

The first assumption is far from truth; the promoters of the PNB fail to acknowledge that not all children enjoy the same opportunities or access to education, especially in a society like the Colombian where one is afflicted by so many social and economic problems. Making an account of all the situations that keep children out of the school system would make a long list, but here I will just mention a few examples (See

Table 3 that presents some of the reasons children do not attend school prepared by the Ministry of Education). The division between life conditions in rural and urban rural areas is huge (some schools do not have electric power or water supply); therefore, the possibility of attending school and the quality of education obtained there vary enormously. In rural areas, children are more exposed to the abuse of guerrilla and paramilitaries who recruit them for their armies. Human Rights Watch (2005) reports that there are more than 11.000 children fighting in these groups. At least one out of four are minors, and a huge number of children are under fifteen; these figures are among the highest in the world according to the same report. In some circumstances, children can attend school, but usually rural schools (particularly the ones in remote areas) have only one teacher.

Another situation that affects both rural and urban areas the same is child labor (Cortina, 2000; Sarmiento, 2006). According to a report from the “Programa Internacional de Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil (IPEC)” in Colombia one out of five children between the ages of five and seventeen work or are looking for a job (BBCMundo.com, 2005); as a consequence, 13% out of the total population of children between these ages cannot attend school, and the figures keep increasing each year (Procuraduría General de la Nación, 2005). The latest report produced by Fabio Arias, president of CUT (“Central Unitaria de Trabajadores”), on the biggest unions in Colombia, is that 25% of children work in Colombia; the most usual forms of work are as

maids, street vendors, agriculture, and sexual workers; this means that one million, four hundred children cannot attend school (Caracol Radio, 2008).

Table 3: Some reasons why children do not attend school.¹⁷

Tabla 3 Razones de Inasistencia escolar

	Total	De 5 a 6 años	De 7 a 11 años	De 12 a 17 años	De 18 a 24 años
Considera que no está en edad escolar o que ya terminó	5,1	36,7	4,6	1,08	3,07
Costos educativos elevados o falta de dinero	39,6	27,3	41,29	42,24	46,4
Falta de tiempo	7,5		0,35	1,53	5,4
Responsabilidades familiares	18,3	1,6	2,3	6,68	14,81
Por problemas de inseguridad	0,1			0,28	0,06
Falta de cupos	0,7	7,7	3,11	1,75	0,83
No existe centro educativo cercano	1,5	6,0	6,49	2,36	1,09
Necesita trabajar	11,4	0,1	2,55	7,34	11,69
No le gusta o no le interesa el estudio	9,7	1,7	7,05	23,03	11,21
Tuvieron que abandonar el lugar de residencia habitual	0,4	1,8	5,06	1,09	0,16
Por enfermedad	1,2	1,8	3,51	2,01	0,81
Necesita educación especial	0,0	3,0	3,81	2,21	0,72
Otra razón, ¿Cuál?	3,7	12,4	19,88	8,43	3,74

Fuente: ECV-2003

Taken from the document: Estrategias para la retención escolar, by Alfredo Sarmiento. MEN

An additional group of school-aged children excluded from the PNB is the boys, girls and adolescents displaced from their hometowns due to violence. Forced displacement in Colombia is a complex phenomenon whose causes and consequences are multiple, so it is almost impossible to generalize them. Nevertheless, some of the most overt causes are dispossession of lands, terrorist attacks, control of paramilitaries, guerrilla, or drug dealers conducting illegal activities. These three causes are interwoven to create several modalities of forced displacement in Colombia. The official figures do

¹⁷ See Appendix C for translation.

not show the totality of displaced population, and the estimate is two million people, that is, four hundred families; these figures place Colombia on top as having the highest internal displacement in the Western Hemisphere and second in the world, preceded by Sudan (Cárdenas, 2006^a). The “Red de Solidaridad Social de la Presidencia de la República (RSS)” reports that 50% of displaced people are women, 42% are children under eighteen years old, and 90% are from rural or semi-rural areas. According to the same report, the most vulnerable population are women, children, indigenous peoples, and afro-descendants¹⁸ (Cárdenas, 2006a; Forero 2003; MEN, 2001).

The second assumption, that all students who attend public schools have access to the same kind and quality of material and human resources, is misleading. There are deep differences between public schools in the big cities and in the small cities; also, just comparing schools in a city like Bogotá, the dissimilarity is enormous (Ayala & Álvarez, 2005). In this sense, it is not the same to learn English in a privileged area in Bogotá where children are surrounded by information in English (stores’ names, parents who speak English, cable TV, movies, etc) with better school buildings and better resources than learning English in a deprived area in Bogotá, where streets are not even paved and the family income cannot afford food, much less any type of entertainment.

¹⁸ While the official figure is two million, ACNUR (Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados) state that the figure is three million people (Caracol Radio, 2008).

The following excerpt supports the assumption that the PNB is addressed to an elite group of students that exists in the mind of the proponents of this project, and who could achieve the standards proposed and profit from “the opportunity to learn English” as stated in example number 8 and reinforced by the following one:

12) [El inglés] Es la lengua que se usa con más frecuencia en los medios de comunicación y, por ello, permite acceder a la internet, la televisión, el cine, la radiodifusión, el turismo, los diarios de mayor circulación y las revistas especializadas (académicas, científicas, literarias, tecnológicas y deportivas, entre otras) (Estándares, p. 9).

The [English] language is being used more frequently in the media, and thus allows access to the internet, television, film, broadcasting, tourism, the largest circulation newspapers and periodicals (academic, scientific, literary, technological and sports, among others)

The “other” group of Colombian children, the invisible group for the PNB, students and non-students, will remain excluded from taking advantage of being bilingual (speaking English) because they do not have the economic resources to purchase access to internet, cable TV, movies, tourism, and all the other wonders the authors of the handbook mention in the previous excerpt¹⁹. A program like this will contribute to making the gap between the haves and have-nots bigger, to promote inequality and injustice, and to maintain the privileges of the very few (Velez-Rendón, 2003).

¹⁹ As an illustration, the coverage of Internet broad band in Colombia was 0.8 users out of 100 in 2002 (Ministerio de Educacion, 2007).

All students will attain level B1, and along with that, they are recognized as legitimate users of the L2

Another instance in which bilingualism is constructed as a homogenous goal is in relation to what is expected to achieve in terms of competence in English. As stated in examples number 9), 10), and 11), the objective is that every student attains a B1 level-- the first of two levels to become an “Independent User” according to the terminology of the Common European Framework (CEFR)²⁰. The idea behind this goal is that learners/students can become ideal proficient speakers because language that is conceived of as good can be obtained and used by anyone in any moment. A conception like this fails to see language as a social practice in which participants are constantly struggling over issues like power or identity because any linguistic exchange implies a power relationship (Bourdieu, 2003). Furthermore, communication can break down or lead to misunderstandings. Instead, language is portrayed as “neutral” (more on this in the next chapter), as an instrument for communication that automatically enables its speakers to participate in any linguistic event. Such events presuppose an ideal speaker-hearer

²⁰ The global scale presented in the CEF states that the independent user:

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans (CEF p. 24).

interaction detached from social reality where both parts have equal status (Lippi-Green, 1997) as described by Chomsky (1965): “linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention or interest, and errors in actual performance.” (p. 3) Furthermore, it is assumed that there is a direct relationship between competence and performance (as defined by Chomsky), so learning the rules of the language is enough to allow students to produce flawlessly an infinite number of sentences; or, as one of the assumptions criticized by Tumposky (1984) in the history of behavioral objectives, “[s]uccessful language learning can be accomplished by mastering pre-specified, hierarchically arranged, discrete items” (p. 303). The following descriptors help to illustrate this point:

13) Demuestro conocimiento de las estructuras básicas del inglés (Estándares, p. 19).

I demonstrate knowledge of the basic structures of English.

14) Describo algunas características de mi mismo, de otras personas, de animales, de lugares y del clima. (Estándares, p. 19).

I describe certain characteristics of myself, other persons, animals, places and climate.

15) Uso adecuadamente estructuras y patrones gramaticales de uso frecuente (Estándares, pg. 21).

I use appropriate grammatical structures and patterns of frequent use.

16) Interactúo con mis compañeros y profesor para tomar decisiones sobre temas específicos que conozco (Estándares, p. 25).

I interact with my classmates and teacher to make decisions on specific issues that I know.

17) Participo espontáneamente en conversaciones sobre temas de mi interés utilizando un lenguaje claro y sencillo (Estándares, p. 25).

I participate spontaneously in conversations on topics of my interest using clear and simple language.

(18) Escribo diferentes tipos de textos de mediana longitud y con una estructura sencilla (cartas, notas, mensajes, correos electrónicos, etc.) (Estándares, p. 27).

I write different kinds of texts of medium length and with a simple structure (letters, notes, messages, emails, etc.)

These descriptors, as well as all the others used in the standards, are written in present tense, first-person singular; possible implications of this grammatical choice are the immediateness of the mastery of the language, meaning that it is here and now when the learner can use it; the fact that the verb is in first person puts the learner in control and gives them complete agency not only of their learning but also of their use of the language. Since the verb is in present and indicative mode (“demuestro”, “describe”, “uso”, “interactúo”, “participo”, “escribo”), the speaker is situated in a statement that shows that the action is doable; the subject of the sentence indicates or supposes they can achieve the action. What it implies in the standards is that the mastery of the L2 is a fact and that the learner is naturally entitled to use the language anytime and with anybody. This is a very simplistic view even for native speakers of a language. Pennycook (1998)

provides the example of a woman in a business meeting who cannot get her point across because she does not speak the men's language variety. Interpreting this situation from Bourdieu's perspective, it could be said that despite the fact that all are native speakers of the same language, these men do not recognize the woman as a legitimate speaker because she does not have the right sort of linguistic capital. In addition, gender discrimination enters into play as another element that makes linguistic interaction complex and not as simple as implied in the "Estándares."

Although in the standards proposed by the MEN, all students are assumed as legitimate speakers, but the truth is that they are not because their legitimacy is not only acquired by speaking the "right" variety of the language, that is, the variety sanctioned and valued by the dominant groups as the valuable one and transmitted through the education system, (Bourdieu, 2003). The linguistic form chosen to write the standards automatically assumes the interlocutors as cooperative ones; the writers of the standards take it for granted that the speaker (student, learner) will be able to perform all the activities set in there freely, and in their interactions, they can count on the cooperation of the other person/s. Pennycook (2004) considers that this consensual conversation partner can exist in a society seen from a liberal point of view, where the members of the social world share goals, and despite some conflicts, they should be able to interact in a cooperative way. But from a critical perspective, social relations are mediated by class, gender, race, or ethnicity in which power is always present, so speakers do not always

find a cooperative interlocutor. He further illustrates his point with the following example. A student teacher in an ESL class is teaching her students to get things done by calling plumbers and electricians, and to do so, she gives students semi-scripted dialogues from which they have to complete the conversation. He argues that a plumber is very unlikely to answer the phone with a “Yes, certainly, I’ll be there at 6:00,” and they might answer with a wide repertoire of statements, questions, possible solutions where students need enough language skills to negotiate in a situation like this. Pennycook’s point is that students need tougher materials, and while I agree with him, I also think that for the Colombian context, we need more realistic objectives. If the descriptors were written using a different conjugation, for example using modal verbs like *can*, *could*, or *should*, it would diminish the categorical implication of the indicative mood where the capacity and right to use the language lies merely on the speaker.

All Students will be equally proficient

Proficiency has been a controversial issue in the field of bilingualism because it is strongly attached to the concept of who can be called bilingual. A very restricted view is Bloomfield’s (1933), who defines bilingualism as the native-like control of two languages. This conception would imply the idea rejected by Grosjean (1985, 1994) that a bilingual person is conceived as two monolinguals, which means that the individual

must be able to attain, in both languages, the same proficiency and fulfill the same functions a monolingual would do. Now, the concept of monolingualism cannot be essentialized either because all monolinguals do not have the same command of the language; some people master one vernacular variety of the language but not the standard, or vice versa; some are illiterate; or some are literate but do not write/read academic/scientific pieces, etc.

On the other hand, Macnamara (1967) produces a rather open concept and considers bilinguals are “persons who possess at least one of the language skills even to a minimal degree in their second language” (p. 60). He acknowledges that individuals do not necessarily have to master both languages equally; one person can be equally skillful in the syntactic system of two codes and yet have different abilities in understanding the spoken L2. The question here is what is “minimal” because it can mean different things to different people in different contexts.

For Grosjean (1994) “...bilinguals [are] those people who use two (or more) languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives” (p. 1656). He explains that his definition ranges from the migrant worker who interacts in the L2 with some difficulty to the interpreter who is fluent in both languages; in between are the spouse who uses his/her first language in some contexts or the scientist who reads and writes articles in the L2 but does not speak it. These bilinguals share one feature in common and it is that all of them use two (or more) languages to lead their lives.

Considering these three definitions, out of many, it is evident that proficiency is equally complex; nevertheless the authors of the “Estándares” set up the goals of the PNB as a packed whole implying that the proficiency level must be the same for everybody regardless of the needs, resources, context, socio-economic situation, and/or motivation of students.

The standards are set in five groups (or skills): listening, reading, writing, monologues, and conversation. In each group there are between seven and eleven descriptors; looking at them in a vertical way, it can be observed that each one is *per se* a categorical objective, that is, the descriptors are not flexible and are not written in a continuum where teachers could draw according to the particularities of their contexts. For example, the following are some of the goals to be achieved in the skill “Conversación” for tenth and eleven grades:

17) Participo espontáneamente en conversaciones sobre temas de mi interés utilizando un lenguaje claro y sencillo. (“Estándares”, p. 27)

I participate spontaneously in conversations on topics of my interest using clear and simple language.

20) Respondo preguntas teniendo en cuenta a mi interlocutor y el contexto. (“Estándares”, p. 27)

I answer questions taking into account who my interlocutor is and what the context is.

21) Utilizo una pronunciación inteligible para lograr una comunicación efectiva. (“Estándares”, p. 27)

I use an intelligible pronunciation to achieve an effective communication.

22) Uso mis conocimientos previos para participar en una conversación. (“Estándares”, p. 27)

I use my previous knowledge to participate in a conversation.

23) Describo en forma oral mis ambiciones, sueños y esperanzas utilizando un lenguaje claro y sencillo. (“Estándares”, p. 27)

I describe orally my ambitions, hopes and dreams, using clear and simple language.

The same pattern is used for the other skills where goals are presented as wholes and students are supposed to achieve them. The assumption of the authors is that all students will be equipped with exactly the same tools and therefore will reach the same proficiency²¹. Once again the conception of learning a language is reduced to learning and applying a set of rules.

Looking at the standards in a horizontal way to see what learners are expected to achieve for each group of skills, the concept of proficiency as something that can be attained equally in all language skills is apparent:

24) Identifico la idea principal de un texto oral cuando tengo conocimiento previo del tema. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 26)

I identify the main idea of an oral text when I have prior knowledge of the subject.

²¹ The metaphorical use of “equipped” and “tools” is deliberate to match an instrumental and neutral view of language portrayed along the document.

25) Identifico palabras clave dentro del texto que me permiten comprender su sentido general. (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 26)

I identify key words within the text that may help me understand its broader sense.

26) Estructuro mis textos teniendo en cuenta elementos formales del lenguaje como la puntuación, la ortografía, la sintaxis, la coherencia y la cohesión. (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 27)

I structure my texts taking into account formal elements of language as punctuation, spelling, syntax, consistency and cohesion.

27) Narro en forma detallada experiencias, hechos o historias de mi interés y del interés de mi audiencia. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 27)

I tell in a detailed way experiences, facts or stories of my interest and the interest of my audience

According to these descriptors students have to develop the same level of proficiency in each one of the skills and this idea is reinforced by the use, once again, of the indicative mood. Proficiency, then, is misunderstood because people, in general, do not have the same level in each of the language skills, and if since this is not true for the L1, it is even less true for the L2. Some people might need a high command of listening and speaking skills but very little writing or reading; some might be able to explain a complicated scientific issue in the L2 but have troubles explaining the doctor their symptoms during a medical appointment.

Furthermore it seems that the PNB expects students to develop a proficiency that mirrors that of their L1 because there is no specialization of the functions fulfilled by each language. Both are intended to be used for academic activities and for everyday

activities but in fact, bilinguals do not use their languages in the same way for the same purposes. If this were the case, people would cease to be bilingual (Fishman, 1967/2003; Grosjean, 1994; Romaine, 1999). The following excerpt illustrates this point:

28)...los estándares presentan temas y relaciones con los que los estudiantes ya están familiarizados en su primera lengua. (“Estándares”, p. 29)

...the standards introduce topics with which students are already familiar in their first language.

In the same line of thought, between the ideal speaker constructed in the “Estándares” and the real learner who faces society with all its imperfections, there is a huge gap because the latter might have troubles interacting in real life with real people. The monolithic concept of language as one fixed system leaves out all the shades language takes on in different speech acts. In the school setting students are exposed mainly to the academic variety of the L2, because the school, in general terms, is an academic setting. In a predominantly monolingual and monocultural context like Colombia, students do not have the opportunity to acquire pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence in the L2 to perform as expected by the PNB. Grosjean (1982) reports how English Canadians who attend immersion schools fail to be competent in real life French because English is spoken outside the school and English is the language life takes place

in, so learners do not have access to social and cultural contexts to develop functional competence in the L2.

By and large, the standards described in the “Estándares” are envisaged for an imagined and ideal group of students who differ greatly from the real students who attend schools. The project is offering “tangible benefits of a few but only symbolic ones for the many” (Edelsky, 2006, p. 6). The second monolithic assumption made by the authors of the “Estándares” has to do with the nature of English; in the following section I will discuss this assumption.

English Language has one single standard variety

In CDA what is said is as important as what is unsaid, what discourses are allowed to circulate (Foucault, 1972) and what discourses are silenced; the same for ideologies, beliefs, and the like. One of the aspects that go unsaid in the “Estándares” is that English has varieties. As in any other language, speakers use different varieties of the language depending on the context, situation, audience, and purpose (McGroarty, 2003); or regional background, social status, ethnicity, gender, age, style and so on (Rickford, 2003) so it is possible to talk of southern English, New England English, New York English, or AAVE (Kachru & Nelson, 2003; Lippi-Green, 1997; Preston, 1996).

But English is not only spoken in the *inner circle* countries, that is, the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Kachru (1994; 2003) characterizes these countries as those where English is the first or dominant language. English is also spoken in Bangladesh, Kenya, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Malaysia, Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania (Bhatt, 2001) these countries comprise the *outer circle* and are so characterized because English has taken important roles in education, governance, literature and popular culture (Kachru & Nelson, 2003). Finally there is the *expanding circle* where English is used for specific purposes related mainly to science and technology. Some of the countries that make up this group are China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, South America, Caribbean Countries, Nepal, Israel, Taiwan, Egypt, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Poland and Russia (Bhatt, 2001; Tollefson, 2000).

As stated above the authors of the handbook “Estándares” fail to acknowledge that English has varieties and as a consequence it is constructed as a monolithic entity (Tollefson, 2000). In addition, English is constantly related to the “globalized world”, “modern world”, “today’s world”, “universal language” (as discussed in the first part of this chapter in examples 1 through 6). Consequently, readers are led to make the connection between these phrases and the first world countries, so by extension the assumption is that Colombians will speak [standard] American English or [standard]

British English²² (Cf. Kubota, 2002). All the other “Englishes” are excluded from the project and the evidence is that none of the standards or descriptors mention anything related to raise awareness about other varieties of English let alone teach them. The following excerpts serve to illustrate this point:

29) Reconozco cuando me hablan en inglés y reacciono de manera verbal y no verbal. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 18)

I recognize when someone speaks in English to me and react verbally and nonverbally.

30) Reconozco algunos estados de ánimo a través del tono o volumen de voz en una historia leída por el profesor o en una grabación. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 20)

I recognize some moods, depending on the tone of voice or volume, in a story read by the teacher or in a recording.

31) Identifico el tema general y los detalles relevantes en conversaciones, informaciones radiales o exposiciones orales. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 22)

I identify the topic and relevant details in conversations, radio reports or oral reports

32) Identifico diferentes roles de los hablantes que participan en conversaciones de temas relacionados con mis intereses (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 24)

I identify different roles of the speakers participating in discussions of subjects related to my interests.

²² In fact, since the British Council has been designated by the MEN as the coordinating organism for the whole project, the materials, Tests, and English courses for teachers and for students are based on British English. Furthermore, an anti-American sentiment due to United States interventionist policies in Colombia has yield promotion of British English (Velez-Rendón, 2003). Auerbach (1993) considers that British speakers have been idealized as the model therefore British English has become, by default, the standard in many settings.

33) Identifico personas, situaciones, lugares y el tema en conversaciones sencillas. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 26)

I identify people, situations, places and the topic in simple conversations

The passages presented above are taken from the descriptors for the listening skill, one for each level. As it can be seen, from the first level to the upper one, all of the descriptors are about identifying or recognizing something: language, mood, roles, topics, and people; but these are not written to invite students to explore further elements in the language presented. Students should be encouraged to recognize different varieties of English, including different accents. The authors could have written the descriptors in a way that indicates that there is not one sole form of English but many²³.

Rickford (2003) states that raising awareness about the varieties of English is essential for second and foreign language teaching; when students know other forms of English, they are better prepared to interact (given they have the chance) with other speakers of English (native or non native). Besides, students can learn to value language forms that vary from the standard. Otherwise, making the other Englishes invisible contributes to the perpetuation of negative attitudes towards those varieties of the language. By excluding them from the curriculum, the authors are stating a position about whose knowledge (or language) is valued and what variety should be favored. These

²³ It is worth noting that variations not only exist in pronunciation but also there are grammatical, lexical, semantic, and syntactic differences.

attitudes are not random; they are socially constructed by the dominant groups and legitimated through different forms (school is one of them); consequently less powerful groups end up accepting that some varieties are more prestigious than others. (Bourdieu, 2003; Grosjean, 1982) and little by little are adopted by other groups (Grosjean, 1982). Kachru & Nelson (2003) state that speakers of the standard varieties of American or British English are more likely to accept each other's variety while, in general, they tend to reject the usage of other less prestigious varieties of English. Considering that the British Council is coordinating the whole project "Colombia bilingüe en diez años" is no surprise that they have decided to exclude other Englishes from the standards.

Another dimension of the monolithic conception of English as a single variety is the implications it has for how learners can relate to it. Throughout the "Estándares" English is described in terms of all the benefits it offers to the speakers who master the standard:

34) [El inglés] Permite acceso a becas y pasantías fuera del país. Es muy importante que los jóvenes colombianos puedan aprovechar, en igualdad de condiciones, las oportunidades educativas que se ofrecen en el exterior y que requieren niveles de desempeño específico en inglés. ("Estándares", p. 9)

[English] gives access to scholarships and internships abroad. It is very important that young Colombians take advantage of the equal educational opportunities being offered abroad, and which require specific performance levels in English.

In the previous piece the word “standard” is not mentioned but the word “específico” is. “Específico” might mean in this context the same as standard, so as long as students master the standard, the access to the benefits of English is granted. This idea is emphasized further in the following paragraph:

36) Al igual que en otras áreas, los estándares de inglés son criterios claros que permiten a los estudiantes y a sus familias, a los docentes y a las instituciones escolares, a las Secretarías de Educación y a las demás autoridades educativas, conocer lo que se debe aprender. Sirven, además, como **punto de referencia** para establecer lo que los estudiantes están en capacidad de **saber** sobre el idioma y lo que deben **saber hacer** con él en un contexto determinado. (“Estándares”, p. 11) (Bold in original)

As in other areas, the standards for English are clear criteria that allow students and their families, teachers and schools, the Ministries of Education and other educational authorities, to know what must be learned. They also serve as a benchmark to establish what students are able to learn of the language and know what to do with it in context.

In order to legitimize the importance of mastering the standard, the paragraph is constructed in an additive style. Although the first sentence opens a section in the handbook, starting with “al igual que en otras áreas gives” a justification of why setting standards in English; it is because the MEN is doing this for all the school areas, including English and they are useful because the school community knows what must be learned. The issue of whose knowledge is valid comes again here through inquiring who decides what must be learned. The second part of the paragraph starts with an addition to the first part; its purpose is to reinforce the statement made before by adding three key phrases: point of reference, knowledge about the language, and knowledge about how to use it.

To direct students' relation to the language in order to ensure that they follow a prescriptive approach, the descriptors constrain what students can do:

37) Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase. ("Estándares", Escritura, p. 19)

I copy and transcribe words I understand and which I use frequently in the classroom.

15) Uso adecuadamente estructuras y patrones gramaticales de uso frecuente. ("Estándares", Escritura, p. 21)

I use appropriate grammatical structures and patterns of frequent use.

39) Utilizo vocabulario adecuado para darle coherencia a mis escritos. ("Estándares", Escritura, p. 23)

I use vocabulary that is appropriate to give coherence to my writings.

While many scholars consider that literacy development, either in the first or the second language, should be a constructive process in which students are not only allowed but encouraged to be creative and play with language in order to learn how to read and write (Edelsky, 2006; Smith et al, 1976; Smith, 1997; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000), in the "Estándares" the descriptors are clear in what students must do: copy and transcribe. Writing, according to these descriptors, is conceived of as the transcription of the oral language, as a skill detached from any real purpose, it is just an activity used as an excuse to practice grammatical rules, just an exercise, just a drill. The inclusion of the

words “adecuadamente” and “adecuado” in descriptors 38 and 39 set the ground for the type of language that has recognition in the classroom, that is, students must use the right type of linguistic capital. Most likely what is considered adequate is determined by the dominant groups, those who speak the variety valued in the linguistic market.

From the way in which the descriptors are written, it can be inferred that the authors do not acknowledge that language is unpredictable (Tumposky, 1984) because it is dynamic and will inevitably differ from the standards regardless of how hard teachers try to preserve the language as if it were kept in a glass box (Cerron-Palomino, 2003).

Whenever languages are in contact one will influence the other from a lesser (individual’s interlanguage) to a greater degree (groups whose interlanguage becomes the norm). This is a common phenomenon due to lack of fluency in one of the languages or to a strong influence of one over the other (Grosjean, 1982). In Colombia the effects of the contact with English can be seen (at the individual level) in isolated instances despite of the efforts of the Language Academy on the one hand, and government laws on the other, like Law 14 of 1979 which mandates the defense of Spanish. A salient example of the influence of English over Spanish is the name of shops or stores: “Autotrader S.A”, “Milton’s color house”, “Boutique Paola’s” (Albor, 2001); using words in English and apostrophes (wrongly used) is a sign of distinction. In Bogotá, for example, a great number of businesses located in the north area (associated with wealth and power) have their names in English (Velez-Rendón, 2003). On the other hand, lots of English words

that have penetrated Colombian Spanish have been adopted but using the Spanish pronunciation. The clearest example is the name of certain brands like “Colgate”, “Palmolive”, “Pioneer”, “Pilot”, and “Paper Mate” which are spelled in English but adapted phonologically to Spanish²⁴.

A greater degree of influence is when an interlanguage is fossilized by an entire group of people and it becomes the norm giving rise to a new variety of the language. This explains the emergence of Spanglish, Singlish, Indian English, Nigerian English, and so on and so forth. The fact that none of these varieties are mentioned in the “Estándares” suggests that the aim of the MEN in their PNB is to keep the influence of one language over the other (specifically Spanish over English for the reasons discussed in the first part of this chapter) to the level of individual deviation. For that reason they state that:

40) En el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera se presenta interferencia de la lengua materna. Este último aspecto explica por qué, en el logro de los niveles de desempeño descritos en estos estándares, se acepta y da lugar a la interferencia de la lengua materna. (“Estándares”, p. 29)

In foreign language learning there is interference from the mother tongue. This point explains why, in achieving the performance levels described in these standards, interference of the mother tongue is accepted.

²⁴ As stated by Niño-Murcia (2003) this is a trend in all Latin American countries.

It is meaningful that three out of four sentences are written in the passive voice (constructed with ‘se’). In the first sentence the structure diminishes the importance of “interferencia”; the semantic assumption is that the phenomenon exists but will eventually disappear. The use of passive voice also contributes to avoiding responsibility; by saying “se presenta”, “descritos”, “se acepta” and “se da lugar”, the agent/s of the action/s is/are absent therefore no one is accountable for the actions taken. Interference is looked at in a unidirectional way as the influence of the mother tongue over the L2, without considering that English may influence students’ Spanish too.

While, at least on the surface, interference is accepted, the following texts show something different:

41) My teacher understands that sometimes I use Spanish if I don’t know the words in English. (“Estándares”, p. 29)

My teacher understands that sometimes I use Spanish if I do not know the words in English.

42) Utilizo el lenguaje no verbal cuando no puedo responder verbalmente a preguntas sobre mis preferencias. Por ejemplo, asintiendo a negando con la cabeza. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 19)

I use non-verbal language when I cannot respond verbally to questions about my preferences. For example, nodding the head to deny or accept.

43) Refuerzo con gestos lo que digo para hacerme entender. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 19)

I reinforce with gestures what I say to make myself understood.

44) Utilizo códigos no verbales como gestos y entonación, entre otros. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 23)

I use nonverbal codes such as gestures and intonation, among others.

45) Formulo preguntas sencillas sobre temas que me son familiares apoyándome en gestos y repetición. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 23)

I ask simple questions on familiar topics relying on gestures and repetition.

The first excerpt is taken from a picture depicting a student addressing his teacher. There is a contradiction between the content and the form, because while the overt message of the text is that it is fine to use Spanish words within an English discourse, the text is written only in English signaling the opposite. Excerpts 42 to 45 are the only descriptors in the whole document that acknowledge students might face communication breakdowns (all the others assume, as discussed above, that communication will flow smoothly) but instead of saying that students can rely on their mother tongue (along with the other strategies mentioned in the descriptors) to communicate their messages, the authors limit explicitly tell students to use gestures implying that using the L1 is not appropriate or allowed as a legitimate communicative strategy.

Finally, I would like to conclude this part with the following quote from Pennycook (1994a)

Rather than assuming some monolithic version of the standard language, therefore [sic], we can acknowledge, on the one hand, multiple standards, and on the other, the particular importance of certain language forms because of their relationship to certain discourses. If giving students access to forms of standard Englishes is important, so too is the need to allow them the space to experiment and play with English. (p. 316)

Bilingualism is Constructed on Myths.

The fields of bilingualism and SLA are continually examined in order to inform teaching practices and policies. It is not only teachers but policymakers who should be aware of the advancements in these fields so that they can formulate situated language policies. In this particular case in which the MEN has undertaken a project of the dimensions of the PNB whose aim is that by 2019 all Colombians speak English, the oversimplification pattern I have described above is apparent in the theoretical foundations cited in the “Estándares”. Overall there is a conservative, mainstream approach to what language, and learning an L2 implies and means based on what I call here “myths.

I use the word myth relying on one of its dictionary meanings as a sacred narrative that contributes to shape systems of knowledge and values (Barthes, 1972). A myth is not necessarily true or false, but they are “magical and powerful constructs; they can motivate social behaviors and actions which would be otherwise contrary to logic or reason” (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 41). For these reasons, I use this concept here to show that one particular perspective or paradigm is validated and recognized in this handbook and it is used to justify particular points of view. The more salient myths are the possibility to become balanced bilingual, and the possibility to achieve full communicative competence as it is defined and presented in the “Estándares”

Myth No. 1: Balanced bilingualism is the norm

According to Romaine (1999: 69) “The notion of balance bilingualism is an ideal one, which is largely an artifact of a theoretical perspective which takes the monolingual as its point of reference”; balanced bilinguals have been defined as those individual who master the L1 and L2 with the same or equivalent proficiency (Grosjean, 1982, Baker & Jones, 1998; De Mejia, 2002). It seems that this is the ideal state for a bilingual person. To examine this belief, Grosjean (1982) asked a group of college students what being bilingual meant for them and most their answers had to do with mastering two languages. Mastering the two languages includes the same level of development in the four skills.

The fact is that at the social level, it is not possible to have a society of balanced bilinguals because two languages are not needed or used to fulfill the same purposes (Fishman, 1971, Grosjean, 1982, Romaine, 1999), and therefore balanced bilinguals are not the norm but the exception. The following excerpts are taken from the “estándar general” (general standard) for 10th and 11th grades (the last grades in high school). The general standards describe what the students must know and know to do at the end of each grade:

46) Participo en conversaciones en las que puedo explicar mis opiniones e ideas sobre temas generales, personales y abstractos. (“Estándares”, Grados 10 y 11, p. 26)

I participate in discussions in which I can explain my views and ideas on general topics, personal and abstract.

47) Escribo textos que explican mis preferencias, decisiones y actuaciones. (“Estándares”, Grados 10 y 11, p. 26)

I write texts that explain my preferences, decisions and actions.

48) Comprendo textos de diferentes tipos y fuentes sobre temas de interés general y académico. Selecciono y aplico estrategias de lectura apropiadas para el texto y la tarea. (“Estándares”, Grados 10 y 11, p. 26)

I understand the different types and sources on topics of general and academic interest. I select and apply appropriate reading strategies to read a text and do homework.

Example number 46) sets the general goal for the speaking skill; example number 47) is about writing; and example 48) is about reading. Adding to what I have said above about the conditions in which language is assumed to take place, the lexical choices used

in these standards imply that students are able to talk in, write in, and understand a wide variety of registers and styles. In example number 46) students are expected to “explain”, their “opinions” and “ideas”. Choosing this verb instead of “say” or “state” demand from students the ability to present arguments, reasons, causes, consequences, etc. since explaining something as opinions and ideas require the complexities of an expositive genre. To be able to accomplish this task they must have a command of the L2 very similar of that of their L1, or even better. On top of this, students must give these explanations about three very broad and different topics: “general”, “personal”, and “abstract”.

Examples 47) and 48) make the same assumptions as those in example 46) in the sense that students must exhibit the same ability level as that of their first language (or better) to be able to perform in the L2 according to the general standard. Besides, the expectation is that students must be equally proficient in the four skills. By and large, it can be seen that the standards have been established without taking into account the specialization in the functions served by each language, so students should become balanced bilinguals.

This myth can be evidenced further in one of the practical experiences carried out by school teachers during the experimental stage of the PNB. These teachers teach from first to third grade and had to plan a unit to introduce the standards in their classes. Two

examples are presented in chapter 7 of the “Estándares” as a way to motivate other teachers. This is the chart they designed:

49)

INGLÉS (<i>English</i>)	CIENCIAS NATURALES (<i>Natural Science</i>)	CIENCIAS SOCIALES (<i>Social Science</i>)
My community Notices		Mi comunidad: su gente y sus oficios
Means of transportation Leisure time activities		Medios de transporte Actividades de esparcimiento
Sports Celebrations		Deportes Celebraciones

This chart clearly shows that the objective of English is to mirror the uses and functions of Spanish. The topics proposed for the English class are the exact translation of the topics proposed for Social Science and Biology. The myth differs from reality in that bilinguals develop different levels of proficiency in each one of their language skills according to their needs and the environment that surround them; in the same way, bilinguals’ proficiency in each language varies according the context of use therefore (Grosjean, 1982). As stated above, some individuals might be very skillful at using academic language but have difficulties making themselves understood when getting things fixed at home.

Myth No. 2: It is possible to achieve full communicative competence

Any discourse is anteceded and followed by other discourses, that is, there is no one single text that emerges from nothing (Bakhtin, 1986; Halliday, 1985, Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2001; Foucault, 2005; Kress, 1989a). This means that whoever produces discourse draws from other discourses, sometimes with the purpose of validating what counts as knowledge. In this particular case, the authors of the “Estándares” draw from the discourse on communicative competence.

The term competence was introduced by Chomsky in the mid 1960s to define the idealized capacity of speakers to know the rules that govern the production of language. Later on, Hymes (1966a) coined the term communicative competence to add that knowing the rules was not enough, but that speakers should know the social and cultural codes to be able to use the language appropriately according to the context. These two conceptions are problematic because they attempt to describe what an ideal speaker-hearer would be and fail to concede that real speakers differ greatly from the ideal ones. As shown in the previous section, languages are complex and so are the ways in which they are used.

Nevertheless, the PNB adopts this terminology, uncritically, to establish its main goal: students, at the end of high school, should attain a B1 level and along with it communicate competence:

50) El conjunto de saberes, conocimientos, destrezas y características individuales que permite a una persona realizar acciones en un contexto determinado es lo que define las **competencias**. En el caso de inglés se espera desarrollar la **competencia comunicativa**. (“Estándares”, p. 11) (Bold in original)

*The set of knowledge, skills and individual characteristics that allows a person to perform actions in a particular context is what defines the competencies. In the case of English, it is expected to develop **communicative competence**.*

Although the concept communicative competence proposed by Hymes recognizes the social nature of language that Chomskyan competence did not, it does so from a prescriptive point of view in which new users of the language are taught the social conventions of interaction. Here the asymmetric power relationships established through language among speakers in various contexts is not considered or examined. If it were true that something like communicative competence existed, this should help contest inequality practices enacted and perpetuated through language.

Nevertheless the communicative competence described by the authors of the “Estándares” is even more prescriptive than the one proposed by Hymes. According to the “Estándares” communicative competence comprises linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence; they are defined as follows:

51) *Competencia lingüística*: Se refiere al conocimiento de los recursos formales de la lengua como sistema y a la capacidad para utilizarlos en la formulación de mensajes bien formados y significativos. Incluye los conocimientos y las destrezas léxicas, fonológicas, sintácticas y ortográficas, entre otras. Esta competencia implica, no solo el manejo teórico de conceptos gramaticales, ortográficos o semánticos, sino su aplicación en diversas situaciones. (Por ejemplo, hacer asociaciones para usar el vocabulario conocido en otro contexto o aplicar las reglas gramaticales aprendidas en la construcción de nuevos mensajes)

Competencia pragmática: Se relaciona con el uso funcional de los recursos lingüísticos y comprende, en primer lugar, una competencia discursiva que se refiere a la capacidad de organizar las oraciones en secuencias para producir fragmentos textuales. En segundo lugar, implica una competencia funcional para conocer, tanto las formas lingüísticas y sus funciones, como el modo en que se encadenan unas con otras en situaciones reales.

Competencia sociolingüística: Se refiere al conocimiento de las condiciones sociales y culturales que están implícitas en el uso de la lengua. Por ejemplo, se emplea para manejar normas de cortesía y otras reglas que ordenan las relaciones entre generaciones, géneros, clases y grupos sociales. También se maneja al entrar en contacto con expresiones de la sabiduría popular o con las diferencias de registro, de dialecto y de acento. (“Estándares”, p. 12. Italics in original)

Linguistic Competence: Refers to knowledge of the resources of the language as a formal system and the ability to use them in the formulation of well-formed and meaningful messages. This includes lexical, phonological, syntactic, and spelling knowledge and skills among others. This competence involves not only knowing grammar concepts, spelling or semantics, but also its application in various situations. (For example, to make associations to use the known vocabulary in another context or applying the rules of grammar in the construction of new messages)

Pragmatic competence: It is related to the functional use of language resources and includes, first, a discursive competence that refers to the ability to organize sentences in sequence to produce textual fragments. Secondly, it implies a functional competence to learn, both linguistic forms and functions, and how they are chained to each other in real situations.

Sociolinguistic competence: This refers to knowledge of social and cultural conditions that are implicit in the use of language. For example, it is used to manage courtesy rules and other rules that regulate relations between different generations, genders, social classes and groups. It is also used to understand expressions of popular wisdom or a different register, dialect and accent.

In the definitions of these three components of communicative competence, the social and dynamic components of the language are ignored. Being communicatively competent means to be able to produce correct sentences, use the right vocabulary in particular situations, or join sentences are together; whom the speaker is talking to is not relevant, nor are the hierarchies speakers hold in a conversation. The definition of sociolinguistic competence considers the social part but as a way to direct students' behavior: it is important to know the social rules to be polite, to become part of the social order without questioning if it is fair or not. It is necessary to know how to write a

paragraph, but not who is going to read it, what the purpose of it is, what tone should be used, and so one and so forth. The following descriptors exemplify this point:

13) Demuestro conocimiento de las estructuras básicas del inglés. (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 19)

I write descriptions and short narratives based on a sequence of illustrations.

53) Escribo descripciones y narraciones cortas basadas en una secuencia de ilustraciones. (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 21)

15) Uso adecuadamente estructuras y patrones gramaticales de uso frecuente. (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 19)

I use appropriate grammatical structures and patterns of frequent use.

The emphasis in these descriptors, as in the majority of the ones included in the handbook, is on the formal part of the language, students are asked to master the rules and forms but none of these activities have a critical component. The oral or written texts students produce or listen to or read are detached from its social nature, social structures and *status quo* are unchallenged, because language, and particularly the English language is considered a “neutral” language.

Sociolinguistic competence is reduced to politeness:

52) Saludo cortésmente de acuerdo con la edad y rango del interlocutor. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 21)

I greet courteously according to age and rank of my interlocutor.

53) Pido y acepto disculpas de forma simple y cortés (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 21)

I request and accept an apology in a simple and courteous way.

54) Puedo cortésmente llamar la atención de mi profesor con una frase corta. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 21)

I can politely call the attention of my teacher with a short phrase

These are the only descriptors in the whole document that specifically state how the action should be conducted (politely). I agree that it is valuable to teach students good manners, but when certain behaviors are singled out, the risk is to educate submissive students rather than polite ones. A contradictory element in the document is that the last part of the definition of sociolinguistic competence states that students can acquire it by being exposed to different dialects, registers, and accents, but as mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, there is not a single descriptor that attempts to expose students to a variety of Englishes. In conclusion, language is a static set of rules that when combined appropriately determines that the speaker is communicatively competent.

Aiming at developing students’ communicative competence in the classroom is idealistic, even the very restricted and prescriptive competence promoted in the “Estándares”. The best way to get closer to the acquisition of the communicative

competence is by a long contact with the real context in which the language is spoken. As a speaker of English as a second language myself, I have found it very difficult to perform adequately in many situations despite the fact that I am an applied linguist who has lived in Great Britain and in the United States. In a largely monolingual and monocultural context like the Colombian one it is almost impossible for students to acquire communicative competence because their only setting for practice is the classroom; in most (if not all) public schools all students are Spanish speakers and most (if not all) public school teachers are Spanish speakers. This setting highly constrains students' practice of the L2, because as stated by Velez-Rendón (2003) speaking English outside the school context or when foreigners are present "might be considered unnatural or snobbish" (p. 192). By and large, if students do not need the L2 they will not learn it (Grosjean, 1982; Pennycook, 1998).

In a study conducted by Valencia between 1999 and 2004 in two public schools in Colombia, she observed that English is the language of the board (the teacher would write words or sentences in English), and of the textbooks. Spanish is the language of spontaneous interaction and the language used in the construction of linguistic knowledge. This pattern is not uncommon in most public schools in Colombia, and the reasons range from teachers' own proficiency to teachers' beliefs about language and learning, to physical conditions of the classrooms; and lots of other reasons in between.

Finally, communicative competence as described in the "Estándares" contributes

to creating the illusion that a skilled performance is a set of sub-skills that can add up, and that having these skills grants the student recognition as a legitimate speaker. The way in which the standards are written does not disturb the world as given nor does it challenge students to interrogate the world or the *status quo*. Quite the opposite, they contribute to perpetuating models of learning an L2 and models of how language should be used in an imaginary world with no inequalities where there is no need for struggle (Edelsky, 2006).

CHAPTER 5: THE SYMBOLIC POWER OF ENGLISH

The English language around the world has come to be perceived as the language of power, access, civilization, science, technology, and, in general, terms of progress. This same discourse, which has unofficially and anecdotally circulated in Colombia for some years now, has been institutionalized with the promotion and implementation of the PNB, lead by the Ministry of Education and the British Council. The “Estándares” is the vehicle used to spread this discourse and at the same time direct teachers’ beliefs and practices in the classroom (Cf. Stubbs, 1996).

The section 3 of the “Estándares” entitled “¿Por qué enseñar inglés en Colombia?” (Why teaching English in Colombia?), is devoted, particularly, to highlight the benefits of learning English. The authors start by establishing connections between internationalization and the need for a common language; they then present the advantages of learning a foreign language, and in the last part, they state the reasons why it is important to speak English. Examining closely what is said in this section, along with the standards set in section 5, two broad categories emerge of how the English language is constructed in this handbook. These two categories are not new in terms of how English is conceived of around the world; they are particularly salient in this handbook, and I will examine them as they are situated in the particular Colombian context. The first category deals with the idea that the English language is neutral, the second category is

that English gives equal access to the wonders of the modern world, and third that English makes Colombians smarter.

English is a “Neutral” Language

The discourse that portrays English as a neutral language has been around for a long time. On the one hand, the fact that English was designated the official language of the countries of the outer circle (Kachru, 1997) where many languages could have had this status has contributed to construct the notion of English as a neutral language, since one of the main arguments was that by choosing English over all the local languages conflicts among the speakers of different languages would be avoided (Myers-Scotton, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001).

On the other hand, Pennycook (1994a) asserts that the neutrality of English emerged out of two main discourses, the discourse of linguistics and applied linguistics where language was seen as a medium for communication (where “communication” was also constructed as a “neutral” activity) and the discourse of marketing where English, along with all the activities related to it like teaching methodologies, textbooks, teacher training, tests, materials, and the like, are portrayed as a service industry. The neutrality of English has been a key aspect in its promotion of a language that serves mere

instrumental purposes; meanwhile, its other characteristics as a vehicle to broaden the ideology and cultural practices of the inner circle countries have been obscured.

The way in which English is constructed within the “Estándares” contributes to enhance the neutrality attached to English and does so in three main forms. 1) English is neutral in the sense that throughout the document there is a strong emphasis on a prescriptive approach to the use of the language. 2) It is neutral because it only fulfills a denotative function. And 3) it is neutral because by presenting the language as one single standard variety, issues of social differentiation are erased. In the following section, I will discuss each one of these forms of neutrality.

Neutrality as a prescriptive approach

Considering a prescriptive approach to teach the language as a form of neutrality arises from the idea that when the intention is to transmit a language as a set of fixed rules which are detached from any relationship with the speakers of that language, the assumption is that language is not a vehicle by which inequality, discrimination, sexism, racism, and power can be executed. A prescriptive approach presents a language that does not have real speakers and therefore no conflicts of any sort.

Within the document, the emphasis is on the appropriate ways of doing things with language: the rules students must know and how they must apply them, as stated in this excerpt:

36) Al igual que en otras áreas, los estándares de inglés son criterios claros que permiten a los estudiantes y a sus familias, a los docentes y a las instituciones escolares, a las Secretarías de Educación y a las demás autoridades educativas, conocer lo que se debe aprender. Sirven, además, como **punto de referencia** para establecer lo que los estudiantes están en capacidad de **saber** sobre el idioma y lo que deben **saber hacer** con el en un contexto determinado. (“Estándares”, p. 11) (Bold in original)

As in other areas, the standards for English are clear criteria that allow students and their families, teachers and schools, the Ministries of Education and other educational authorities, to know what must be learned. They also serve as a benchmark to establish what students are able to learn of the language and know what to do with it in context.

In this excerpt, the authors of the handbook define the standards in English as “clear” criteria; this means that all the members of the school community must understand the same thing to ensure that everybody will follow the same patterns. The objective of these criteria is to inform everybody of what “must” be learned. By using specifically the verb “debe” and “deben” (must) in lines 3 and 5, the message is that of an imposition; the possibility of doing things differently does not exist. A variation in the word choice would give a different message, for example using *should* or *could*. The verb “deber” implies the obligation of doing something, and therefore establishes from the beginning an asymmetrical power relationship where those who “know” (MEN, BC) determine what those who do not know (school community) “must” learn.

Behind statements like example 36) lies a behavioral concept of education. The interest of the authors of the “Estándares” is to direct people’s behavior by limiting what students “must” know in terms of the language. They still believe that it is possible to predict the result of instruction (Tumposky, 1984), that students will learn whatever teachers (or the State) define in the curriculum. The banking model of education and the computer metaphor input=output are still in effect regardless of all the controversy and more interactive and creative ways of looking at teaching, in general, and teaching languages, in particular.

To ensure that students will not deviate from the standard but continually observe the rules, the descriptors used along the document follow a pattern of controlling the use of the language. The following examples, taken from the descriptors set for the writing skill serve to illustrate this point:

37) Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase. (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 19)

I copy and transcribe words I understand and which I use frequently in the classroom.

55) Escribo mensajes de invitación y felicitación usando formatos sencillos (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 19)

I write messages of congratulations and invitations using simple formats.

26) Estructuro mis textos teniendo en cuenta elementos formales del lenguaje como la puntuación, la ortografía, la sintaxis, la coherencia y la cohesión. (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 27)

I structure my texts taking into account formal elements of language as punctuation, spelling, syntax, consistency and cohesion.

The commonality in these three examples, as in all the two hundred and eighteen descriptors included in the “Estándares,” is the absence of real meaning and purpose. The way the descriptors are written suggest that the activities held in class have the purpose of mastering patterns, structures, formats; students are asked to write an invitation for the sake of practicing the structure of an invitation; the content, purpose, addressee, relationship between them and the writer, occasion, media and other aspects of the like are not included or considered. Instead, there is always stress on form (reinforced in the textbooks used in Colombia, like the example in table 4 below).

Table 4: Example from an English textbook

7 a. Fill in the gaps with the correct prepositions. (pg. 11)

8 Use the verbs below in their correct form to complete the paragraph. (pg. 11)

10 Using the information you have learned in this unit, write one of the letters above. You should write between 120 and 180 words. (pg. 22)

Examples taken from: Upstream. Upper intermediate. Student's Book

Example 37) offers the most obviously narrow conception of what writing is within the “Estándares”. Here writing is conceived of as a mechanical activity of

“transcription”; students “copy” words from textbooks or boards; as such, writing is the lifeless and meaningless activity of putting isolated words on paper. Furthermore, writing, in this sense, responds to the concept that it is simply the transcription of the spoken word.

The excerpts that follow, 55) and 26), resemble the writing approaches in fashion before the 1980s where the emphasis was on the product of writing. Brown (1994) states that in the product approach, students’ written pieces should: a) meet certain standards of prescribed English rhetorical style, b) reflect accurate grammar, and c) be organized in conformity with what the audience would consider conventional. The focus of writing instruction was in imitating models of different types of texts, and the final products would be evaluated according to the similarity with the original. In the examples mentioned above, students are limited by “formats” they have to follow in order to preserve the correct form of the language.

The same pattern of “modeling” is used to direct students’ oral production. The following examples belong to the first second level (First to fifth grade of elementary school) in relation to what must be achieved in the monologue skill:

57) Recito y canto rimas, poemas y trabalenguas que comprendo, con ritmo y entonación adecuados. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 19)

I recite and sing rhymes, poems and tongue twisters that I understand with appropriate rhythm and intonation.

58) Participo en representaciones cortas; memorizo y comprendo parlamentos. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 19)

I participate in short performances; I memorize and understand speech.

59) Digo un texto corto memorizado en una dramatización, ayudándome con gestos. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 20)

I say a short text in a drama, helping with gestures.

60) Recito un trabalenguas sencillo o una rima, o canto el coro de una canción. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 20)

I recite a simple tongue twister or a rhyme, or sing the chorus of a song.

Rote learning, highly criticized lately in SLA theories, seems to be in effect here where students are encouraged to “memorize” bits of language and then produce them, observing the right rhythm and intonation. Rote learning is disguised by the inclusion of the word *comprendo* in example number 57) and 58) (but not in examples 59 and 60). The implication is that students should imitate the native speaker’s²⁵ accent and pronunciation, and the more similar the better.

This strategy, that is not overtly explicit in these standards, was used by the British colonizers in Trinidad and Tobago (London, 2001). London discusses that during the late colonial period, the dominance of English was assured by certain curriculum and

²⁵ Conceiving of native speaker of English as one, single, ideal speaker, in the same vein of the previous chapter of only one variety of the language.

pedagogic practices. It is interesting to see that the same strategies used in the early 1900s to Anglicize people in Trinidad and Tobago are the same suggested in the “Estándares”, such as “hand-writing, spelling, recitation, rhymes, ‘chats’, and storytelling” (p. 409), whose purpose was “to ensure acceptable pronunciation even at the expense of textual comprehension” (p. 410).

Linguistic creativity is then completely excluded and prevented by telling students to use non-verbal resources to get their messages across as stated in the excerpts below. The proponents of the PNB aim at preserving the standard variety as pure as possible because that is the one sanctioned as valuable in the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 2003):

42) Utilizo el lenguaje no verbal cuando no puedo responder verbalmente a preguntas sobre mis preferencias. Por ejemplo, asintiendo a negando con la cabeza. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 19)

I use non-verbal language when I cannot respond verbally to questions about my preferences. For example, nodding the head to deny or accept.

43) Refuerzo con gestos lo que digo para hacerme entender. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 19)

I reinforce with gestures what I say to make myself understood.

44) Utilizo códigos no verbales como gestos y entonación, entre otros. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 23)

I use nonverbal codes such as gestures and intonation, among others.

45) Formulo preguntas sencillas sobre temas que me son familiares apoyándome en gestos y repetición. (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 23)

I ask simple questions on familiar topics relying on gestures and repetition.

A prescriptive ideology like the one exhibit in the “Estándares” ignores the very nature of language as a live and dynamic entity that is in constant flux and change; it is impossible to maintain an unchanged and unchangeable language regardless of the efforts of purists and prescriptivists (Bhatt, 2001; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005), otherwise there would not be an explanation for the emergence of the world Englishes. To cite an example, De Mejía (2006) documents the nativization of English in an elite bilingual (English-Spanish) school in Paraguay where students have developed a new variety of English (and Spanish) called ASA English (after the acronym of the school: American School of Asuncion: ASA) which they use on a daily basis at school. Unfortunately, a prescriptive ideology has been motivated and supported by the popular view that other varieties of English are corrupted or degenerated and therefore they have no place in the classroom (Siegel, 1999). San Andres and Providence English is a good local example of this ideology.

As a result, learners of English who are exposed to a narrow approach like this grow up believing that English is a neutral language because there are certain patterns to be followed, the same for everybody, in every occasion, and in any part of the world.

Neutrality as a denotative function

Jackobson (1990) states that there are six factors in a speech event and that each one of them determines the function of language. When the focus is on the context, the function is called “referential”; this function is denotative, that is, used to talk about the world as is.

English around the world has been presented as a language that serves a mere denotative function in the sense that it is used to talk about the world in an unproblematic way. One probable cause of this is that the content of EFL/ESL classes is, in many cases, dictated by the textbooks which are produced by the inner-circle countries (Canagarajah, 1999; Valencia-Giraldo, 2006; Velez-Rendon, 2003). These textbooks are characterized by an aseptic portrayal of reality that gets transmitted to students as fact, so the topics of textbooks are about leisure, travel, celebrities, and the like (Pennycook, 1994a), as illustrated in Table 5 below. London (2001) states that during the late colonization period in Trinidad and Tobago, all the textbooks used were identical to those used in Ireland, Scotland and the West Indies. This pattern is maintained nowadays because the more “neutral” the textbooks are, the easier they can be marketed anywhere in the world (Pennycook, 1994a; Valencia Giraldo, 2006).

Another probable reason is that the spread of EFL/ESL teaching methodologies originated in the inner circle countries where the main concern was to train teachers to be efficient instructors; these methodologies were exported around the world in an identical

Table 5: Lessons taken from the textbook Interchange 1.

7 INTERCHANGE 5 Family facts
Find out about your classmates' families. Go to Interchange 5.

8 SNAPSHOT

Typical Families

Facts about the United States	Facts about Your Country
• 41% of homes have three or more televisions.	• _____ % of homes have three or more televisions.
• 63% of families almost always eat dinner together.	• _____ % of families almost always eat dinner together.
• 50% of mothers with young children work.	• _____ % of mothers with young children work.
• 78% of high school students have jobs.	• _____ % of high school students have jobs.
• 74% of adults between the ages of 18-35 marry.	• _____ % of adults between the ages of 18-35 marry.
• 27% of adults between the ages of 18-34 live with their parents.	• _____ % of adults between the ages of 18-34 live with their parents.

Sources: Nielsen Media Research, Christian Science Monitor. Families and their habits, by U.S. Census Bureau.

Which facts seem like positive things? Which seem negative?
What are families like in your country? Write your guesses.
Tell the class your guesses. Do they agree?

9 CONVERSATION I come from a big family.

A Listen and practice.

Marcos: How many brothers and sisters do you have, Mei-li?
Mei-li: Actually, I'm an only child.
Marcos: Really?
Mei-li: Yeah, most families in China have only one child nowadays.
Marcos: I didn't know that.
Mei-li: What about you, Marcos?
Marcos: I come from a big family. I have three brothers and two sisters.
Mei-li: Wow! Is that typical in Peru?
Marcos: Not really. A lot of families are smaller these days. But big families are great because you get lots of birthday presents!

B Listen to the rest of the conversation. What does Mei-li like about being an only child?

Tell me about your family. • 33

5 GRAMMAR FOCUS

Present continuous

Are you living at home now? Yes, I am. No, I'm not.
Is your sister working for the government? Yes, she is. No, she's not. / No, she isn't.
Are Ed and Jill going to college this year? Yes, they are. No, they're not. / No, they aren't.

Where are you working now? I'm not working. I need a job.
What is your brother doing these days? He's traveling in the Amazon.
Who are your parents visiting this week? They're visiting my grandmother.

A Complete these phone conversations using the present continuous.

1. A: Hi, Stephanie. What _____ you _____ (do)?
B: Hey, Mark. I _____ (stand) in an elevator, and it's stuck!

2. A: Oh, no! Are you OK?
B: Yeah. I - wait! It _____ (move) now. Thank goodness!

A: Marci, how _____ you and Justin _____ (enjoy) your shopping trip?
B: We _____ (have) a lot of fun.
A: _____ your brother _____ (spend) a lot of money?
B: No, Mom. He _____ (buy) only one or two things. That's all!

B Pair work Practice the phone conversations with a partner.

6 DISCUSSION Is anyone ... ?

Group work Ask your classmates about people in their family. What are they doing now? Ask follow-up questions to get more information.

A: Is anyone in your family traveling right now?
B: Yes, my dad is. He's in Korea.
C: What's he doing there?

Topics to ask about

traveling	going to high school or college
living abroad	moving to a new home
taking a class	studying a foreign language

32 • Unit 5

format regardless of the context, culture, or resources of each particular location (Canagarajah, 1999; Cárdenas, 2006a; González, 2008; Pagliarini & De Assis-Peterson, 1999; Pennycook, 1994a; Valencia-Giraldo, 2006). As a consequence, the English classroom is a site to practice exercises that are, in nature, detached of the local reality.

Likewise, in the “Estándares,” there is no attempt to promote the use of the language to fulfill a purpose different from the denotative one. For example, the ‘listening’ descriptors aim at developing the skill to understand what is said in order to follow instructions, or to understand a story, or to identify connectors, and so on, as can be seen in the following descriptors taken from different levels:

61) Entiendo instrucciones para ejecutar acciones cotidianas. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 26s)

I understand instructions to perform everyday actions.

62) Reconozco los elementos de enlace de un texto oral para identificar su secuencia. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 24)

I recognize the link elements of an oral text that identify its sequence.

63) Comprendo preguntas y expresiones orales que se refieren a mí, a mi familia, mis amigos y mi entorno. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 22)

I understand questions and oral expressions that refer to me, my family, my friends and my surroundings.

For the other skills, the descriptors work in the same way:

64) Comprendo relaciones establecidas por palabras como *and* (adición), *but* (contraste), *first*, *second...* (orden temporal), en enunciados sencillos. (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 22. Italics in original)

I understand relationships between words such as and (addition), but (contrast), first, second ... (Temporary Order), in simple statements.

65) Escribo mensajes en diferentes formatos sobre temas de mi interes. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 25)

I write messages in different formats on topics of my interest.

21) Utilizo una pronunciación inteligible para lograr una comunicación efectiva. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 27)

I use an intelligible pronunciation to achieve an effective communication.

Descriptors constructed in this way contribute to the perpetuation of the idea that English is a neutral language, because while in our mother tongue we are aware of the different ways in which social relationships are established through language, which accents have prestige and which do not, how to address people of higher or lower hierarchy, and so forth (Thompson, 2003), and sometimes we are able to contest these patterns (Norton, 1989). Throughout the two hundred and eighteen descriptors of the “Estándares,” there is no signal that English also is inextricably linked to social life (Bourdieu, 2003; Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Halliday, 1985; Norton, 1989). This ideology is strengthened by opposition when compared to the standards for the other areas; table 6 below shows that it is crucial for social and natural sciences to raise students’ awareness about critical issues.

By obscuring the relationship between language and social life, the authors of the “Estándares” are also establishing a barrier between the language and the learners (as part of the society). When the standards limit what can be said and how it can be said, they are telling the users that the language does not belong to them and that the language serves

Table 6: “Estandáres básicos de competencias en ciencias sociales y ciencias naturales” p. 103*Basic standards for social and natural sciences.*²⁶

Por ello, conviene que la formación en ciencias en la Educación Básica y Media contemple el abordaje de problemas que demandan comprensiones holísticas (como por ejemplo la pobreza, la contaminación ambiental, la violencia, los modelos de desarrollo, el desarrollo tecnológico...) para que el estudio en contexto, además de vincular los intereses y saberes de los estudiantes, permita que los conceptos, procedimientos, enfoques y propuestas propios de las disciplinas naturales y sociales estén al servicio de la comprensión de situaciones, relaciones y entornos propios de estas áreas del conocimiento.

only certain purposes. Speaking a language is a matter of making meaning (Halliday, 1974; Norton, 1989), but if speakers are constrained by formats, models, and rules, there is a risk of using these to silence them (Norton, 1989) because they cannot relate to the language.

In the “Estándares,” students are told they can write about their interest but using specific formats for that; they can tell a story but observing the grammatical rules; they can participate spontaneously in a conversation but with good pronunciation. All and all, the standards privilege form over content because; in that way, it is easier to perpetuate the idea that English is a neutral language. If its function is merely denotative, the stance of the speaker is not considered nor the multiple interpretations triggered by a text.

²⁶ See Appendix D for translation.

The authors of the “Estándares” state that according to the level (Básico, Pre-intermedio I and pre-intermedio II), a particular function of the language will be emphasized:

67) En el nivel principiante se hace mayor énfasis en las funciones demostrativas del discurso. (“Estándares”, p. 29)

In the beginner level, more emphasis is on the referential functions of language.

68) En los niveles básicos se busca fortalecer el dominio de funciones expositivas y narrativas. (“Estándares”, p. 30)

In the basic levels, the aim is to strengthen the mastery of expository and narrative functions.

69) En los últimos grados se busca fortalecer el dominio de funciones analíticas y argumentativas, aunque no con el mismo nivel de su lengua materna. (“Estándares”, p. 30)

In the upper grades the objectives to strengthen the dominance of analytical and argumentative functions, but not with the same level as in their mother tongue.

Underneath this graded function, the emphasis is the concept that a limitation in a linguistic code is the same as limitation in thinking ability and so children from six to ten years old are only capable of using language in a denotative way, to describe their surroundings without taking a stance. For this reason, only the referential function receives attention, although the superficial structure of example 67) suggests something different. By stating that *se hace mayor énfasis* (there will be greater emphasis), the implication is that all language functions will receive attention but that the emphasis will

be on the referential one. Supposing these were true, there should be descriptors aimed at developing all functions. However, there is a mismatch between that statement and the descriptors set for this level because none of them refer to using the language with a purpose different from denotation.

The same situation happens with the statement in example 69), because, although the authors warn that the analytic and argumentative functions can not have the same level as in the mother tongue, there are only three descriptors that remotely relate to the goal:

70) Expreso mi opinión sobre asuntos de interés general para mí y mis compañeros. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 25)

I express opinions on matters of general interest to me and my classmates.

71) Asumo una posición crítica frente al punto de vista del autor. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 26)

I take a critical position against the views of the author.

72) Identifico los valores de otras culturas y eso me permite construir mi interpretación de su identidad. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 26)

I identify the values of other cultures, and this allows me to build my interpretation of their identity.

It is interesting that the three descriptors are included in the *Monólogo* skill, which means that students do not interact with others to develop or challenge their opinions. If there were a real interest in promoting argumentative and analytic functions, these would be included in all the skills to give students the opportunity to strengthen their abilities by using different modes of language for their purposes. Besides, it is unrealistic that after nine years of controlled production in the L2, students will feel comfortable presenting their opinions and critiques in English.

Neutrality as uniformity

Uniformity is another of the shapes taken by the neutrality of English. The aim is to reproduce uniformity in two ways: language variety and social behavior. As stated earlier, English is presented as an aseptic language that exists in a vacuum, free of any kind of contamination in a pure and fixed state (and as such it must be kept) where everybody speaks in the same way. Students are not made aware that as any other language, English presents different varieties that respond to regional origins, gender, sex, education, age, context in which the language is used, purpose, and so on and so forth.

Being that English is the most used language in the world, there is wide variability within it. The problem is, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that English is conceived of as having one single variety that by default is Standard American English or Standard British English, but whatever the standard, it cannot be matched to any real group of people; it is an imaginary language that resides in an ideal speaker (Lippi-Green, 1997). This is the language introduced in the classroom through international textbooks (Pennycook, 1994a) and through the “Estándares” in the PNB. The following excerpts, serve to illustrate this point:

73) Identifico elementos culturales como nombres propios y lugares, en textos sencillos. (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 20)

I identify cultural elements as proper names and places, in simple texts.

32) Identifico el tema general y los detalles relevantes en conversaciones, informaciones radiales o exposiciones orales. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 22)

I identify the topic and relevant details in conversations, radio reports or oral reports.

74) Comprendo relaciones de adición, contraste, orden temporal y espacial y causa-efecto entre enunciados sencillos. (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 24)

I understand relationships of addition, contrast, spatial and temporal order, and cause-effect between simple statements.

34) Identifico personas, situaciones, lugares y el tema en conversaciones sencillas. (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 26)

I identify people, situations, places and the topic in simple conversations.

These descriptors for reading and listening, where students could be exposed to different varieties of the language and encouraged to appreciate its differences, do the opposite. In example 73), the cultural experience is reduced to the identification of people's names and names of places. This type of activity gives way to stereotyping because students might get the idea that certain names are attached to certain cultures along with certain social practices, particularly considering that English textbooks tend to be very ethnocentric, portraying only the positive characteristics of the west; as a consequence, students will see the world in black and white in spite of the colorful layout of textbooks (Pennycook, 1994a).

The same is true in examples 32) and 34). The use of the verb "Identifico" restricts the intellectual activity students perform; they are simply expected to pinpoint information they hear or read without engaging their personal beliefs or ideas. Example 74) shows a recurrent pattern in the descriptors, that the relevance of the activity is given to the structure of a text; students have to identify the relationships among the components of the text, but there is no mention of why it is written in a particular way. In this sense, the relationship between the author and the text is ignored.

The insistence in denying the existence of other varieties of English (along with denying the existence of those speakers) nurtures the concept of an ideal state in which one day we all will be able to speak in exactly the same way and live in endless harmony. This plan is already in progress in some workplaces where employees are asked to

modify their own linguistic persona and adopt a more homogeneous corporate one (Cameron, 2002).

The second aim of the neutrality of English in relation to uniformity is to perpetuate, reproduce or promote a pattern of social behavior where students are positioned as passive consumers of social norms enacted via language (Auerbach, 1993; Pennycook, 1994a). The following excerpts show how specific language choices and grammatical structures indicate the role of students as users of the language:

76) Utilizo variedad de estrategias de comprensión de lectura adecuadas al propósito y al tipo de texto (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 26).

I use a variety of reading comprehension strategies appropriate to the purpose and type of texts.

77) Utilizo estrategias adecuadas al propósito y al tipo de texto (activación de conocimientos previos, apoyo en el lenguaje corporal y gestual, uso e imágenes) para comprender lo que escucho (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 26).

I use appropriate strategies according to the purpose and text type (activation of prior knowledge, support on body language and gestures, and use of pictures) to understand what I hear.

78) Monitoreo la toma de turnos entre los participantes en discusiones sobre temas preparados con anterioridad (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 25).

I monitor turn taking among participants in discussions on topics prepared in advance.

The three examples use action verbs to give the idea that students are active participants in the process, autonomous individuals who are in control of their own

learning, but looking at the predicate of each one of the sentences, the message is different. In the first two examples, the purpose is to use strategies to understand a text (written and oral). Therefore, students are supposed to become efficient readers or listeners (See table 7). These types of goals can be associated to the language of business in the capitalist world, where efficiency is a must to assure economic profit (Tollefson, 1991; Tumposky, 1984). The instrumentality of these descriptors is apparent because there is a preeminence of technique over enjoyment.

Table 7: Reading instructions in a textbook.

2 Read the text. For questions 1-7, choose the most appropriate answer (A, B, C or D)

Strategy point

- Read the text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about.
- Look at the first part of the question, and underline key words. Don't read the options A-D yet. Find the part of the text the question refers to.
- Go through the choices and underline the key words.
- Choose the answer that best fits. Keep in mind that the information may be rephrased.
- Even if you think you know the correct answer, always check that the others are not appropriate.
- Check your answer against the text.

Examples taken from: Upstream. Upper intermediate. Student's Book, p. 14

In the third example, students' future behavior in any conversation is being directed by observing how turn taking occurs. The implication of monitoring is that students have to pay attention and replicate the pattern; they are not asked or expected to problematize turn taking practices, to question unfair distribution of talk time depending on age, gender, regional origin, hierarchy, social status, and the like (Norton, 1989). Consequently, the intention of choosing the verb "monitor" is to hide the fact that turn taking and all the day-to-day social practices are sites where asymmetric power relationships are enacted (Auerback, 1993).

Leaving social practices unexamined contributes to the perpetuation of forms of inequality, submission, and discrimination, particularly taking into account that learning a language implies acquiring a way of looking at the world (Goke-Pariola, 1993). If schools serve the interests of dominant groups interested in maintaining the *status quo*, they are facilitating for them the task of exerting symbolic power, because one can not resist or contest what one does not perceive as unfair, and there lies the strength of symbolic power.

Writing is another skill in which students' use of language is highly controlled in order to preserve the uniformity of their written production according to the norms set by the standards:

65) Escribo mensajes en diferentes formatos sobre temas de mi interés (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 25).

I write messages in different formats on topics of my interest.

80) Diligencio efectivamente formatos con información personal (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 25).

I effectively fill in forms with personal information.

81) Organizo párrafos coherentes cortos, teniendo en cuenta elementos formales del lenguaje como ortografía y puntuación (“Estándares”, Escritura, p. 25).

I organize coherent short paragraphs, taking into account formal elements of language as spelling and punctuation.

Students are directed to follow the rules, so although the action verb poses the students as agents, it is the format and conventions of the elements in control of what is produced and how. Students are positioned as mere instruments by which texts are written, and in this way, their agency is not acknowledged; they are not constructed, as the verbs misleadingly indicate, in control of their own learning and owners of the language, but as submissive consumers of norms. A final note of caution needs to be made regarding this last point: students might be conceived of as passive by the authors of the “Estándares,” but certainly they are not, as stated by Canagarajah (1999): “Whatever policies the colonies adopted, the locals carried out their own personal agendas, and foiled the expectations of their masters” (p. 64).

English Gives “Equal” Access to the Wonders of the Modern World

One of the prevalent discourses in the spread of English is that it gives unlimited access to the wonders of the modern world as science, technology, money, power, international communication, intercultural understanding, entertainment, and so on and so forth (Nunan, 2001). This is only one side of the coin, because not everybody enjoys these benefits of speaking English and not everybody has access to acquire it. Nevertheless, the discourses that present English as bringing only benefits has been distributed and continues circulating, thanks to those who hold power (Foucault, 2005). In this particular case, some of these groups are the British Council (created with the specific purpose of expanding the use of English around the world, Phillipson, 1992), schools, multinational corporations, international organizations (World Bank, IMF, UNESCO) and TESOL (Pennycook, 1990; 1994a, Phillipson, 1992; Valencia-Giraldo, n/d).

The Ministry of Education through its “Estándares,” as an official institution that holds power, gives its share to the construction of English as a key to access unlimited benefits, all of which can be eventually converted into economic profits (Bourdieu, 1986). Access to economic power is then an overarching framework in which the other forms of access feed into the following: Access to an imagined community of English speakers, access to equity in the distribution of social goods, access to knowledge, and

access to pluriculturalism. In what follows, I will discuss each one of these forms of access and illustrate them with textual examples from the handbook.

Access to economic profits

3) Ser bilingue es esencial en el mundo globalizado (“Estándares” p. 5)

This quote, which opens the body of the “Estándares,” leaves many questions unanswered: for whom?, what for?, why? In the circulating discourse about why it is important to speak English, the economic benefits it brings along prevails to the point of equating not to being able to speak English with being illiterate in the global world (Vélez-Rendón, 2003). The economic interest of the institutions, agencies, and nations that provide the service of spreading English over the world is hidden, though. English is a multimillion dollar business for the inner circle countries (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1998), but that fact is never made evident in the campaigns to spread English around the world.

Hiding their own economic interest grants international agencies like the British Council the symbolic capital they need to exert symbolic power. For example, in Colombia, the whole PNB is coordinated by the BC and all the services (such as teachers’ training programs, English courses for teachers, tests, textbooks, and other materials) are

supplied by them. In an invitation letter sent to certain Colombian scholars, the MEN explicitly stated the relevant role of the British Council in the project and their interest to strengthen the master of English as a second language in Colombia (See table 8).

Table 8: Excerpt of the invitation letter sent by the MEN to validate the standards²⁷

Para el cumplimiento de lo anterior, y atendiendo a lo establecido en el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, el Ministerio de Educación Nacional iniciará en el año 2005 la generación de estándares básicos en inglés, su divulgación y promoción en las entidades territoriales y en las instituciones educativas. Para este proceso el Ministerio de Educación ha decidido celebrar un Convenio Especial de Cooperación con el Consejo Británico, previa las siguientes consideraciones: 1. En el año de 1979 se firmó un Convenio Cultural -que sigue vigente- entre el Gobierno del Reino Unido de la Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte y el Gobierno de la República de Colombia, el primero estará representado por la Misión Diplomática en Bogotá y por el British Council (Consejo Británico), entidad oficial encargada de llevar a cabo sus relaciones culturales y educativas. 2. En el marco del Convenio, tanto EL MINISTERIO como el Consejo Británico han manifestado sus deseos de emprender acciones conjuntas a favor de la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés en la educación oficial del País, especialmente en el fortalecimiento de estrategias de mejoramiento en el manejo del idioma inglés de los alumnos, docentes y población en general. 3. Se hace necesario implementar un programa Nacional que formule estándares de competencia para el área de inglés, que desarrolle evaluaciones de competencia en inglés en alumnos de primaria y secundaria y que adelante programas de formación para maestros encaminados a: 3.1. Mejorar los resultados en cuanto al dominio del idioma en alumnos y docentes con referencia a los estándares que se formulen.... En esta línea, el convenio con el Consejo Británico busca fortalecer el dominio del idioma inglés como segunda lengua de los docentes y alumnos, a partir del diseño de estándares, evaluación sistemática del inglés en alumnos de primaria y secundaria y de programas de formación que se desarrollarán con referencia a los estándares definidos y a los resultados que arrojen la evaluaciones aplicadas.

In an opposite fashion, the economic benefits of learning English are overtly expressed in various documents whose arguments are social mobility, job promotions, job opportunities, and in general a better economic future; these documents antecede, proceed and surround the “Estándares” and the implementation of the PNB (See table 9). The authors of the “Estándares” take advantage the circulation of this discourse and count on the cognitive connections people are led to make between speaking English and

²⁷ See Appendix E for translation.

economic progress so that in the handbook there is no need to make overt statements about; it is offered in a more subtle way.

Table 9: Documents referring to the economic benefits of learning English in Colombia.²⁸

Document	Statement
ASCOPI Newsletter (October, 2003)	Objetivo: "Ante el mundo, Bogotá y Cundinamarca se destacaran por contar con personas más productivas. El dominio de un idioma diferente al Español, inicialmente el inglés, permitirá aumentar la competitividad de la región".
British Council Web Page (n/d)	De igual manera puede pensarse en implementar un Programa de certificación de Competencias Bilingües, mediante el cual los ciudadanos y ciudadanas bogotanos que llenen los requisitos establecidos en los estándares de la ciudad, adquieran una Certificación que les reconoce estos dominios y les sirve de garantía para efectos de su vinculación y movilidad laboral, complementando así los programas que adelanten las empresas.
Invitation letter sent by the MEN to validate the standards (April, 2005)	Dentro de la política de Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Educación, El Ministerio de Educación Nacional ha impulsado estratégicamente la definición de estándares, la evaluación en las distintas áreas del conocimiento y la formulación de planes de mejoramiento institucional. Esta estrategia está orientada a lograr que los educandos obtengan mejores resultados en competencias básicas, laborales y valores ciudadanos.
Proyecto de acuerdo Bogotá bilingüe. Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá (Noviembre, 2006)	Se promoverán procesos colectivos que estimulen a personas productivas, a empresas de valor agregado e instituciones generadoras de confianza, mediante el fortalecimiento de los mercados, así como la democratización del acceso a las principales fuentes de ventajas como el conocimiento, la educación bilingüe, las tecnologías de información... Todo esto con el propósito de hacer posible la integración económica y social, la generación de empleo e ingresos y el logro progresivo de una sociedad más justa y equitativa.

The only explicit claim about the economic relevance of learning English is in the following quote:

84) [El inglés] Ofrece mayores oportunidades laborales. ("Estándares", p. 9)

[English] offers greater working opportunities.

²⁸ See Appendix F for translation.

From an oversimplified perspective, the Ministry of Education (MEN) perpetuates the belief that speaking English is enough to have better jobs and therefore better economic provisions in the globalized world; it is promoted as the “credit card to success” (London, 2001:403). They imply that speaking English is the only form of (cultural/linguistic) capital needed to succeed while at the same time obscure the fact that other qualifications are needed (plus social and economic capital) to compete for jobs, especially within the globalized world where the competence is under unequal conditions.

Guided by the promise of a better future, students demand education in English (Francis & Ryan, 1998; Niño-Murcia, 2003; Ramanathan, 1999), but in fact, most of them will be kept away from these opportunities because of multiple factors. In Latin America, one of the strongest motivations people have to learn English is to immigrate to the United States (Francis & Ryan, 1998; Niño-Murcia, 2003; Vélez-Rendón, 2003) to search for job opportunities in order to improve their economic situation and send money back to their families in their home countries. In Colombia, the reason to migrate is strongly attached to high indices of unemployment and to low salaries; in the new century, the profile of migrants has extended to include middle and upper class Colombians whose reason to migrate responds to the political and economic instability of the country (Díaz, 2006).

The former group, which is a low income population, is at a disadvantage to apply for and obtain a visa, because they lack the social capital (of the right sort) and the

economic capital; speaking English, rather than incorporating them to the world of money and power, keeps them excluded and marginalized.

For people who stay in the country, the economic profit associated with English is an illusion too, and it can be particularly reflected in the current situation of local English teachers. The example mentioned by Pennycook (1998) in relation to house privileges for Britain born English teachers in Hong Kong is not extraneous to what happens in Colombia, where certain high profile bilingual schools in Bogota pay for the housing of their English teachers who are native speakers of English, in addition to their salaries. De Mejía (2005) found that in Colombia, English teachers can be categorized in three groups: A privileged group of teachers who are contracted in the United States or Great Britain, another group of teachers who are native of these countries but live in Colombia, and a third group of local teachers.

This categorization responds not only to the origin and place of living, but mainly to the working and salary conditions among these three groups, where the lower salaries are assigned to national teachers. It seems that the prevailing ideology shared by administrators and parents alike, is that it is more important to speak English native-like than having the qualifications to teach it. The evidence is that in a lot of institutions, native speakers of English, who do not have any further qualifications, are hired as English teachers or as coordinators of language programs (De Mejía, 2005; Vélez-Rendón, 2003). As a consequence, lower working conditions and salaries for local

teachers is as an indication of the construct of superiority-inferiority NS-NNS (Pennycook, 1998) and perpetuates the “mentality of underdevelopment, in that foreign staff are considered the principal purveyors of new ideas and methodologies” (De Mejía, 2005).

This example of the current situation of local English teachers helps to foresee the economic and employment future of a wide sector of the Colombian population who, for whatever reason, will not be able to attain the standards, considering that speaking English is set to become a criteria in selecting employees and giving them promotions and salary raises. The already disadvantaged population will be kept at disadvantage so English will be their “fool’s gold”.

Access an imagined community

To explain this category, I draw from Anderson’s (2006) imagined communities and Gee’s (2005) notion that one important function of language is to support human affiliation. Anderson coined the term *imagined community* to offer a definition of *nation*, and explains it in the following way: “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6, italics in

original), and further he explains why community: “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). Putting these two ideas together gives, as a result, that the inhabitants of the world who share an affiliation by speaking English are members of an imagined community that resides in the global village. The comradeship characteristic is enhanced by all the advantages ascribed to English, so by default, all members are afforded such advantages.

The main goal of the MEN through its PNB is to foster the learning of English in Colombia so that the country can become part of (belong to) the global village:

5) El Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo se orienta a “lograr ciudadanos y ciudadanas capaces de comunicarse en inglés, de tal forma que puedan insertar al país en los procesos de comunicación universal, en la economía global y en la apertura cultural con estándares internacionalmente comparables” (“Estándares” p. 6).

The National Bilingual Program aims to "ensure that citizens are able to communicate in English, so they can insert the country into the universal communication processes in the global economy and cultural opening with comparable international standards.

Two main assumptions can be drawn from this excerpt. First, if Colombians are able to speak English automatically, they “belong” to the imagined community of English speakers that enjoy the benefits attached to that language. These benefits translate mainly into economic profits; interpreted in the light of Bourdieu’s concept of convertibility of capital (1986), this means that by acquiring the linguistic capital of a highly valued

language in the linguistic market (English), Colombians will have better jobs and opportunities for social mobility.

The second assumption stems from the first, and this is that as the result of adding up the individual profit, Colombia will belong to the international community with the same status as that of the first world countries. The authors of the standards overrate the role of English in the development of the country and point to it as the sole element that will bring progress to our nation. In order to belong to the elite nations of the world and to be recognized as one, multiple and complex elements need to be in play, not only promoting the learning of English among the citizens.

This type of discourse has an impact on people's perceptions about the importance and reasons to learn English in Colombia. After the project "Bogotá bilingüe en diez años" was sanctioned, one of the members of the City Council stated that speaking English would be an advantage for anybody once the free trade agreement, TLC ("Tratado de Libre Comercio"), was signed with the United States (ElTiempo.com, 2006), implying that the TLC would bring progress and job opportunities to Colombians. Unfortunately, advocates of free trade agreements fail to realize that Colombia does not have the infrastructure, policies, logistics, and resources to compete in an open market. According to Romero (2006), free trade agreements are sophisms aimed at distracting the attention over the fact of the unequal exchange of goods between powerful countries and third world countries like Colombia. In this sense, it would be utopian to consider that

adopting English as a foreign language in the Colombia will “insert” us in the global economy.

The aspiration of the Ministry of Education for Colombia to belong to this imagined community finds a fertile ground in the same hope of some Colombian students. Within the English classroom, students are constructed as “the other” through the content of textbooks and teaching methodologies because they do not see themselves represented in any way (Canagarajah, 1999; Ducar, 2006; Pennycook, 1994a; Valencia-Giraldo, 2006); this fact might motivate students to long to belong to the imagined community of speakers of English. The same desire is fostered by the “Estándares” as seen in the following excerpt, but very likely, it is deceiving:

82) Busco oportunidades para usar lo que sé en inglés. (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 21)

I seek opportunities to use what I know in English.

What is a mandate for every schooled individual in Colombia can be actualized by only a small percentage of people who belong to a privileged socio-economic status (Velez-Rendón, 2003) and have the cultural, social and economic capital to look for those opportunities outside the school and enjoy, by internet access, exchange programs with the United States or Great Britain. This group constitutes the exception, while the norm is that in the Colombian context, the majority of students do not have the occasion to

practice English outside the school; in fact, within the school, these opportunities are limited because the surroundings are highly monolingual in Spanish. The MEN is aware of this situation, as seen in the next excerpt, but undermines it and does not state whose responsibility it is to overcome the problem:

83) Sabemos que en muchas instituciones del país, el aula y el entorno escolar son los únicos espacios disponibles para el uso del inglés y que el tiempo de contacto de los estudiantes con el idioma es limitado. Estas condiciones plantean el gran desafío de aprovechar al máximo todas las oportunidades que se tengan al alcance. (“Estándares”, p. 31)

We know that in many institutions in the country, the classroom and school environment are the only spaces available for the use of English and that students' exposure to the language is limited. These conditions pose a great challenge to maximize all the opportunities that are available.

This excerpt has two main sentences which differ greatly in terms of accountability. The first one is stated using first person plural “Sabemos” (we know), indicating the authors’ awareness of a limitation (who represent the official voice of the MEN), though not assuming any responsibility in the fact; this type of structure masks a reality by presenting it as a natural event and not as something motivated by previous actions. The classroom is the only available setting to practice English because Colombia is mainly a Spanish monolingual country. This state of being did not happen by accident, but by the language policies implemented since colonization, has prevailed over the years and been motivated by a monolingual/nationalist ideology (Mar-Molinero, 2000). There is not enough time to practice because the Ministry of Education has not made any

provisions to implement a project like the PNB, as it did not made any provisions for its previous project, Law 115 in 1994, where the teaching of at least one foreign language in elementary school was mandatory, despite the fact that elementary school teachers did not know English nor how to teach it.

In the second part of the excerpt, there is an abrupt change because the first person plural is no longer included; instead, the sentence starts with “Estas condiciones” (*these conditions*). In doing so, the authors distance themselves from being the sources of the challenge, and they stick to their assumption that the current state of schools in Colombia is a natural happening and that nobody, not even the official institutions, are to be blame. Additionally, the sentence does not have an agent who would carry out the action; it is not explicitly stated whose responsibility it is to take advantage of the limited opportunities afforded to the students, but it could be assumed that it is a shared task between teachers and students, since the authors of the “Estándares” are not including themselves in the solution to the problem.

As a result, belonging to the imagined community of English is feasible for a few but an illusion for most students; it can create a local inner-outer dichotomy between those who might have access and those who do not (Ramanathan, 1999). It is necessary to consider, though, that even for those who can have the forms of capital to become members of this desired community, the experience of “belonging” is not automatically granted. It might be influenced by factors such as the nativeness/non-nativeness ideology.

It should not be generalized that by not being native speakers students will be automatically excluded as it should not be generalized that they will be automatically included. It all varies and depends on multilayered factors, too. More research is needed to document this aspect, but Cárdenas (1994) reports some cases of people feeling excluded or discriminated in Great Britain due to the variety of English they speak.

Access to equality

The ways in which British colonization took place in India (Canagarajah, 1999) and Hong Kong (Pennycook, 1998) in relation to the status of English present some similarities with the PNB in Colombia. For one, English is associated with power, learning, science and civilization; at the same time English is promoted as the language of equity, but in fact, it contributes to the delivery and perpetuation of privilege and inequality because it favors the advantaged groups who have access to the right sort of linguistic capital.

As seen in the following excerpt, the authors of the “Estándares” state that one of the assets of speaking English is that it allows students to compete for scholarships offered abroad:

85) [El Inglés] Permite el acceso a becas y pasantías fuera del país. Es muy importante que los jóvenes colombianos puedan aprovechar, en igualdad de condiciones, las oportunidades educativas que se ofrecen en el exterior y que requieren niveles de desempeño específico en inglés. (“Estándares” p. 9).

[English] gives access to scholarships and internships abroad. It is very important that young Colombians take advantage of the equal educational opportunities being offered abroad, and which require specific performance levels in English.

The subject/doer of the action in the first sentence of example 85) is English; it acquires the characteristics of an animated, being capable of performing actions, in this case, giving access to scholarships and internships. The sentence suggests that the only necessary qualification is English (Niño-Murcia, 2003), but any person who have gone through the process of applying for a scholarship in Colombia knows that this is far from truth. Being intellectually and professionally competent is also necessary; additionally, in order to obtain all the documentation required, including preparing for and taking international language tests and other exams, people need a social network and money.

On the other hand, this first statement, in example 85, is categorical in the sense that it excludes the possibility that any other foreign language can give access to scholarships and internships as well. English speaking countries are not the only ones that offer these opportunities; there are programs all around the world, even within South America and Spain, so Colombians would not need to learn a foreign language. To this date (July 2nd 2008), according to the information found in the ICETEX (Instituto Colombiano de Credito y Estudios Tecnicos en el Exterior) there are sixty-one

scholarship offers (see table 10), and although English can be a plus, it is not necessarily the language in which students will be tested and taught.

In the second sentence of example 85), it is assumed that English will give students the opportunity to compete under the same conditions (en igualdad de condiciones). This is another problematic statement because given that standardized tests are used to select students for scholarship programs, these are, in most cases, unfairly constructed in the sense that only a certain type of knowledge is valued and therefore included and tested. For this reason, it is not possible to talk about “equal” conditions, because they do not exist.

Table 10: List of countries offering scholarships for Colombians

Country	Number of scholarships
Colombia	1
Mexico	6
Espana	7
Argentina	8
Honduras	1
Peru	3
Guatemala	1
Japan	11
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Korea	1
Switzerland	1

Panama	1
India	9
Brazil	1
Costa Rica	1
Scotland	1
Iran	1
Egypt	1
France	1
United States	1
Other countries	Various

Taken from: ICETEX web page

The discourse of equality has influenced language policy decisions under the premise that speaking English gives equal opportunities particularly in the economic field, but this ideology blurs the recognition of the inequality to the access of ways to learn English. There is a big difference between attending public under-funded and overcrowded schools and attending elite private schools (Tollefson, 2000), and Colombia is not an exception. Some elite private bilingual schools offer intensive English classes (between eight to twenty hours per week) and others offer content instruction in both English and Spanish (De Mejía, 2005). On the contrary, adding to the lack of qualified teachers, there is little or no time assigned to teach English (Cárdenas, 2006), as acknowledged by the MEN in its “Estándares”:

86) En la Educación Básica Primaria, algunas instituciones cuentan con una hora semanal para la enseñanza del inglés y también hay otras en las cuales todavía no se le asigna tiempo (“Estándares”, p. 31).

In primary education, some institutions have one hour per week to teach English, and there are others which have not yet assigned time.

87) En la Escuela Secundaria y en la Media, la enseñanza del inglés cuenta con un promedio de dos a cuatro horas semanales (“Estandares”, p. 31).

In High School, the teaching of English has an average of two to four hours per week.

Nevertheless the authors of the “Estándares” claim:

88) Esta intensidad horaria permite alcanzar los estándares y, por ello, es crucial aprovechar al máximo el tiempo de clase proponiendo actividades pedagógicas adecuadas y valiéndose de múltiples recursos que respondan a las necesidades de los estudiantes y a los objetivos propuestos por los docentes. Así mismo, recomendamos explorar todas las posibilidades que ofrece el mundo de hoy, utilizando los medios de comunicación, la música y la internet, entre otros, que resultan tan cercanos a la población más joven (“Estándares”, p. 31).

The time allotted is enough to reach the standards, and therefore it is crucial to maximize class time by proposing appropriate educational activities and using multiple resources that meet students' needs and the objectives proposed by the teachers. Likewise, we recommend exploring all the possibilities offered by the world today, using media, music and internet, among others, that are close to the younger population.

The first statement in example 88) shows the lack of knowledge the MEN has about the L2 teaching-learning process as well as the Colombian public education context. In relation to the former one, it is impossible to learn an L2 without having any sort of contact with it. So, if children in elementary school are to attain a Basic I proficiency level (A 2.1 in the European Framework terminology), as shown in table 11

below, the MEN needs to make provisions to make that happen in terms of allotting time, educating teachers, and equipping schools, among others. Otherwise, the very same MEN is promoting and perpetuating inequality by restricting the access to the linguistic capital of English. The same is true in secondary education; while public schools have two to three hours per week, private schools have double or triple that time.

Given the strategic alliances of the education sector with the economic sector in Colombia to pursue this bilingual project, in which one of their objectives is to use proficiency in English as a criteria for job selection and promotion (as shown in table 10 above), for these children, English will not be a key to equality but rather to inequality because it will become a gatekeeper that determines who can have access to certain types of employment and economic future and who will not.

Table 11: Standards for elementary school²⁹

²⁹ See Appendix G for translation.

Table 12: Standards for elementary school (Continued)

GRADOS 1 a 3 Básica Primaria Principiante (A1)	En este nivel	Comprendo historias cortas narradas en un lenguaje sencillo.	Desarrollo estrategias que me ayudan a entender algunas palabras, expresiones y oraciones que leo.	Comprendo el lenguaje básico sobre mi familia, amigos, juegos y lugares conocidos, si me hablan despacio y con pronunciación clara.
GRADOS 4 a 5 Básica Primaria Básico I (A 2.1)	Además de lo que logré en el nivel anterior, en este nivel	Comprendo textos cortos, sencillos e ilustrados sobre temas cotidianos, personales y literarios.	Comprendo cuentos cortos o lo que me dice mi profesor en clase.	Participo en conversaciones cortas usando oraciones con estructuras predecibles.
Hablo de mí, de mis compañeros y de nuestras actividades cotidianas con oraciones simples, encadenadas lógicamente y a veces memorizadas. Aún se me dificulta hablar de temas que se salen de mi rutina familiar o escolar.	Mi pronunciación es comprensible y hablo de manera lenta y pausada.	Escribo pequeños textos sencillos sobre temas de mi entorno.	Mi vocabulario se limita a temas y referentes cercanos y conocidos.	

As such, the structure of the PNB, particularly in the establishment of the standards to be attained by Colombian students and the misconceptions in which it is founded (discussed in the previous chapter), is set to make an unequal distribution of English language to the nationals.

The second part of the excerpt shows again the lack of knowledge of the authors of the “Estándares” regarding availability of resources in public schools. To mention just two that directly influence the unattainability of the goals of the PNB, Colombian public schools have overcrowded classrooms where there are fifty or more students per classroom (Ayala & Alvarez, 2005; Cárdenas, 2005; Castaño, 2008). This situation makes it very difficult for teachers to maximize the time in order to produce the results expected by the MEN. Furthermore, claiming that the internet is accessible to all Colombian students is a fallacy, because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the internet coverage in Colombia is very limited, and public schools are not an exception.

In 1996-1997, the MEN run the “Programa nacional de bilingüismo y nuevas tecnologías” (*National New Technology and bilingual program*) (De Mejía, 2005) and set up 1500 computer classrooms in the country connected to the internet. The reality is that some of these classrooms were never used because teachers were afraid that students could break the computers; others had limited use due to the overpopulation of students or because there was not internet access at all (Cárdenas & Nieto, 2003).

By and large, on the surface of excerpt 88), the MEN portrays itself as the problem solver by assuming the voice of the expert who tells teachers and students what to do to teach and learn English (respectively); the implication is that if the latter do not attain the goals set in the PNB, it is their fault and not the fault of the Ministry of Education.

Access to knowledge

There has been a mismatched ideology between people who want to acquire knowledge (pursue a professional career) and the institutions that offer and certify it. The latter are, generally, motivated by the convertibility of their cultural capital into economic capital. Parents insist that their children study a career that will provide for them a good monetary situation; in this case, the economic interest is overt. Educational institutions, on the other hand, give relevance to knowledge for the sake of knowledge and not for the possibility to convert it into money, so education is seen as a non-lucrative service (Zapata, 2007). When educational institutions exhibit any type of link with economic or monetary activities, they are strongly judged because they are failing their philosophy and are serving the interest of the capitalist world (Fairclough, 1995; McLaren, 1995).

Since the MEN represents and rules the education system in Colombia, it has to comply with the expectations and beliefs of Colombians in relation to the nature and purpose of schools and universities in the country. This explains the obscurity in presenting the economic advantages of English and hiding it through other benefits associated to the language like access to knowledge. In the following excerpt, the categorical syllogism logic of the authors of the “Estándares” to fulfill their purpose can be analyzed in the light of Toulmin’s model of Grounds, Backing, Warrants, and Claims (van Eemeren et al., 1997):

89) El mundo actual se caracteriza por la comunicación intercultural, por el creciente ritmo de los avances científicos y tecnológicos y por los procesos de internacionalización. Estas circunstancias plantean la necesidad de un idioma común que le permita a la sociedad internacional acceder a este nuevo mundo globalizado.

La educación permite el desarrollo humano y ofrece respuestas a los ciudadanos que conforman la sociedad, en los diversos momentos de la historia. Particularmente en Colombia, la Ley General de Educación establece como uno de sus fines “*El estudio y la comprensión crítica de la cultura nacional y de la diversidad étnica y cultural del país, como fundamento de la unidad nacional y de su identidad*”. En la misma ley se fijan como objetivos de la Educación Básica y Media “*La adquisición de elementos de conversación y de lectura, al menos en una lengua extranjera*” y “*La comprensión y capacidad de expresarse en una lengua extranjera*”.

Teniendo en cuenta esta reglamentación y haciendo uso de su autonomía, las instituciones educativas colombianas han optado por ofrecer a sus estudiantes la oportunidad de aprender el inglés como lengua extranjera. Con ello pretenden brindar una herramienta útil que permita a niños, niñas, y jóvenes mayor acceso al mundo de hoy. Este hecho se ve confirmado por los datos suministrados por el Icfes respecto a las pruebas del 2004, según los cuales el noventa y nueve por ciento de los estudiantes seleccionaron el inglés en el examen de estado (“Estándares”, p. 7).

The world is characterized by intercultural communication, by the increasing pace of scientific and technological advances and internationalization process. These circumstances raise the need for a common language that allows the international society access to this new globalized world. Education enables human development and provides answers to the people that make up the society at various points in history. Particularly in Colombia, the General Education Law establishes as one of its purposes "the study and critical understanding of national culture and ethnic and cultural diversity of the country as the basis for national unity and identity." The same law sets targets for Basic Education and the Media "The acquisition of elements of conversation and reading at least one foreign language" and "Understanding and ability to speak in a foreign language."

Taking into account these rules and making use of their autonomy, the Colombian educational institutions have chosen to offer their students the opportunity to learn English as a foreign language, thus providing a useful tool intended to enable children and young people greater access to the world today. This is confirmed by data provided by ICFES regarding the evidence of 2004, in which ninety-nine percent of the students selected English in the state examination.

The grounds are the premises that support a claim. In the example above, the authors weave their arguments to justify the choice of English as the language to be adopted in Colombia. The grounds of the text are as follows: 1) The modern world is characterized by intercultural communication, scientific and technological advancement; 2) Education allows people to perform according to the needs of their time. The Warrants

are 1) Colombian Educational Law establishes the importance of education; 2) One paramount aspect of education is the ability to use a foreign language. The Backing of the Warrants in this case is the following: 1) the characteristics of the modern world demand the use of a common language. The claim is that the foreign and common language has to be English; finally, there is an additional backing to the claim, stating that institutions, in behalf of their autonomy, selected English, as motivated by students' foreign language choice in the national test, ICFES.

The deconstruction of the text using Toulmin's model unveils how the arguments are put together to unfold the connection between the production and consumption of knowledge, science, technology and culture, and English. From there, three sets of syllogisms can be identified as the origins of the content of example 89) and can be as follows: Syllogism 1) The modern world is characterized by culture, science and technology--> Culture, science and knowledge are spread through a common language--> The world needs a common language. Syllogism 2) The modern world needs a common language-->The common language is English--> The modern world needs English. And Syllogism 3) The modern world speaks English--> Colombia wants to belong to the modern world--> Colombia has to speak English. Building on that unfolding argument, the authors of the "Estándares" present as one of the advantages of speaking English the following:

90) [El inglés] [e]s una herramienta que permite el acceso al conocimiento para estar al día con las ideas y con las investigaciones más recientes a nivel internacional. Saber inglés acerca al estudiante a diversas áreas de la ciencia y la cultura, al manejo de nuevas tecnologías y a la interacción social y cultural (“Estándares”, p. 9).

[English] is a tool that allows access to knowledge to keep up with the ideas and the latest research at the international level. Speaking English brings the student near to several areas of science and culture, management of new technologies and social and cultural interaction.

As seen in this excerpt, there is no mention of economic advantages attached to learning English. The justification for choosing English as the foreign language Colombians have to speak is related to a kind of enrichment bilingualism (Fishman, 1976a) whose purpose deals with cultural understanding, and in this particular case, access to knowledge, science, research, and technology. What seems as a legitimate and innocent incentive to promote the learning of a foreign language (English) is, in fact, a strategy to build on assumptions already constructed in other contexts. As seen in table 12 below, the decision to impose English in Colombia stems from mere economic interests led by the logic that if Colombia wants to have better economy, it needs to participate actively in the consumption of knowledge and that English is the currency that makes it possible.

The statements in example 90) are categorical: English is **the** language that gives access to knowledge. In a very ethnocentric fashion (discussed below), the only valued knowledge is the one produced (and spread) in English. The implication that all the great philosophers, scientists, writers, and scholars have to be read in English denies students

the possibility of approaching the great thinkers of humanity in their native languages. A vicious circle is being created: everything needs to be translated into English because that is the language people speak, and people learn English because everything is produced in English.

Along with the categorical high status of English, Spanish is undervalued because despite the fact that it is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, it is not enough for Colombians to access knowledge. This attitude is reflected in the unequal allocation of resources and efforts to promote the improvement of the teaching of the two languages; while English is the object of international agreements, investment in textbooks, tests, teacher preparation courses, national campaigns, and so on, Spanish does not receive the same attention (Cárdenas, 2003; Valencia-Giraldo, n/d), despite the high figures of illiteracy in the country. As a result, the access to knowledge is a farther possibility for a great number of Colombians.

On the other hand, the assumption that speaking English functions as a democratic instrument that makes knowledge, technology, science and culture available to anyone is not completely the truth, at least not for everyone. In India, during the colonization, English was imposed as the official language under the premise that it would open to Indians the world of British literature and the universities in Europe; the result was that for some it never became a reality because poverty and customs prevented them from profiting from this opportunity (Pennycook, 1998). In Colombia, the

economic, political, social, and cultural situations suffer profound inequalities that cannot be solved by demanding that everybody speaks English to have access to development. A project like “Colombia bilingüe en diez años” will contribute to increase the already unfair distribution of goods in our society.

Access to pluriculturalism

One of the strategies to validate discourses is citing other discourses (Fairclough, 2003) that already benefit from public recognition. Ideologies of whose discourse is valued, whose discourse is accepted as truth, whose discourse is official, or whose discourse is legitimate enter into play. Given the asymmetrical relationship between third world countries and first world countries, usually the Anglo-European Discourse has been constructed as being the appropriate, civilized, and correct one, so the actions of the third world follow the patterns of the ‘masters’ (Pennycook, 1994a; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005).

The Ministry of Education of Colombia is no exception and constantly emphasizes the relevance of the British Council in their PNB because they are the experts and Colombians are the novice (MEN, 2005a; MEN, 2005b; MEN, 2006).

Table 13: Relationship between knowledge and economic gain³⁰

Document	Statement
Ajuste al plan estratégico de la región de Bogotá y Cundinamarca. Mayo 2004	Promover la cultura exportadora: Región bilingüe: capacitación a docentes y empresarios; practicas exportadoras y tratados de libre comercio.
Agenda prospectiva de ciencia y tecnología de Bogotá y Cundinamarca. Abril 2005	<p>Objetivo General:</p> <p>Construir en consenso con los actores la ciudad-región, la visión prospectiva regional para desarrollar en el corto, mediano y largo plazo una capacidad endógena de ciencia y tecnología como base para una gestión competitiva en las organizaciones públicas y privadas, creando las condiciones de generación, difusión y utilización del conocimiento, que incrementen la productividad y mejoren la calidad de vida de sus habitantes.</p> <p>FHC:-8 Lineamientos de formulación de programas de formación de docentes dirigidos al desarrollo de competencias básicas en lengua materna y lengua extranjera.</p>
Convocatoria Estándares Abril 2005	<p>JUSTIFICACION DE LA PROPUESTA</p> <p>La Revolución Educativa</p> <p>La educación es un factor primordial, estratégico, prioritario, y condición esencial para el desarrollo social y económico de cualquier conglomerado humano. Asimismo, es un derecho universal, un deber del Estado y de la sociedad, y un instrumento esencial en la construcción de sociedades autónomas, justas y democráticas.</p> <p>La cobertura y la calidad de la educación son los factores más determinantes para asegurar la competitividad de un país. El desarrollo social y económico está directamente asociado al aumento de la productividad lo que motiva la necesidad de impulsar políticas que garanticen incrementos lineales y graduales en cobertura, equidad y calidad de los diferentes niveles de educación.</p>
Proyecto de Acuerdo Bogota bilingüe. 2006	<p>Por otro lado, la Administración Distrital, promueve el proyecto "Bogota y Cundinamarca Bilingües en Diez Años" Haciendo alusión de manera directa a este tema en el plan de desarrollo 2004-2008. "Bogota sin indiferencia. Un compromiso social contra la pobreza y la exclusión", así:</p> <p>Artículo 12. Objetivo del Eje Urbano Regional. Avanzar en la conformación de una ciudad de las personas y para las personas, con un entorno humano que promueva el ejercicio de los derechos colectivos, la equidad y la inclusión social. Una ciudad moderna, ambiental y socialmente sostenible, equilibrada en sus infraestructuras, integrada en el territorio, competitiva en su economía y participativa en su desarrollo.</p>

³⁰ See Appendix H for translation.

In the same way, the MEN claims that they adopted the standards set in the *Common European Framework of Reference for language* (CEF) because it is the result of a research conducted by linguists and pedagogues from forty-six countries of the European Union in a time frame of more than ten year (MEN, 2005b). This argument functions as a strategy to show that these standards are correct because they come from Europe, that is, from the ‘masters’, so there is no need for a critical examination of any sort.

Nevertheless there are crucial differences between the purposes and ideologies behind the CEF and the “Estándares” (Ayala & Álvarez, 2005; Sánchez Solarte & Obando Guerrero, 2008), one of them being the emphasis on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism vs. monolingualism and monoculturalism.

Plurilingual and pluricultural competences are defined in the CEF as: “the ability to use languages for the purpose of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168). In this view, all languages and cultures should be valued and promoted to enrich the lives of those sharing geographical spaces. In direct opposition with this ideology, the “Estándares” proclaim the importance of learning English, and along with that, they deny the value of other languages and cultures by excluding them from the project.

In the following excerpt, the authors of the “Estándares” mention some of the advantages of learning a foreign language, and given that for the PNB, English is the only language included, these advantages are ascribed to English:

91) [Aprender una lengua extranjera] Disminuye el etnocentrismo y permite a los individuos apreciar y respetar el valor de su propio mundo, lo mismo que desarrollar el respeto por otras culturas. El aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera fomenta el respeto y la valoración de la pluralidad y de las diferencias, tanto en el entorno inmediato, como en el globalizado” (“Estándares”, p. 8).

Learning a foreign language reduces ethnocentrism and enables individuals to appreciate and respect the value of their own world, as well as developing respect for other cultures. Learning a foreign language promotes respect and appreciation of diversity and differences, both in the immediate environment, as in the globalized one.

At a macro level, there is a mismatch between claiming that learning a foreign language (English) diminishes ethnocentrism and the claims of other Discourses (with capital D in Gee’s terms) of the PNB that adamantly promotes the teaching-learning of English. These Discourses are made up of the documents previously cited in Table 9 and Table 12, the proliferation of institutes devoted to the teaching of English in the country, the number of conferences, seminars, symposiums about teaching English, the TV and radio commercials that highlight the importance of speaking English, the amount of TV programs in English, and in general a growing circulation of Discourses, in different spaces, that stress the importance of speaking English.

Instead of diminishing Colombians' ethnocentrism (cultivated by a favor for a monolingual and monocultural society where Spanish as a language and as culture has been valued over indigenous languages and cultures), the redundancy of Discourses favoring English and the Anglo-American culture replaces it by another ethnocentrism, in which the view of the world produced by English speaking countries prevails over others. The symbolic capital of inner circle countries, accumulated for centuries of domination, grants them the resources to legitimize their constructions of the world (Bourdieu, 1989; 2003) and the symbolic power to present it to others as natural. Assuming a point of view as natural, accepting it as the way things should be prevent any type of contestation and assure the perpetuation of the status quo.

Schools have been identified as sites for reproduction and legitimization of Discourses (Bourdieu, 1977b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989; McLaren, 1994; 1995; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Foucault, 2005) through different types of practices, such as the organization of timetables, organization of content, daily routines. In the particular case of promoting the supremacy of English and Anglo-American culture as an absolute truth, the textbooks adopted by schools play a critical role because a significant number of them defines the features of different cultures from a superiority/inferiority stance; Anglo-European culture is unmarked, but every other culture is called "exotic," "picturesque," or "funny" (Guerrero, 2007).

At a micro level, there is a mismatch between the statement in example 91) above and the few descriptors in the “Estándares” which mention cultural awareness (Eight out of two hundred and eighteen):

92) Memorizo y sigo el ritmo de canciones populares de países angloparlantes (“Estándares”, Escucha, p. 20).

I memorize and follow the rhythm of popular songs from English speaking countries.

73) Identifico elementos culturales como nombres propios y lugares, en textos sencillos (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 20).

I identify cultural elements as proper names and places, in simple texts.

93) Leo y entiendo textos auténticos y sencillos sobre acontecimientos concretos asociados a tradiciones culturales que conozco (cumpleaños, navidad, etc).

I read and understand and simple authentic texts on specific events associated with cultural traditions that I know (birthday, Christmas, etc).

94) Identifico en textos sencillos, elementos culturales como costumbres y celebraciones (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 22).

I identify in simple texts, cultural elements such as customs and celebrations.

95) Identifico elementos culturales presentes en textos sencillos (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 24).

I identify cultural elements presented in simple texts.

96) Demuestro que reconozco elementos de la cultura extranjera y los relaciono con mi cultura (“Estándares”, Conversación, p. 25).

I show that I recognize elements of foreign cultures and relate them to my culture.

97) En un texto identifico los elementos que me permiten apreciar los valores de la cultura angloparlante (“Estándares”, Lectura, p. 26).

In a text, I identify the elements that allow me to appreciate the values of English-speaking culture.

98) Opino sobre los estilos de vida de la gente de otras culturas, apoyándome en textos escritos y orales previamente estudiados (“Estándares”, Monólogos, p. 27).

I give opinions about the lifestyles of people from other cultures, building on prior oral and written texts.

The verb that describes the goal in each one of these examples positions students as passive participants in the action because their role is limited to “identify,” “read,” “understand,” and “show” (only example 98 allows students an active participation by giving opinions). Students are not expected to enter into a dynamic relationship with these different texts to interrogate them as products and/or representations of a particular culture. For example, in excerpt 92) students are asked to “memorize and follow the rhythm” of a song; their relationship with the text is so superficial that they are not expected to establish any type of semantic connection with the songs, to understand the lyrics, to discuss them, to know the context in which songs are produced, or to problematize their content (Gainer, 2007).

In the same line of thought, the concept of culture is simplistically created either by oversimplifying cultural practices (celebrations, names) or by overgeneralizing them (anglophone culture vs. local culture). Both respond to and reproduce the stereotypical

imaginery constructed by diverse Discourses. In this way, the oversimplification of culture is actualized in what Nieto (2002) calls “heroes and holidays,” asking students to identify “customs and celebrations”--example 94) is not enough make them “less ethnocentric” because along with the identification there is no further engagement in what these customs and celebrations mean for them and for others. The same happens with the descriptors 73) and 93) where culture is associated with people’s names, names of places, and celebrations.

The overgeneralized concept of culture is apparent in the sense that Anglophone countries are constructed as one single culture; in this context where Anglo-American culture is unmarked, failing to explicitly mention other Anglophone countries (outer circle) shows that only the unmarked are valued as true representatives of Anglophone culture; furthermore, among the inner circle countries, there are deep cultural differences that are not addressed either.

Examples 96) and 97) serve to illustrate this point. The noun phrases “foreign culture” and “Anglophone culture” written in singular hint the idea of a monolithic concept of culture. As such, there are two big broad cultures: foreign (Anglo) and local. The multiple layers and complexities of cultural practices around the world are blurred and totalized into these two sets where indigenous cultures do not have a place. As a consequence, reducing the cultural experience of students to stereotypical or superficial

practices of only two imagined cultures does not diminish their ethnocentrism—as aimed by the “Estándares”—but replaces it with an “Anglo” one.

In addition to the reduced number of descriptors (eight out of two hundred and eighteen), the dominance of form over content contributes to the naturalization and reproduction of cultural stereotypes because these descriptors do not leave room to encourage students (there is no time either) to examine critically the content of texts (written or spoken), only to consume and take them for granted (De Mejía, 2006).

On the other hand, it is contradictory to talk about “*respeto y valoracion de la pluralidad y las diferencias*” (“respect and value pluralism and difference,” see example 90) in the framework of a project that has decided unilaterally (Sánchez Solarte & Obando Guerrero, 2008) to adopt and promote one single language: English, at the expense of other foreign languages, indigenous languages, and even Spanish (Cárdenas, 2003; Valencia-Giraldo, n/d). In this sense, the MEN is the first to violate its own claim because privileging one language over the others means no respect or value for pluralism and difference. Rather the opposite, the goal is to homogenize the whole population into a kind of assimilation to the Anglo-American culture.

The cultural enrichment or intercultural understanding that could be obtained through the contact with other languages (foreign or indigenous) is non-existent because the whole PNB is focused on English and Anglo-American culture. As a result of this narrow exposure, students are acquiring an ethnocentric perspective that values only the

culture of the inner circle countries, especially white America and white Britain (Kubota, 2002). In the same vein, ethnocentrism is evidenced in what counts as knowledge (Foucault, 2005); in the arrogance of the so called civilized world, only knowledge produced by them is considered valuable and worth of being learned. Therefore, indigenous knowledge does not count as something we could learn and profit from.

De Mejía (2006) provides the example of an English teacher in a bilingual school in Bogotá whose students are unable to relate to indigenous stories (one of the topics in her class) because they see them as something distant, belonging to the past, and do not see the value of their narrations; these students were unaware of the high mestizo population in Colombia. Their perceptions of our indigenous peoples and our own culture have been shaped, in part, by the textbooks used in Social Science classes. All textbooks are produced in Great Britain, and Colombia is portrayed mainly as a drug dealing country, by books full of pictures of massacres and drug mules. As a consequence, students prefer to assimilate to the foreign country rather than being associated with such negative images.

By and large, the discourse that highlights the diminishment of ethnocentrism as one of the advantages of learning a foreign language (English) does not find support in the descriptors of the standards, in the everyday practices within the school and the classroom, or in the broader social practices of the community. Ethnocentrism is accentuated, nurtured, and perpetuated with the complacency of the official institutions,

and the acquiescence of teachers and students who legitimately believe in the good intentions of the school system.

English Makes us (Colombians) “Smarter”

In addition to the construction of English as neutral and key to access, the third characteristic attached to this language is that its superpowers (Barletta, 2007) make Colombians smarter. In the “Estándares” under the heading “El aprendizaje de otra lengua y su relacion con el desarrollo personal” (pg. 8), there is a list of how and why learning a foreign language helps students in their social, cultural and cognitive development. As stated above, foreign language is by default equated to English so that all these advantages are associated to English. By the same token, indigenous languages are excluded, and with that, any possibility of promoting them as second languages in Colombia.

The advantages highlighted in the “Estándares” have to do with two fields: social and cognitive. In the next excerpt, number 99) learning a foreign language (English) has the power to help students improve their relationships:

99) Apoya a los estudiantes en la práctica de la interacción social y en la negociación de significados. Así mismo, mejora su capacidad para entablar relaciones con otras personas y para desenvolverse en situaciones nuevas (“Estándares”, p. 8).

It supports students in the practice of social interaction and negotiation of meanings. It improves their ability to build relationships with others and to perform in new situations.

English in this sentence acquires the characteristics of a human being, because it is the agent that performs the action. English makes it possible for students to interact and to negotiate meanings with others. The implication is that students do need English to be able to interact with others because their mother tongue (Spanish or any of the sixty-six indigenous languages spoken in Colombia) cannot fulfill that purpose. To support the argument, there is an additive clause that states that students can also establish relationships with new people and in new contexts. English then, works its magic by altering personality characteristics like insecurity, shyness, apathy, or being introverted. Once again, there is a lack of awareness that speaking English is not the only necessary condition to acknowledging oneself or being acknowledged by others as legitimate members of a speech community.

CHAPTER 6: TEACHERS

The two previous chapters dealt with an interpretation of what the MEN understood by bilingualism and English respectively within their PNB. The purpose of this chapter is to offer an interpretation of the images the authors of the “Estándares” have of Colombian English teachers. I consider that including this interpretation is important because it shows that the MEN’s monolithic approach to understanding education spreads across and along the whole system and that teachers are no exception.

Texts are dialogic in nature (Mills, 2004); the writer constructs his/her reader, and based on that idea, selects the language to be used in the text (Kress, 1989). This makes it possible to reconstruct information about the addressee even when he/she is not overtly present in the interaction or in the text. If we hear only one of the interlocutors in a conversation, the linguistic choices made by him/her allows us to construct an idea of who the other interlocutor(s) is/are: Age range: children, adolescents, adults; sex: men, women; type of relationship with the speaker: family, friend, stranger, lover; power relation: symmetric, asymmetric, and so on and so forth (Eggins, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1985).

Julio Cortázar, a very well known Argentinean writer used to say that he wrote for a male reader, meaning that his novels and stories were meant for readers with

characteristics associated with males: outgoing, adventurous, risk takers, tough, and so on. Umberto Eco said he liked to write in an obscure way so that only intelligent people could understand him. Although these two examples are discriminatory and play with collective images of what it is to be male or to be intelligent, they serve to illustrate that the audience is constructed in the mind of the producer of a text.

Halliday (1994, 2004) considers that three different meanings are present in a clause: message, exchange, and representation. The first one refers to the topic or thematic structure of the clause, what it is about. The second one, exchange, establishes who is voicing the message: “it is the element the speaker makes responsible for the validity of what he is saying” (Halliday, 1994, p. 34). And the third one, representation, is how human experience is constructed. To each one of these meanings, Halliday associates three functions respectively: Theme, subject, and actor.

It is the third function, that is, clause as representation, which will guide the analysis of this chapter (although the three meanings occur simultaneously). Halliday (1994) states that reality is made up of processes, and processes consist of three components—*the process itself, the participants in the process, and the circumstances associated with the process*—saying, “[t]hese components are semantic categories which explain in the most general way how phenomena of the real world are represented as linguistic structures” (p. 109). In this chapter, I concentrated in *the participants in the process* since my interest—as stated above—is to see how teachers, as participants in the

National Bilingualism Program (PNB), are represented or constructed in the “Estándares.”

The analysis of data shows three main images: the first one is that *teachers are invisible* because despite the fact that this book is addressed to them and they are the ones to carry out the actions to achieve the standards, they are scarcely mentioned in the handbook, their opinions little considered and their knowledge not valued. The second image is that of *teachers as clerks* in the sense that they are expected to just follow the orders of a remote authority without questioning, resisting, or contributing; and a third image constructs *teachers as technicians* who are there to make a marketable product.

Teachers are Invisible

González, Montoya, and Sierra (2002) in their seminal article on teacher education in Colombia state that although teacher educators might think they know what teachers need and want as professionals, their voices are very rarely taken into account when designing teacher education programs. The same is true when it comes to educational policies (Smith, 2004); teachers are not consulted about the feasibility, necessity, or content of a new policy, nor are their knowledge and expertise taken into account (Ayala & Álvarez, 2005; González, 2007; Sánchez & Obando, 2008).

One possible explanation for the exclusion of teachers' voices might have to do with whose knowledge is valued and whose is not, which at the same time might be related to three aspects:

1) The influence of positivism in the sense that something is sanctioned as “valid knowledge” if it responds to the characteristics of the scientific method, that is, if it is observable and measurable and if it comes from a recognized author (Foucault, 2005; Macdonell, 1986). Teaching is a humanistic activity that does not always fit in the scientific method; sometimes teachers make decisions based on their intuition because they are the ones who have a holistic picture of who the students are and what they need.

2) The value given only to institutionalized forms of capital. Bourdieu (1986) identifies three forms of cultural capital—embodied, objectified, and institutionalized—but it is the latter that gets more value in our society. It is necessary to have a certification of knowledge given by an institution (which at the same time is a double-edged sword because the knowledge sanctioned as such by an institution responds to what the mainstream or dominant groups regard as “valid knowledge”). As a consequence, teachers' knowledge is not certified (in a lot of cases) because a great deal of their knowledge is constructed in and from their classroom through experience.

3) The widespread concept in Colombia is that teachers are less intelligent or less capable than the rest of the professionals in Colombia (see table 13 below, where people give their opinions about English teachers in Ibagué, Colombia); two probable reasons

for this concept might be first that to enroll in any teaching program students are required to have the minimum score in the ICFES (State Exam) while for other programs the highest score is required. The second possible reason is that to obtain a bachelor degree in teaching, students had to attend college for four years while all other programs take five years (this was modified some years ago and now all programs take five years to complete).

Table 14: People write their opinions about the result of an English test taken by elementary school teachers. Taken from “El Tiempo”(April 08/08) newspaper³¹.

Pero claro. háganles una prueba de español!!! conozco profesores de primaria y bachillerato que cometen unos errores gramaticales y de ortografía, que da dolor que estén dizque enseñando!!! cómo será en otro idioma. hay que leerrrrrrrrrrrr mucho!

No me parece nada extraordinario, en un país en el que se enraza de docente en idiomas a cualquier niña que ha pasado sus vacaciones en miami. es más si se hicieran exámenes a todos los docentes en sus respectivas áreas de "conocimiento", el resultado sería el mismo.

Esto es terrible! pobres ninhos! la idea de empezar por profesores de san andres es descabellada, ellos no hablan inglés! hablan papiamento y lenguas similares... es absurdo. y para jammca36 que habla de la educacion del inglés en la india, tenga en cuenta la palabra "colonia britanica", adicionalmente, alguna vez a intentado entender a un indio hablando en inglés? es imposible! la solucion mas practica para esto es importar profesores de paises de habla inglesa, no necesariamente eu o uk, si por fuera quienes ensenhan espanhol son latinos, quienes ensenhan inglés aqui deberian ser angloparlantes, no es lo mas logico??

Pero de qué se extrañan si la mayoría de estos profesores ni siquiera habla un español decente? desde que la docencia se convirtió en la mejor forma de desvararse nos llevó el que sabemos...

³¹ See Appendix I for translation.

As a consequence of this poor conception of who teachers are and what they are able to do, in most educational planning, teachers are expected to just follow instructions and successfully achieve the goals set by others. The national Bilingualism Program is no exception, and school teachers' voices were not considered when designing it (Sanchez & Obando, 2008). Besides their invisibility during that process, school teachers have also been invisible in the "Estándares" regardless of the crucial role they will play as future implementers of the project.

In order to explain the invisibility of teachers in the "Estándares," I drew from Halliday's (1994) clause as representation and Fairclough's (2003) representations of social events. As stated above, for Halliday, a clause is made up of process, participants and circumstances; also, depending on its grammatical configuration, the semantic interpretation varies. In the same line of thought, Fairclough considers that social events include various elements like forms of activity, persons, social relations, objects, means, times and places, and language. This framework allows the researcher to identify not only what elements are included or excluded, but of those included, which ones get prominence and which ones do not. The following excerpt, which is the opening paragraph in the "Estándares," illustrates one of the instances in which teachers are made invisible in the handbook:

100) Ser bilingüe es esencial en el mundo globalizado. Por ello, el Ministerio de Educación Nacional, a través del Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo, impulsa políticas

educativas para favorecer, no solo el desarrollo de la lengua materna y de las diversas lenguas indígenas, sino también para fomentar el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras como es el caso del idioma inglés (“Estándares”, p. 5).

Being bilingual is essential in the globalized world. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, through the National Bilingualism Program, promotes educational policies to favor not only the development of the mother tongue and the various indigenous languages, but also to promote the learning of foreign languages as is the case of the English language.

The text mentions various forms of activities like “impulsa políticas educativas” (*thrust forward educational policies*), “favorece el desarrollo de la lengua maternal y de las lenguas indígenas” (*favor the development of the mother tongue and indigenous languages*), and “fomenta el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras” (*foment the learning of foreign languages*); there is also information about objects: the languages to be learned and developed. The means is also present in the “Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo”. In relation to the persons involved, only the MEN is included with a very prominent role, which is indexed by the grammar of the main sentence because it is in active voice. The selection of vocabulary enhances the role of the MEN since words like “impulsa”, “fortalice”, and “fomenta” have positive connotations.

Excluded from this particular paragraph are students and teachers. The former are mentioned in some other parts of the “Estándares” while the teachers are hardly ever mentioned in the document, which makes sense in their construction of teachers because as stated by Bourdieu (2003), “the minimum of communication ...is the precondition for economic production and even for symbolic domination” (p. 45). Making sure teachers

are the least mentioned in the document diminishes their opportunities to criticize, opine, question, and all and all, interact with the MEN.

In this excerpt and many others, there is no reference of the role they play in the whole project, which shows MEN's lack of understanding in this sense because teachers are directly responsible for the success or failure of any educational policy (Giroux, 1988; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). As this excerpt clearly shows, it is the MEN who is advocating for this plan. Who the beneficiaries will be--and more importantly--who the mediators between the project and its actual concretization in the classroom will be does not have any prominence in this paragraph.

By excluding teachers, the social relationship between them and the MEN is obscured in relation to teacher preparation programs. The actions included (mentioned above) do not signal how the government is promoting the development of the mother tongue and indigenous languages; the actions are taken for granted, as if they were actualized in every single context in the country and for every single teacher. Furthermore, the text suggests that Spanish, indigenous languages, and English receive all the same budget and investment, but the reality is that the majority of resources are being used for the spread of English. (De Mejía, 2006; Vélez-Rendón, 2003) (See Table 14 below).

The Table below shows that there is a lack of coherence between the discourse of the MEN and its actions. The document states their interest in promoting the development

of Spanish, indigenous languages and English, but their actions are concentrated in supporting only teachers' preparation in English, using the models developed by the British Council like the TKT; furthermore, teachers are tested with the Quick Placement Test designed by Oxford University Press (Cely, 2007; González, 2007).

Table 15: Presentation of the actions proposed by the MEN to improve English learning and teaching³².

Acciones	Instituciones
Diagnósticos Línea de base (regiones) (Quick Placement Test, Teaching Knowledge Test) Aplicación y elaboración informes	Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, Centro Colombo Americano (Medellín), Universidad del Norte, Universidad Nacional (Manizales), Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina, UPTC (Tunja), British Council
Colombian Benchmarking Test (8 th , 10 th , last year university students) Desarrollo y logística	University of Cambridge, ICFES, MEN
Evaluación de estudiantes de último año Lic. en Lenguas (First Certificate in English) Fases 1 y 2	2005 , 280 estudiantes de Nacional, Pedagógica, UPTC, Distrital, Javeriana, Salle, Nariño, Valle, Antioquia, Andes, Gran Colombia, Bolivariana 2006 : 400 estudiantes, 22 universidades

³² See Appendix J for translation.

Acciones	Instituciones
Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lengua Extranjera: Inglés <i>Formulación y validación</i>	Surcolombiana, Javeriana, Uninorte, EAFIT, Nacional (Bogotá y San Andrés), Distrital, Pedagógica, ASOCOPI, UPTC, ICES, British Council, Private and State Schools
Socialización de Estándares <i>Diseño e implementación Talleres</i>	Grupo de Investigación Universidad del Norte (Colciencias AAA), MEN, Aliados regionales
Esquema Nacional de Acreditación de Institutos de Lenguas <i>Formulación y validación</i>	Más de 100 centros de idiomas y programas de extensión de las universidades, MEN (coordinación British Council)

Table 14: Presentation of the actions proposed by the MEN to improve English learning and teaching, Continued.

Acciones	Instituciones
Programas de Inmersión en Lengua + Componente socio-cultural en San Andrés	Universidad Nacional Sede Caribe, Fundación Living in English y British Council
Talleres y seminarios regionales Énfasis en habilidad oral y uso de recursos	Expertos Comisión Fulbright
Esquema de Metodología para docentes en servicio Piloto y estudio de investigación (ICELT – TKT)	Industrial de Santander, Sabana, Uninorte, Tecnológica de Pereira, Atlántico, Corunversitaria, Javeriana, Valle, Autónoma de Bucaramanga, Amazonia

The following excerpt is another example of a text where teachers could have been included, but instead they are invisible again; only the MEN and students are present as participants:

101)...el Ministerio de Educación Nacional ha establecido como uno de los ejes de la política educativa mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza del inglés, permitiendo mejores niveles de desempeño en este idioma. Así pues, se pretende que los estudiantes al egresar del sistema escolar, logren un nivel de competencia en inglés B1 (“Estándares”, pp. 5).

...the Ministry of Education has established as one of the main lines of educational policy to improve the quality of the teaching of English, enabling higher levels of performance in this language. Thus, it is intended that students graduating from the school system, achieve a level B1 of competence in English.

The prominent role is played by the MEN again as the agent or official institution responsible for all educational projects and policies; the sentence in the active voice signals the MEN as the doer of positive actions (in the same manner as the previous excerpt) like improving the teaching of English. In the excerpt, the authors state the *what* (improves the quality of teaching of English) and the *what for* (for students to attain a B1 level). But they do not mention how this goal can be achieved, or whose responsibility it will be to make it possible, that is, teachers. The authors of the “Estándares” ignore the function teachers fulfill in the teaching-learning process and assume that just by decree, students will attain level B1 (so teachers are not necessary).

The agency of the MEN is apparent throughout the whole “Estándares” in the sense that they present themselves as the ones who possess knowledge and as a consequence of that, they can make decisions, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

102) Por ello, el Ministerio de Educación escogió el “Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para Lenguas: Aprendizaje, Enseñanza y Evaluación”, un documento desarrollado por el Consejo de Europa, en el cual se describe la escala de niveles de desempeño paulatinos que va logrando el aprendiz de una lengua (“Estándares”, pp. 6).

Therefore, the Ministry of Education has chosen the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment," a document developed by the Council of Europe, which describes the scale of performance levels that the learner of a language will achieve.

In this paragraph, the only participant included is the MEN; they are presented as carrying out a very relevant task, which is “choosing” one framework to set the standards of English in Colombia. The simple tense and active voice of the sentence show the categorical nature of the action; an imaginary sentence could say: “The MEN along with school teachers/scholars/academics/etc. after studying different frameworks decided to adopt the European one”, where all participants have more or less the same prominence in the action. By assuming the whole agency in the decision making, the MEN not only does not acknowledge the voice and opinions of Colombian school teachers / scholars / academics /experts but also by opposition gives a high value to the knowledge produced in Europe.

Table 15 serves as an illustration of the disparity of the value given to local knowledge (the one produced by Colombian school and university teachers) and foreign knowledge (European). The first letter was sent by the MEN to invite various university teachers to participate in the project to **formulate** and **validate** the standards. While in the letter the MEN praises the achievements of local knowledge and acknowledges the important role it can fulfill in the project, later on they decided to choose the Common European framework in a clear disregard for the work of Colombian academics. In fact, in 1990 a group of Colombian scholars participated in the COFE (Colombian Framework for English) project (Rubiano et al, 2000), and later, in 1999 another group of academics wrote the “Lineamientos curriculares para idiomas extranjeros” (*Curricular guidelines for foreign languages*). Although both projects were sponsored by the MEN, none was considered to be adopted for their PNB. The second excerpt is a paragraph of a letter that was signed by more than thirty Colombian academics sent to the MEN to ask why they had adopted the First certificate to evaluate proficiency while there was a group of Colombian scholars working on the development of a local test.

Table 16: Invitation letter to participate in a committee to formulate and validate the standards and response from the committee after the decision of the Ministry to choose the CEFRL³³.

La experiencia nacional en la definición de estándares, evaluación de competencias y formulación de planes de mejoramiento ha mostrado su potencial movilizador de las áreas del conocimiento en las instituciones educativas y ha generado dinámicas de desarrollo en lo pedagógico, metodológico y administrativo en estas áreas. Por ello el Ministerio de Educación considera pertinente adelantar acciones tendientes a la definición de estándares básicos para el área de inglés, de tal forma que se aproveche el desarrollo de los años de experiencia en el área y se promueva su adecuada implementación en la totalidad de instituciones educativas del país.

Congruente con lo anterior, la Dirección de Calidad de la Educación Preescolar, Básica, y Media del Ministerio de Educación Nacional conocedora de su trabajo y experiencia en la enseñanza del inglés se permite invitarle como representante de su institución a participar en el comité ejecutivo encargado de “Formular los estándares nacionales de inglés para la educación básica y media y su posterior validación”.

Desde el Ministerio de Educación Nacional y el ICFES se planteó que el trabajo realizado por el equipo colombiano serviría de base para la toma de decisiones en el campo de políticas de evaluación para el sistema educativo colombiano de educación media y superior. No se conocen resultados de evaluaciones realizadas al trabajo hecho por la Colegiatura. Sin embargo, se ha decidido que el Consejo Británico lidere el diseño de la prueba alineándola con el Marco Europeo. La Colegiatura de Idiomas-Área de Inglés demostró la capacidad para hacer este trabajo, articulando marcos nacionales e internacionales, e involucró a través de diversas estrategias a docentes de distintos niveles educativos y regiones del país. Por otra parte, nos preocupa la presión por parte del proyecto-programa Colombia Bilingüe para que adopten las pruebas de la Universidad de Cambridge. Prueba de ello son las aplicaciones que se han hecho para los sectores de educación básica, media, superior y del profesorado de inglés.

The practice of devaluing local knowledge is common in Colombia, and a possible interpretation has to do with our condition as a former colony of Spain. After the independence, Latin American leaders were strongly influenced by the Enlightenment

³³ See Appendix K for translation.

which ranked societies from barbaric to civilized (Hall, 1997 cited in Ruiseco & Slunecko, 2006) so that the new republics should imitate European culture if they wanted to become civilized. During the 1920s, a nationalist movement emerged in Latin America that addressed the fact that although Latin American countries had achieved their independence, it was only political because culturally and ideologically we continued to behave as the colonized (Gamia, 1916; Vasconcelos, 1961). The colonial ideology in which Europe was constructed as the paradigm of what the world should be like (Pennycook, 1998a; Ruiseco & Slunecko, 2006) was so pervasive that even today in some fields like in education, we adopt their models guided by the idea that they know better (Ayala & Álvarez, 2005).

In the same line of thought continuing with an asymmetrical assessment of whose knowledge is accepted and whose is not, in the following excerpt, the MEN exerts what could be called “an intellectual power” over teachers by imposing their view of some key concepts:

103) Con el propósito de brindar un contexto amplio a la lectura de los estándares, conviene hacer algunas precisiones acerca de lo que el Ministerio de Educación entiende por conceptos como bilingüismo, lengua extranjera y segunda lengua (“Estándares”, p. 5).

With the aim of providing a broad context to the reading of the standards, it is necessary to make some clarifications about what the Ministry of Education meant by concepts such as bilingualism, foreign language and second language.

By saying “lo que el Ministerio de Educación entiende por...” (what the Ministry of Education understands as...) and relying on assumptions of legitimacy of knowledge, the MEN is indicating, in a subtle way, that these very same concepts have to be adopted by teachers. After this paragraph, the authors introduce dictionary-like definitions of these three concepts. Taking advantage of the pre-established hierarchical relationship between the MEN and the teachers, the former determines what definitions their subordinates need to master. The invisibility of teachers is apparent at two levels: 1) In the first sentence there is no indirect object, and as a consequence there is no explicit reference of who is going to read the standards; 2) Only the “understanding” of the MEN is included in the text, they do not even cite any references to confront the validity of their concepts.

Given that the MEN adopts the European framework, it is clear that there is a hierarchical relationship between the MEN, Colombian teachers and the European Council. Taken the dyad MEN-Teachers, the former presents itself as the knowledgeable authority that discerns what is best while the latter are constructed as so novice and insignificant that they are not included in the text. In the relationship between the MEN and the European Council, on the other hand, the relation is the opposite, because the MEN positions itself in a lower intellectual hierarchy in relation to the European council, acknowledging that in Europe people know better. The adoption, not only of the CEF but also the teaching methodologies, the teaching training programs, the materials and the

test perpetuates the inequity between local knowledge and the knowledge of the former colonial powers (González, 2007).

Table 16 below shows an excerpt of the letter sent by the MEN at the beginning of the process of the PNB in which they state why they signed an agreement with the BC. As stated by González (2007) “[t]he imposed leading role of the British Council, or of any other academic foreign institution that might have been chosen to guide the policy of bilingual Colombia, holds back the development of a local community with enough validity to construct a language policy” (p. 313)

The invisibility of teachers is apparent not only in the design of the standards, but also in their implementation. As the following excerpts show, the role of teachers as educators is taken over by the English language itself. These two excerpts are included in a list of eight points under the title “El aprendizaje de otra lengua y su relación con el desarrollo personal” (*Learning a foreign language and its relationship with personal development*):

90) [Aprender una lengua extranjera] Disminuye el etnocentrismo y permite a los individuos apreciar y respetar el valor de su propio mundo, lo mismo que desarrollar el respeto por otras culturas. El aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera fomenta el respeto y la valoración de la pluralidad y de las diferencias, tanto en el entorno inmediato, como en el globalizado” (“Estándares”, p. 8).

[Learning a foreign language] reduces ethnocentrism and enables individuals to appreciate and respect the value of their own world, as well as developing respect for other cultures. Learning a foreign language promotes respect and appreciation of diversity and differences, both in the immediate environment, as in the globalized one.

104) Apoya a los estudiantes en la práctica de la interacción social y en la negociación de significados. Así mismo mejora su capacidad para entablar relaciones con otras personas y para desenvolverse en situaciones nuevas (“Estándares”, p. 8).

With the aim of providing a broad context to the reading of the standards, it is necessary to make some clarifications about what the Ministry of Education meant by concepts such as bilingualism, foreign language and second language.

These two excerpts are examples of metonymy in which English is ascribed the characteristics of a human being, particularly of what teachers are supposed to do. Teachers are not included in these excerpts, so they do not have any prominence in the goals to be achieved. The prominence is given to an inanimate entity, the English language; by itself, it decreases ethnocentrism, promotes respect for other cultures, improves students’ ability to start a conversation, and so forth. The role of teachers as educators is completely devalued and ignored.

Table 17: Letter of invitation sent by the MEN to Colombian academics, Bogota April 6ht 2005³⁴

Para este proceso el Ministerio de Educación ha decidido celebrar un Convenio Especial de Cooperación con el Consejo Británico, previa las siguientes consideraciones: 1. En el año de 1979 se firmó un Convenio Cultural -que sigue vigente- entre el Gobierno del Reino Unido de la Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte y el Gobierno de la República de Colombia, el primero estará representado por la Misión Diplomática en Bogotá y por el British Council (Consejo Británico), entidad oficial encargada de llevar a cabo sus relaciones culturales y educativas. 2. En el marco del Convenio, tanto EL MINISTERIO como el Consejo Británico han manifestado sus deseos de emprender acciones conjuntas a favor de la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés en la educación oficial del País, especialmente en el fortalecimiento de estrategias de mejoramiento en el manejo del idioma inglés de los alumnos, docentes y población en general. 3. Se hace necesario implementar un programa Nacional que formule estándares de competencia para el área de inglés, que desarrolle evaluaciones de competencia en inglés en alumnos de primaria y secundaria y que adelante programas de formación para maestros encaminados a: 3.1. Mejorar los resultados en cuanto al dominio del idioma en alumnos y docentes con referencia a los estándares que se formulen.... En esta línea, el convenio con el Consejo Británico busca fortalecer el dominio del idioma inglés como segunda lengua de los docentes y alumnos, a partir del diseño de estándares, evaluación sistemática del inglés en alumnos de primaria y secundaria y de programas de formación que se desarrollarán con referencia a los estándares definidos y a los resultados que arrojen la evaluaciones aplicadas.

³⁴ See Appendix E for translation.

The invisibility of teachers is also evident in this excerpt:

105) Invitamos a adoptar esta nomenclatura, para asegurar un lenguaje común que facilite el trabajo en equipo hacia el logro de las mismas metas (“Estándares”, p. 6).

We invite to adopt this terminology, to ensure a common language that facilitates team work towards the same goals

There is an invitation to adopt a specific nomenclature written in the first person plural, so it is assumed that the invitation is made by the MEN; what is not explicit is who the invitees are. The prominence in this text is on the forms of activity: *asegurar* (guarantee), *facilitar* (facilitate), *lograr* (achieve)—again, verbs with positive connotations. According to this message, it is more important to agree on the nomenclature (superficial aspect) to guarantee the success of this project, than to work with teachers who are directly responsible for the success or failure of this project.

In the same line of thought, in the only paragraph where teachers are mentioned in the introductory chapter, their prominence is belittled while the relevant point is to mention adoption of the nomenclature established by the Common European Framework:

106) Si bien se adopto la escala de niveles con la terminología que emplea el Marco Común Europeo, consideramos importante relacionarlos con los nombres que tradicionalmente utilizan los docentes para denominar los diversos niveles de desempeño. Invitamos a adoptar esta nomenclatura para asegurar un lenguaje común que facilite el trabajo en equipo hacia el logro de las mismas metas” (“Estándares”, p. 6).

While adopting the scale of levels with the terminology used by the Common European Framework, we consider it important to relate the names traditionally used by teachers to

describe the various levels of performance. We invite the adoption of this nomenclature for a common language that facilitates team work towards the same goals.

Although the MEN acknowledges that Colombian teachers have long used a particular terminology, they decide that the one used in the Common European Framework is better and that everybody has to adopt it. The colonial ideology emerges again to choose the European product over the local one.

In the following excerpt, once again the MEN takes all the prominence of the actions taken:

107) Para organizar los estándares de inglés en una secuencia que facilite el trabajo paulatino durante los diversos grados de la Educación Básica y Media, partimos de los diversos niveles de desempeño que deben lograrse a lo largo del proceso de aprendizaje y establecimos las competencias requeridas (“Estándares”, p. 10).

To organize the standards of English in a sequence that facilitates the work during the various grades of primary and secondary education, we started from different levels of performance to be achieved through the learning process and set the appropriate skills.

In this paragraph, neither teachers nor students are included, only the MEN is. Once again, it presents itself as the knowledgeable body: they have the expertise to determine the sequence needed between elementary school and high school, and they establish what students have to learn in order to accomplish the objectives set by the MEN in its PNB. Teachers, who know their students better than anyone else, do not get a

voice to express their opinions, concerns, and solutions. Despite the fact that teachers are excluded, the relationship between them and the MEN is apparent, particularly in the use of the last verb “*establecimos*” (we established). The categorical statement like this signals a vertical and asymmetrical power relationship where teachers are positioned as followers whose role is to obey the rules without questioning them.

Using words in this way paves the road towards the naturalization of discourse (Fairclough, 1995) and with it the road to symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2003). In this case, an institution like the Ministry of Education, given its very nature (official institution), is entitled to exert power explicitly on the education community by means of decrees, laws, agreements, and other regulatory means; but nevertheless, it reinforces its actions by the use of symbolic power through the use of discourse, because as stated by Bourdieu (2003), symbolic power leads people to behave according to the interest of the dominant groups without using violence. Through their discourse, in which they circulate the message that this is how things should be, the MEN wants to block any type of resistance from teachers; their goal is to create a hegemonic situation in which teachers accept and are part of their own silencing.

Teachers as Clerks

In the few instances in which teachers are included in the “Estándares,” they are constructed as “clerks.” I borrowed this denomination from Giroux (1988) meaning that teachers are viewed as employees who follow diligently the directions of a distant authority. In this handbook, teachers are portrayed as passive followers whose willingness to cooperate is taken for granted.

The perception of teachers as clerks has been constructed through time and has been strongly influenced by the ideology that guides teacher development programs. Within the terminology of teacher education, there are two prevailing concepts which are “pre-service teacher education” to refer to the preparation of students who want become teachers; and “in-service teacher education” to refer to the courses taken by teachers to update their knowledge, to learn new techniques, strategies, and the like. González (2003) explains the existence of the second type according to the common belief (by teachers and non teachers alike) that pre-service teaching preparation is insufficient and more preparation is needed in order to become a good teacher. Part of the reason for this belief could be that teacher preparation has been influenced heavily by behavioral and cognitive psychology and that educational theory has been constructed around a discourse and a set of practices that emphasize immediate measurable methodological aspects of learning

(Giroux, 1988), and when teachers face the reality and do not comply with these ideals they need they need more “training.”

According to Woodward (1990), teacher education programs could drop into two main attitudes: “teacher training” and “teacher development,” which she defines as being fundamentally opposed to each other as illustrated in table 17 below. There are profound ideological differences between these two attitudes in relation to how teachers and teaching are perceived in each one. Although both models focus on the instructional part of teaching, in the former, teachers are seen as mere “deliverers” who need to learn certain skills and recipes to be “efficient.” In the latter, teachers are viewed as professionals who are in charge of their own actions and capable of making their own decisions (González, 2003; Richards, 1996; Woodward, 1990).

Table 18: Bi-polar attitudes to teacher education

Teacher training	Teacher development
Compulsory	Voluntary
Competence based	Holistic
Short term	Long term
One-off	Ongoing
Temporary	Continual
External agenda	Internal agenda
Skill/technique and knowledge based	Awareness based, angled towards personal growth and the development of attitudes/insights
Top-down	Bottom-up

Product/certificate weighted	Process weighted
Done with experts	Done with peers.

(Taken from Woodward, 1990, p. 147)

González (2008) states that in Colombia, ELT education follows two tendencies which she categorizes as top-down and bottom-up but which are strongly related to Woodward's taxonomy. The former tendency includes the courses proposed by the British council like the ICALT and the TKT while the latter tendency includes regional conferences, publisher's sessions, university-schools collaboration, and university-based programs. Considering that for this particular project the MEN has designated the British Council as the coordinating organism for the whole project, it is a natural consequence that the BC models of teacher education, which fall into the characteristics of teacher training, prevail at this moment in Colombia. As a result of this, teachers in the "Estándares" are constructed as "trainees," that is, people in need of learning from the experts and not as professionals capable of making sound contributions to the PNB. Consequently, given that they receive a limited training useful to perform only certain tasks, they are positioned at the same level as clerks. Table 18 below shows the aims of the latest teacher development program proposed by the MEN in which it is clear that the goals are to train teachers from a mere instructional point of view with no interest in promoting teachers' reflection or their exploration of critical issues in teaching. In a course like this one, teachers are equipped with all the necessary recipes to perform their

task efficiently with the underlying belief that in that way, they will be good English teachers.

These teacher training models are not innocent because, as stated by Pennycook (1994a), teaching practices are cultural practices linked to the promotion of certain forms of culture and knowledge. As a consequence, a discourse that emphasizes “skills, strategies, trainees, systematic, accuracy, techniques” and the like (as seen in table 18 below) is bound to be spread in the same way. This type of course does not encourage or promote the problematization of linguistic practices and the power relationships that exist within them (Bourdieu, 2003; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000), and therefore the possibility of agency to transform unequal social practices enacted through language is denied from the beginning.

The following excerpt is another example of the construction of teachers as clerks. Here the MEN positions itself as the authority that determines what teachers have to do to fulfill the tasks assigned:

108) La tarea de todas las instituciones educativas es velar por que sus planes de estudio y las estrategias que se empleen contemplen, como mínimo, el logro de estos estándares en dichos grupos de grados y ojala los superen, conforme a las particularidades de sus proyectos educativos institucionales y a sus orientaciones pedagógicas (“Estándares”, p. 11).

The task of all educational institutions is to ensure that their curricula and strategies used include, at the very least, the achievement of these standards in those groups, and hopefully to be exceeded, being in conformity to the particularities of their institutions and their teaching guidelines.

Table 19: “Teacher Development Programme” Course Guide, British Council.

<p>COURSE AIMS</p> <p>MEN Teacher Development Programme (Stage 2) is designed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop trainees' knowledge of concepts related to language, language use and the background to and practice of language teaching and learning. 2. Raise awareness of strategies to better develop learners' language skills. 3. Raise awareness of strategies to better help learners develop accuracy and fluency.
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As presented in the previous chapters, these standards do not respond to the realities of Colombian contexts at many levels. Nevertheless the MEN demands from schools the commitment to “watch over” (*velar*) their study plans and the strategies used so the standards are achieved. They clarify, though, that schools should take into account their “Proyectos educativos institucionales” (PEI)³⁵ and their own pedagogical orientation when working towards the achievement of the standards. The two clauses that give structure to this paragraph are contradictory because the first one is stating a command that schools (so teachers) need to obey and which is based on the standards previously adopted by the MEN. Regardless of schools PEI, they must *at least* (“como

³⁵ The PEI was created by the MEN as a way to actualize the autonomy of Colombian schools particularly in relation to establish educational goals that responded to the situated needs of each school community (Decreto 1860 de 1994).

mínimo”) achieve those particular standards. This means that the autonomy schools have in the PEI exists only in paper and not in reality.

Another way in which teachers are constructed as clerks but which cannot be identified in independent instances or paragraphs have to do with the tenor (Halliday, 1985) of the whole document. As stated above, this handbook is addressed to teachers because they are the people who teach English in the classrooms, but they are hardly mentioned in the “Estándares.” Nevertheless the tenor in which the whole document is written hints at the image that the MEN has of Colombian teachers.

The concept of “tenor” developed by Halliday (1985) in relation to the “context of situation” and along with other two concepts: field and mode, as defined by the personal relationships involved. In this particular case, the tenor of the whole text allows the researcher to interpret the type of relationship that exists between the author (MEN) and the addressees (school teachers).

From the linguistic choices made by the authors, the topics and the structures in which the text is written, the asymmetrical positioning between the MEN is apparent, where the latter are poorly valued and are not recognized as legitimate contributors in the design and implementation of an educational project. The language used by the authors of the document is, in a way, patronizing and condescending.

The text that more evidently resembles the construction of teachers as clerks is the first part of chapter 5 of the “Estándares” where the authors explain the structure of the standards. It comprises a set of instructions teachers have to follow; the style in which they are written do not leave room for autonomy, creativity or questioning from the teachers as can be seen in the following excerpt which is the first paragraph of chapter 5:

109) En las paginas siguientes se encuentran los cuadros de estándares para la educación básica y Media. Estos están organizados en cinco grupos de grados que corresponden, además, al desarrollo progresivo de los niveles de desempeño en inglés (“Estándares”, p. 14).

On the following pages are tables of standards for basic and secondary education. These are organized in five groups of grades that match the progressive development of standards of performance in English.

The tenor of this text shows an unequal power relationship between the writer and the audience. Following a Hallidayan analysis, it could be said that the participants in the text are the MEN (as the writer) and teachers (as audience). The MEN by means of two indirect statements (where the descriptors of the standards are and how they are organized) performs an illocutionary act (Austin, 1962/2004) and relies on teachers’ tacit agreement or cooperation principle (Grice, 1975/2004) in doing the task, and also on the asymmetrical power relationship that exists between them given by their roles in society. By announcing that the standards are to be found in the following pages the MEN is

saying more than that; they are stating that the MEN has established certain standards and teachers have to implement them.

The same happens in the following excerpt where teachers are exhorted to “observe” and therefore to accept how the standards have been structured. The fact that the sentence is agentless is meaningful because it blurs the doer of the action; it was done by a more knowledgeable entity so there is no need to contest the decision:

110) Antes de iniciar la lectura de los estándares de los diversos grados, conviene examinar la manera como estos han sido estructurados, para observar su coherencia horizontal y vertical (“Estándares”, p. 14).

Before starting the reading of the standards of the various degrees, it is important to consider how these have been structured to observe their horizontal and vertical consistency.

Although teachers are participants in this text, they are not explicitly mentioned, which denies them, as audience, any prominence. Instead, the relevance is given to the descriptors for the standards. Once again the role of the teachers is relegated to fulfill a clerical job; they are not valued as intellectuals, and their autonomy is not considered. They are conceived of as instruments in the spread of a policy (and with it, of particular Anglo-American ideologies), and servants of a corporate system (the school system) (Canagarajah, 1999; Cárdenas, 2006a; Pennycook, 1990; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).

The conclusion is that “the experts do the thinking and teachers are reduced to do the implementing” (Giroux, 1985, p. 124).

Throughout the document it is apparent that the English language is constructed as “neutral” (as explored in the previous chapter), a concept influenced by the structuralist idea that grammar is value-free and language is a set of structures that do not relate in any way to real life or to social practices (Canagarajah, 2005). The same “neutral” ideology permeates who English teachers are; problematizing existing social inequity practices or helping students to become better human beings is not the task of the English teachers but teachers of other subjects. English teachers are required only to “deliver” the language to their students and make sure they learn the structures, as implied in the following excerpts:

111) En la parte superior, junto al grupo de grados, hay un estándar general. Este ofrece una descripción amplia de lo que las niñas, los niños o los jóvenes colombianos deben saber y saber hacer al finalizar su paso por ese grupo de grados. La función del estándar general es definir el nivel de desempeño del idioma (“Estándares” p. 14).

At the top, with the group of grades, there is a general standard. This provides a broad description of what the girls, boys or young Colombians should know and know-how at the end of their tenure in this group of grades. The role of the general standard is to define the performance level of the language.

According to Apple (2006), the neoconservative ideology of devaluing teachers sees them as “suspicious,” of not doing their job, and because of that they are under a

“regulatory autonomy” that establishes whose knowledge should be taught. As a result of this conception, teachers’ work is more standardized, rationalized, and “policed” (p. 42), all these aiming at the “deskilling” of teachers, the “intensification” of their work, and the loss of autonomy and respect” (pg. 43).

In constructing teachers as clerks, their intellectual capacity is also devalued. One way this underestimation takes form in the “Estándares” is in how the MEN introduces various theoretical issues as facts. Fields like bilingualism, second language acquisition, and linguistics are under constant debate, and it is clear that there is no general consensus on a great deal of topics. Despite this, the MEN has adopted the perspective of the mainstream and introduces theoretical concepts of the aforementioned fields as absolute truths; some examples are the definitions of bilingualism, communicative competence, foreign language, second language, acquisition, learning, and so on and so forth. In the following excerpt, the MEN states that children learn second languages effortlessly:

112) Debido a que los niños son espontáneos y no tienen inhibiciones ni temor a equivocarse, prestan mayor atención al significado que a la forma del lenguaje y eso les permite “arriesgarse” a utilizar la nueva lengua, así no dominan todos sus elementos formales (“Estándares”, p. 30).

Because children are spontaneous and have no inhibitions or fear of making mistakes, they pay greater attention to the significance of language and form that allows them to "take risks" to use the new language, even if they do not dominate all its formal elements.

While it is true that children have only a peripheral attention to form so they focus on meaning, it is not necessarily a reason for them to be risk takers in the L2.

Generalizing that all children are spontaneous and do not have inhibitions is far from truth particularly for pre-pubescent children (Brown, 1994). The MEN brings these ideas, originated mainly in contexts where the L2 is the language of the majority, and presents them to teachers as facts. Teachers' knowledge and intuition about who their students are and what they need are displaced by the knowledge of the experts.

Another way in which teachers' intellect is belittled is by instructing them to take into account theoretical aspects that teachers do know because that is exactly what they learn in pre-service teaching programs and develop further in in-service teaching programs. The following excerpt is an example to illustrate this point:

113) Por todas estas razones resulta importante que, al definir los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés para la Educación Básica Primaria, los docentes tengan en cuenta las características de los niños y las niñas. Su necesidad de moverse, sus breves periodos de atención y concentración y su motivación para aprender a través de experiencias significativas se constituyen en retos para hacer de la enseñanza del inglés un trabajo creativo y enriquecedor ("Estándares", p. 30).

For all these reasons, it is important that in defining the processes of teaching and learning of English for basic primary education, teachers take into account the characteristics of boys and girls. Their need to move, their short periods of attention and concentration and their motivation to learn through meaningful experiences constitute challenges to make the teaching of English a creative and enriching work

Elementary school teachers are well aware of children's cognitive stages since it is one of the first topics they learn in any teacher education program in Colombia. The emphasis on this shows that two implications might be made of what the MEN thinks of teachers: a) that teachers do not know how to teach children, or b) they know but they do not do it. Either way teachers' capacity or agency is questioned. The MEN assumes that they need to explicitly tell teachers what to do or otherwise they will not carry out their task properly.

Seeing teachers as clerks has to do also with how the MEN perceive their use of time and resources:

88) Esta intensidad horaria permite alcanzar los estándares y, por ello, es crucial aprovechar al máximo el tiempo de clase proponiendo actividades pedagógicas adecuadas y valiéndose de múltiples recursos que respondan a las necesidades de los estudiantes y a los objetivos propuestos por los docentes.

The time allotted is enough to reach the standards, and therefore it is crucial to maximize class time by proposing appropriate educational activities and using multiple resources that meet students' needs and the objectives proposed by the teachers. Likewise, we recommend exploring all the possibilities offered by the world today, using media, music and internet, among others that are close to the younger population.

Language choices like *it is crucial to take the maximum advantage of time* (“es crucial aprovechar al máximo el tiempo”), *proposing adequate pedagogical activities* (“proponiendo actividades pedagógicas adecuadas”), and *using multiple resources* (valiéndose de múltiples recursos) suggests that Colombian teachers are not doing their

job at their best, so they need to be told to do so. Apple (2006) explains this kind of belief as the influence of the focus in neoliberalism on the vision of a “weak state,” which implies that what is public is necessarily bad and what is private is necessarily “good.”

Furthermore, the social (and in this case institutional) relationship between the Ministry and school teachers is obscured once again because the MEN has the agency to demand efficient use of time and resources but does not assume any responsibility in facilitating teachers’ job; they assume that teachers do not need support of any kind to adequately perform their task. But as González (2002) shows, this is far from the truth, in fact she identifies three critical areas in which teachers claim more support from the Ministry of Education: 1) as workers (with better salaries, less work load, stable jobs, prevention of school violence, autonomy, and support from school administrators); 2) as instructors (smaller classes because the average is 45-50 students per classroom; audiovisual aids, more English classes a week, cross curricular integration, and teaching techniques); and 3) as learners (improve language proficiency, networking, support to attend graduate school, and a humanistic approach to TEFL). These findings show the discrepancy between the goals of the MEN and the real context in which their PNB is to be implemented.

For this reason, the adoption of a marketing discourse intends to produce the efficiency of cost-benefit in public schools. As such, schools whose teachers are seen as employees of an economic industry are at the service of productivity; a teachers’ task is

to “equip” students (who are seen as human capital³⁶) with the skills to compete efficiently and competitively outside the school (Apple, 2006). Thinking of teachers as “makers” of marketable products gives rise to the next category: teachers as technicians/marketers.

Teachers as Technicians/Marketers

Within his identification of postmodern culture, Fairclough (1995) includes its characterization as “promotional” or “consumer” culture. He defines it as the “reconstruction of social life on a market basis” (p. 138) where language serves the purpose of “selling” services, products, ideas, people, and so on. Education has fallen into this category and schools have started to operate as businesses where students’ are the products, teachers the employees whose task is to make a good product, and the corporations are the customers. To keep the customers happy is the ultimate goal of any business; in the school setting, teachers need to make sure the product (students) fulfills the needs of their customers.

³⁶ For Bourdieu (1986) human capital has a mere economic meaning that explains the direct relationship between investment (monetary) and school achievement, so he distances his concept of cultural capital from human capital in the sense that although the monetary investment still exists, it is not the only type of investment.

The MEN and the BC have painted the picture quite differently; although they keep the argument of the economic benefit, the difference lies in who will receive the returns from investing in the right sort of linguistic capital (English) (See table 19 below as an example of the relevance of the economic factor to favor the implementation of the PNB). As shown in the preceding chapter, the overt argument is that students will have economic benefits in the form of social mobility, better jobs, access to scholarships, and access to knowledge, science, technology and entertainment. But what will most likely happen, particularly with the international economic crisis, is that as projected by Apple (2006) for the United States context and which will not be less true for the Colombian context, most new jobs will be found in the service sector where high levels of education are not needed and will be characterized by being low-paid, part time, or temporary.

Table 20: El Tiempo newspaper November 2/06³⁷

Susana González, concejal de Cambio Radical, dijo que con el Acuerdo se busca ampliar el mercado laboral de los bachilleres de colegios oficiales porque cuando hay una convocatoria para un cargo donde se requiere que la persona sea bilingüe, los primeros que son descartados son los alumnos del Distrito.

Para el concejal Baena no hay que perder de vista que se vienen nuevas realidades económicas como el Tratado de Libre Comercio (TLC), escenario en el cual un estudiante o un profesional que maneje el inglés tiene ventajas.

³⁷ See Appendix L for translation.

To fulfill the goal of producing students for the labor market, the role of teachers takes a slightly different shade from the previous one (clerk). They still have to follow orders but there is an emphasis on the quality of the final product as stated by the Ministry of Education, Gloria Cecilia Velez White, in the first page of the “Estándares”:

114) El ideal de tener colombianos capaces de comunicarse en inglés con estándares internacionalmente comparables ya no es un sueño, es una realidad y solo podremos llegar a cumplir los propósitos establecidos si contamos con maestras y maestros convencidos y capaces de llevar a los niños y niñas a comunicarse en este idioma (“Estándares”, p. 3).

The ideal of having Colombians able to communicate in English with comparable international standards is no longer a dream but is a reality, and we can only arrive at meeting the stated purposes if we believe teachers are able to teach the children to communicate in this language.

The role of teachers is to “produce” students who can compete in a linguistic market that is highly influenced by the corporate world where an ideal variety (so called “standard”) is used and that that will determine the feasibility of employment (See table 20). The official voice (Ministry) expects total compliance from teachers to achieve this endeavor by saying that the objective of speaking English will be possible if teachers are “convinced and capable.”

Table 21: Proyecto de acuerdo “Bogotá bilingüe en diez años”, p. 6³⁸

<p>METAS A LARGO PLAZO</p> <p>Sector Empresarial</p> <p>El 80% de los trabajadores vinculados a los sectores promisorios de la Region estaran certificados en la competencia bilingue definida dentro del sistema de Certificacion de Competencias Laborales</p>
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In this paragraph teachers get prominence that comes with a hint of a negative connotation because it implies submission on the teachers’ part. Being “convinced” means that teachers believe and approve the decisions made by the Ministry and will not challenge or resist them; doing the opposite could be seen as sabotage. The underlying thought is that when things go wrong, it is exclusively the teachers’ fault because they were not “convinced” or “capable.” This is a recurring practice in our societies, to blame teachers for social failure instead of bringing a multilayered analysis to interpret reality, while the outcomes are good, everything else is acknowledged but teachers (Apple, 2006; Wink, 2000).

The case of English teachers is particularly interesting because usually they are not seen as educators responsible for the holistic development of their students who can transform their lives (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) but rather as technicians limited to perform

³⁸ See Appendix M for translation.

a specific task without much involvement in the broader context of their classroom, school, or community. This perception is strengthened by the assumptions (still in effect in many contexts in Colombia) that 1) teaching English is “neutral” and that 2) the only requirement to teach English is to speak the language (as seen in table 21).

Table 22: People’s opinions about the result of an English test taken by elementary school teachers.³⁹

Por: frestol

Despues de vivir 20 anos en norteamerica, regrese a mi pueblo por asuntos de familia y termine viviendo nuevamente alli. durante seis anos trabaje con contratos temporales en los colegios de secundaria de mi municipio, hasta que el gobierno departamental hizo la primera convocatoria para profesores de inglés en secundaria. mi puntaje final fue el mejor del departamento, bien por encima de el segundo lugar, pero la falta de un titulo de normal, impidio mi contratacion. en situaciones como estas deberia haber cierto tipo de consideraciones frente a la legalidad y burocracia. ahora, de nuevo en new york, me estoy preparando para tomar la prueba de cambridge tesol (teaching english as a second language) con la firme idea de regresar a mi pueblo y compartir lo apredido y confiando en una mejor acogida de la secretaria de educacion. tal tipo de fracasos estan escritos en los inexistentes planes de estudio y la falta de criterio pedagogico al contratar.

Por: berracol

El inglés es un idioma que no se aprende con dos horas semanales, solo se aprende con los cursos de todas las materias hablados en inglés, lo que implica profesores que hablen el inglés como su propio idioma. un profesor del global institute en broward, miami, me comentó: puedes estudiar inglés todo lo que quieras durante 8 años o más, pero jamás vas a hablar como un nativo. así que conformémonos con entenderlo, hacernos entender y leerlo.

Taken from “El Tiempo”(April 08/08) newspaper

³⁹ See Appendix N for translation.

Therefore English teachers have no responsibility in the education of their students; that is, the task of other teachers; theirs is to teach children to speak the variety of English sanctioned by the MEN and the BC as the legitimate (standard) one, as seen in the following excerpt:

115) Para ilustrar esta interrelación basta ver como en el caso del aprendizaje del inglés o de cualquier lengua extranjera, el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa solo es posible cuando se desarrollan, en forma paralela, otros saberes que el estudiante adquiere en las distintas áreas del currículo y que le dan contenido a sus intervenciones...("Estándares", p. 13).

To illustrate this inter-relationship, it is enough to see, as in the case of learning English or any foreign language, that the development of communicative competence is only possible when other contents of the curriculum are developed (by the student) in parallel, which give substance to their speaking ...

According to this excerpt, the English teacher teaches only the language, that is, the “structures” to be used which get “content” from the other areas of the curriculum. The “neutrality” of the language—discussed in the previous chapter—permeates its teaching so that if language is a collection of rules, teaching it means practicing them, the vocabulary, the combinations, the pronunciation and so on and so forth. Since mastering the structural part of the language is the only one that has validity and relevance for the MEN in their PNB and some teachers lack it (due to historical reasons and not because they are ignorant), the MEN conceives teachers from a deficit perspective who need training in basic skills and privileges the British Council models for Teacher education. This model, as can be appreciated in annex xxx, deals exclusively with instructional

aspects of teaching and conceptualizes teachers as “technicians” whose objective is to perform their task efficiently and effectively.

From this perspective, the English teachers’ role is very mechanical (Guerrero & Quintero, 2005), and they are not at all thought of as intellectuals (Giroux, 1988) who can tackle critical issues within their classes and challenge the status quo. This perception is quite different from what Clavijo et al. (2004) report about a group of language teachers (English and Spanish) who participated in a teacher development program in Bogota, Colombia. They found that teachers do engage in intellectual activities to plan and implement curricular innovations that respond to the needs of their students according to their specific contexts.

This report is only one example of the idea that teaching English is neutral, as existed for a long time within TESOL (and that the MEN and BC want to perpetuate) and has been changing since Pennycook called for the adoption of a critical stance in 1990. In Colombia, English teachers have started to see their profession as much more than teaching empty structures (González, 2007), and the evidence can be found in the amount of scholarly presentations and research articles school and university teachers of English alike have published during the last ten years in the three main teachers’ journals: *Ikala*, *PROFILE* and *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal* (Mora & Ramos, 2003; Chapetón, 2004; Hernández & Samacá, 2005; Piñeros & Quintero, 2006; and Becerra, 2006, just to mention some examples). Their intellectual production shows their understanding of the

profession beyond grammar and their application of theories not only to inform their teaching practices but also to explore who Colombian students are and what they need.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The handbook “Estándares” serves the important purpose of directing people’s ideas about various aspects related to the “Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo” (PNB) in order to pave the road towards its implementation. The symbolic capital held by the Ministry of Education (obtained thanks to its nature as an official institution) grants it the symbolic power needed to have the whole educational community’s acquiescence to carry out their project.

In the present study, three areas were examined to offer an interpretation of how bilingualism is constructed in the “Estándares,” how the English language is conceptualized and how teachers are portrayed. In exploring these issues, I could conclude that the ways in which the authors of the handbook presented their ideas were guided by a quite conservative definition of language. Throughout, the “Estándares” language is constructed as mainly a set of rules and structures that need to be mastered. Language is not conceived of as a political instrument (political as defined by Gee, 2004), at least, explicitly, so its social nature is ignored.

Another characteristic that underlies the ideas about the issues explored is the constant mismatch between the discourse of the MEN and the reality of Colombia.

Looking at the huge gap between the words written in the “Estandares” and what actually happens in the country, it is evident that there is an intention to serve the interests of powerful groups. Various Colombian academics have raised their voices to call attention about this lack of coherence (Ayala & Álvarez, 2005; Cárdenas, 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; De Mejía 2006; González, 2007, 2008; Obando & Sanchez, 2008; Quintero, 2007), but unfortunately, their access to ways of spreading their counter discourse is limited. This confirms Foucault’s (2001) claim that circulating discourse is easier for those in power who have the resources and media to do that.

An oversimplification of concepts, ideas, and theories underlie the way in which the MEN portrays the three elements I consider relevant in this handbook: bilingualism, English, and Colombian teachers. Instead of bringing to the handbook the discussion of theories (as they did in other “Estándares” like Natural Science or Mathematics), they use dictionary-like definitions or introduce common places as facts and in this way, impose a particular view of the world.

About bilingualism:

Bilingualism in this handbook acquires a meaning that denies the multilingualism acknowledged by the National Constitution of 1991 (in effect today), after the long

struggle of minority groups' leaders. The sociolinguistic panorama in Colombia is painted by a variety of languages, from indigenous languages to Spanish and English based Creoles to foreign ones like English, French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Mandarin, to our mother tongue: Spanish. In this context, it is evident that promoting a bilingual project will necessarily exclude a good amount of languages.

The re-definition of the words “bilingual” and “bilingualism” has been so pervasive that in all the documents produced by the MEN within the framework of its PNB, no clarification is needed; it is assumed that when referring to bilingualism, it means English. In the “Estándares,” they make that very clear starting from the title of the handbook, where they announce that these standards are for English. In this sense, the MEN itself establishes distance from the European Framework (the model they adopted), where the standards are set for all the European languages, not exclusively for one. In the same way, the “Estándares” differ from an antecedent document published by the MEN in 1999, whose purpose was to establish national guidelines (not standards) for all the foreign languages taught in the country.

Along with the concept that being bilingual in Colombia means speaking English, in the “Estándares,” the MEN also builds the idea of bilingualism as a homogeneous phenomena to be attained by every child in the nation. The MEN sets certain goals that need to be achieved in a specific time frame by all Colombian students and all English teachers. It is problematic to establish these goals for the whole population at large

because Colombia suffers from deep and serious social problems that prevent a large number of children have access to education. The lack of coherence between national education policies and the actual situation of the country is apparent; the webpage of the Ministry of Education presents various documents where they report the lack of resources in many schools, the various circumstances that keep children out of the education system, the high dropout indices, the high figures of illiteracy, the lack of policies to address the needs of our minorities, and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, they subscribe agreements with international organizations like the British Council and with some Colombian universities to promote a national bilingualism project that will benefit a small portion of the population and that at the end of the day will increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots of the country.

Setting the exact same goal for everyone, that by the year 2019 all Colombian students achieve Level B2 (of the yardsticks of the Common European Framework), is not only utopian but also unfair because the conditions to make that happen are available only to a small number of students who have the privilege of going to school every day in a safe environment, with teachers that are not only proficient in English but also know how to teach it depending on the age range of their students, and where material resources are available (just to mention some of the necessary conditions to have a decent education).

The proponents of the “Estándares” support their utopian goal by implying that whoever speaks English will be acknowledged as a legitimate user in any context. Different authors (Bhatt, 2001; Niño-Murcia, 2003; Norton, Pennycook, 2004) have explored this issue and have found that speaking English does not necessarily grant “speaker legitimacy.” If even in interactions where participants share the same mother tongue there are power issues and some struggle to be recognized as valid interlocutors, why would it be different when the interaction happens when some speak English as their L2?

The issue gets more complicated due to the mismatch between the standards and the implication aforementioned. The standards are constructed from a strong grammatically oriented perspective that emphasizes the need to master rules in order to become a proficient speaker of English. Knowing how to structure sentences is the only necessary condition to speak the L2, and throughout the “Estándares,” this premise is apparent. Besides claiming that students produce grammatically perfect sentences, there is a complete disregard for who the interlocutor could be; there is no awareness that there will be another speaker who might cooperate in the conversation, or quite the opposite, can be very uncooperative. This lack of understanding of what language is for evidences that the concept of language held by the MEN in this document detaches it from its social nature.

Proficiency adds to the previous totalizing ideas of what bilingualism is. By establishing a set of fixed standards for every level and every skill, the Ministry of Education gives the impression of believing that everybody can be equally proficient, that each individual can be equally proficient in every skill. Since they overlook the social nature of language, they in the same way overlook the different registers in which a language can be used and as a consequence do not consider them in their aim for proficiency.

Influenced once again by the idea that language has nothing to do with the individuals who speak it, the oversimplified concept of proficiency is nurtured by the fact that the “Estándares” promote one single variety of English, which is not made explicit, but it is not difficult to guess which one it is, considering that the coordination of the project is in the hands of the British Council and that they are administering their tests and selling the textbooks, materials, language courses, and teaching courses. Covertly claiming that there is only one variety of English, claims at the same time that all the others either do not exist or if so, they are not appropriate and should not be spread. Along with the negative connotations of a variety comes the negative connotation of its speakers and with it sentiments of racism and discrimination.

The discourse about bilingualism within the “Estándares” perpetuates the misconception that balanced bilingualism is the norm. As has been demonstrated by researchers (Baker, 2001; Baker & Jones, 1998; De Mejía, 2002, 2005; Fishman, 1976a,

1977; Grosjean, 1982; Hakuta, 1986; Romaine, 1989), balanced bilingualism is an ideal state achieved by a small number of individuals and never the state of a society. Taking into account that the PNB is a project aimed at acquiring societal bilingualism, expecting that Colombians master equally Spanish and English is unrealistic.

The other misconception that circulates in the “Estándares” is the possibility to achieve a communicative competence. As explained earlier in Chapter 4, the concept of communicative competence used in the “Estándares” is too prescriptive and privileges grammar over content. In their definition of communicative competence and the other competences (linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic), there is always the premise of using rules correctly. Furthermore, as stated above, there is a very simplistic construction of the interlocutor as a cooperative one, once again denying the power struggles among speakers. The dynamics of social groups are filled with subtle and tacit rules of interaction that are easily violated even in monolingual and monocultural settings and even more so in intercultural contexts.

About English:

To provide a rationale of why the MEN chose English over other languages for its PNB, the authors of the “Estándares” relied on the discourses about the neutrality of

English that have been produced since the 18th century. Bringing that universal discourse to the local context seems unproblematic because the MEN can pretend they are providing the solution to the deep needs of our country by including the teaching of the magical language.

Every discourse is multilayered, and while some messages are easily found on the surface layers of a text, others require that the analyst looks deeper, something like “unpeeling an onion”⁴⁰, in order to unpack the subtle messages hidden in a particular discourse. In the “Estándares,” there was a section in which the authors explicitly mentioned the advantages of speaking English in Colombia and presented it as a neutral language. Examining the standards per se, I could see that the proclaimed neutrality of English took different forms that could be identified in the way in which the standards were linguistically constructed.

One of the forms of neutrality is the dominance of a prescriptive approach in the standards. The descriptors aim at producing students who use the language within strict limits that control what they can do with it. The so-called productive skills (speaking and writing) establish the appropriateness of students’ outcomes. When speaking, learners have to produce correct sentences and observe an appropriate pronunciation; the definition of “appropriate” responses contrast students’ pronunciation with that of native

⁴⁰ Metaphor used by Ricento and Hornberger (1996) to describe the complexities of language policies.

speakers of the variety approved as the standard. When writing, they have to follow the patterns given, where the predominance is on the form and not on the content. Ideas of meaningful and purposeful learning do not have a place in these standards.

The neutrality of English is also embodied by attaching to it only a denotative function. The different activities students are expected to perform in the English class are aimed at perpetuating an idealized image of English and everything associated to it, as a fantasy land, where everybody is happy and live in a perfect world. These descriptors are written in such a way that students are not invited to interrogate social practices. Rather, they are asked to remain passive and submissive and participate diligently in the social order. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 5, it is interesting to see that the lack of connection between language and society happens only in the handbook studied here, because in the other handbooks, where the MEN sets the standards for the core areas of the curriculum, there is an emphasis on the importance of raising students' awareness about their context, and that is brought into the classroom. It is ironic that something as inherently social as language is introduced in a national program as just an innocent and isolated tool.

Preventing students from playing with the L2, from getting contact with other varieties of the language, and from interacting with different speakers, that is, keeping them in a vacuum makes neutrality take another form: uniformity. The purpose of uniformity is to fulfill the dream of purists to maintain the language as unchanged as

possible, where every speaker observes the rules and sounds exactly the same. A second purpose is to promote a single view of the world where social behaviors are dictated by the dominant groups; we all should copy the rules for the social practices of these groups and assume our roles to maintain an undistruptive social system.

English is not only presented as a neutral language. Additionally, the benefits of speaking this language is wider communication; besides being neutral, English gives access to wonderland, meaning economic profits.

In a rather naïve perspective, the MEN places English as the magic formula that will solve our economic, social, cultural, and political problems; speaking English is their idea, it grants us “access” to the wide range of advantages associated to this language. Within my analysis, I found that the forms of access that could be inferred from the “Estándares” were strongly related to the convertibility of cultural and social capital into economic capital as described by Bourdieu (1986).

Despite the fact that, at least in theory, the objective of the MEN is to legislate for everyone in Colombia, and part of the justification to launch the PNB was to give equal opportunities to less privileged (or underprivileged) groups, as I have shown throughout the analysis of data, the result is quite the opposite. While there is a pretended equality in the discourse where standards are the same for everybody, and based on them the evaluation criteria will be the established; the truth is that “equality” is a mirage.

As mentioned earlier, one of the strategies used to perpetuate views of the world is to rely on previous discourses and on assumptions. One such common assumption is that of fairness defined as giving everybody the same, and if everybody is equal then there is no question that in order to maintain equality there must not be a differentiated distribution of goods. From a critical perspective, the definition of fairness is quite different; it means to give each one what they need. This simple definition unfolds a many situations in which it is easy to spot the working of marginalization disguised in the discourse of equality.

Spreading the idea that all Colombians have access to a good quality of education along with a good environment to learn English is a big fallacy, as discussed above. Taking that for granted, and from there constructing the rest of the discourses that exalt the virtues of English, generates different expectations that might become true for a few but impossible for most.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to counter these discourses because it circulates in different fields of the society, so the more it circulates, the stronger it becomes and then becomes true (like the short story written by Garcia Marquez included at the beginning of this dissertation). The discourse of access given by English has become so true that a lot of people, from academics to the security guards of an apartment complex, utter it with absolute certainty; there is no interrogation about the validity of that statement, and whoever questions it might be out of their minds.

Those who propitiate the circulation of this discourse forget (voluntarily?) that if it is true that English is indeed a good asset to obtain certain benefits and to be able to participate of certain profits, it is not the only and necessary condition to do so. Simply speaking English is not enough; other forms of cultural capital are necessary (other qualifications certified by an institution like diplomas or degrees): social capital (belong to the right sort of social network) and economic capital. So although access seems available to all, there are a lot of constraints that make access unequal.

Summing up, in such a complex, competitive, rich, plurilingual, pluricultural world like the one we live in, it is very narcissist and egocentric to think that speaking an important language like English is the key to solve all our problems. But what is even worse, is that this narcissistic and egocentric thought is not of one individual but the thought of a governmental office, and it is imposed to a whole nation regardless of the potential consequences.

About teachers:

In Colombia there is a generalized poor conception about teachers. In everyday conversations, teachers are portrayed from lazy to unintelligent to mediocre to problematic. Most parents would stand against their children's desire to become teachers

because teaching is not a profitable and distinguished profession. This conception has a direct relationship with the level of education chosen by the teacher: being a preschool teacher receives the lowest value while being a university teacher gets a little bit more respect.

Few Colombians acknowledge the real value of teachers: The constant devotion most teachers give to their students; the sacrifices teachers who work in rural or underprivileged areas make every day to keep their students at school; the skills teachers develop to make the most of the few resources they have; the effort they make to advance in their education; and the magic they perform to make a decent living out of the low salary they get.

Unfortunately, these teachers, the ones who go to work every day and help to build the nation, are invisible for the Ministry of Education, so invisible that their voices were not heard when deciding this (or other) educational policies. Although there is a list of schools and teachers' names included in the last pages of the "Estándares" as contributors, reviewers, and evaluators of the handbook, it is apparent, as shown in the analysis of the data, that the discourse presented there is not polyphonic, but rather, it is a uniform discourse associated with the ideologies of the British Council and its policy toward the spread of English.

In terms of discourse, the invisibility is achieved in this document by the use of two strategies that superficially seem an oxymoron: exclusion and inclusion (Fairclough,

2003). In most of the document, teachers are not mentioned as if they did not exist or did not have any important role to play in the PNB. The exclusion of teachers in the discourse, not only minimizes their role within the educational field, but also obscures their relationship with the MEN because by being invisible, their needs, problems, ideas, and circumstances are automatically denied.

On the other hand, teachers are included in a few paragraphs of the standards, but their prominence is minimized in contrast with the prominence of the MEN. In this sense, although teachers are mentioned, their presence in the text is portrayed negatively which at the same time exalts the role of the MEN presenting itself as the leader of change and teachers as just followers.

In this project, where teachers are valued only on their language skills in English, it is not surprising that the very essence of teachers is undervalued. The marker of their suitability is their command of the four language skills; whether or not they are good teachers does not matter because with a “training course” they will be ready to follow instructions and be efficient instructors.

The MEN assumes teachers are just instructors (a concept inherited from British teaching models) that is, trainees with a limited, superficial and technical knowledge while the MEN sees itself as a body of “specialists” coached by the British Council “experts”. Teachers are detached of all the complexities of the profession which is not limited to technical tips or content knowledge, but includes a wide range of aptitudes

learned only by teaching. By seeing teachers as technicians, the MEN has no reason to accept them as valid interlocutors whose knowledge can contribute to enrich the teaching-learning process.

Summing up, the conjugation of the already generalized poor concept of teachers, plus the ideology of the colonized gives as a result an asymmetrical power/knowledge relationship. As such, teachers do not have much to offer because their discourse goes in one direction and the MEN's in a different one. Although there might be points in which both coincide, as long as the MEN insists in undervaluing Colombian teachers and academics to acknowledge and hear only what foreigners have to say about how to educate our students, this project is bound to fail.

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to unpack the meaning of three key aspects contained in the handbook "Estandares." Since I took a critical stance, my focus was on points which seemed arbitrary or unfair; this does not mean that everything in the handbook was ill-conceived or that there is a conscious intention on the MEN to privilege a few and exclude a lot. Nevertheless, the close examination of data shows the MEN had

a narrow approach when establishing these standards and much needs to be done in order to have a more sound, fair, and inclusive language policy.

Writing this dissertation was a painful and sometimes hopeless experience and yet it was a very passionate one too. It was very disheartening to learn how many children do not have access to education due to the internal war we live in in Colombia, to revisit the colonization process to see how much injustice was done to impose a language most Colombians are proud to call “mother tongue,” to read about the struggles of our indigenous groups to be recognized as legitimate citizens of their own land and have the right to speak their own languages, to evidence the neglect we all have shown to Afro-Colombians and their languages, to confront the precarious situation of thousands of school teachers who “out of nothing at all” go to work every day. Motivated by my passion and because as a researcher, as a teacher educator, as a teacher but mostly as a Colombian, I do not want to lose my faith in Colombian governmental institutions, I offer here some implications that hopefully will call the attention of the Ministry of Education.

Language policies should be planned by suitable professionals

I have no intention of disregarding the experience and suitability of the committee who designed and wrote the “Estandares”; I think they are in those leading positions

because they have the merits to do so. Nonetheless, the visible heads of the project whose names appear on the first page are not language planning and policy experts (the Minister of Education is an economist, holds a master's in economy and a degree in urban and rural development; the general coordinator of the project has a degree in ELT and has been a teacher and teacher trainer; the general coordinator of the formulation of standards has a degree in ELT and has worked as ELT consultant for the British Council), and while their knowledge and experience is very valuable in this project, consulting with experts in that matter would have given them different perspectives to consider when designing the project and the standards.

The field of language planning and policy is not new. For hundreds of years, human beings have been making decisions about what languages to speak, which ones to ban, what are the correct and incorrect forms of speaking, and so on; after the Second World War LPP emerged as a field to consolidate in the early 1960s (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Ricento, 2000). For this reason, it is concerning that in the 21st century, and after the advancements in LPP, in Colombia we decide to ignore how we could profit from language planners and policy makers, and instead use imperialist practices to privilege one language over the others (like the Roman Empire, Spanish Empire, and British Empire did).

The absence of suitable professionals gives as a result a project where crucial voices were left out (school teachers, academics, students, parents, minorities), where the

adoption of unattainable standards were established for a completely different context (Europe), and where a wider gap is promoted between the elites and the rest of the population.

Value local knowledge, enrich it with global knowledge

In Colombia, the ideology of the colonized is very pervasive. In many aspects of our lives, we have not overcome our condition of colonized and we look up at whatever is produced in other countries (especially of the first world); we are schooled and groomed (Wink, 2000) to believe that our culture has less value than others'. When it comes to knowledge, the situation is not different. We believe something is good if it comes from outside, and we start paying attention to the knowledge produce in Colombia as long as it has been certified as valuable outside.

In this particular case, this ideology has originated that the MEN trusts the whole coordination of its PNB to the British Council when there are knowledgeable and experienced local scholars (some of them are cited in this dissertation) who have worked in the Colombian context most of their professional lives and have both the theoretical and experiential knowledge that allow them to make situated judgments and decisions.

High school and elementary school teachers also have important contributions to make. As stated earlier in the analysis of data, school teachers know best who their students are, what they need, what resources they count on, what methodologies work better with their students, to what types of evaluation they respond to in more effective ways, and as well as many more of aspects related to the teaching-learning situations of the everyday.

By and large, given the value local knowledge represents in the development of our country, it should be privileged when designing policies. Of course it would be not only relevant but necessary to enrich, confront, and validate it with foreign knowledge. By foreign I mean global, not only (as it has been the custom in Colombia) Euro-American, but knowledge and experiences from around the globe that allow us to see how things are done in other parts of the world.

Design flexible national guidelines that can be applied according to the specific context.

One of the main criticisms that comes from critical pedagogy to education is its marketization (also Fairclough's concern). The boost of capitalism during the 80s originated an increasing interest in the client-seller relationship and its application to

sectors like public health (hospitals) and education (schools and universities). In fact, the use of standards emerged from the field of marketing where they were created as standardized processes in order to offer clients the best quality in products and services (Vargas Zúñiga, 2004).

It makes sense to establish standards in processes and products, but when it comes to human beings, it is problematic. I discussed earlier in the analysis of data why the application of standards to this particular project was not only unattainable but unfair. If one of the motivations of the Ministry of Education is to insert the country in the global community and make its nationals more competitive, instead of establishing fixed language standards, the Ministry should, as it did in 1999, establish a set of guidelines and trust the suitability, knowledge and intuition of teachers to adopt and adapt language goals according to the real needs and characteristics of their contexts.

In Colombia elite groups are outnumbered by less privileged ones and the gap between them is enormous. For this reason the policies and projects of the MEN should resemble its nature as a democratic institution and legislate with the goal of promoting social justice; its policies should include and favor the majority of the population while at the same time provide opportunities for teachers and students alike to access the necessary conditions to improve their quality of life. The MEN needs to understand that people will not learn English just because there is a document that says so; the Ministry

needs to make provisions keeping in mind the diversity and complexity of contexts, otherwise this will be, as many other projects in the past, a “white elephant”.

Take actions that promote plurilinguism and pluriculturalism and not privileging one language over the others.

Thanks to the PNB and the “Estandares,” the words “bilingualism” and “bilingual” have started to circulate with a new meaning (speaking English and Spanish) that have displaced the connotation it had in Latin America: speaking Indigenous languages and Spanish. The adoption of the new meaning brings with it the possibility of describing the world from a very narrow perspective where only the two aforementioned languages are valued socially. Consequently the “choice” for this type of bilingualism will determine not only the preference of English over all other languages (even Spanish in some contexts), but along with it the discourse practices associated with and expressed in this language that in turn are ideologically loaded.

As Melba Libia Cárdenas (2003), a well known academic, teacher educator, and researcher claimed early in the process of this policy when it was a local scheme only for Bogota, the project should not be called “bilingual” but “multilingual” or “plurilingual” in order not to deny the variety of languages--some foreign, others indigenous and two Creoles, that share the sociolinguistic panorama of the country. A change in name would

open a wide range of possibilities of Colombians who speak or are interested in speaking other languages different from English. The MEN needs to be aware that English is not the linguistic capital longed for by every single person because there are contexts and situations in which other languages are needed. I learned, anecdotally, about two separate cases in which graduate students had to suffer a long process to get their proficiency in an indigenous language (the language they would need in their professional careers) recognized as their L2, because the requirement was in a “foreign language” even though those would serve them very little in their professional work.

A multilingual project would allow the government to legislate in order to offer stimulus to pursue studies in the languages of the minorities--which seem to be the less desirable. We have an incalculable cultural capital accumulated in our native cultures that we have long overlooked and from which we could learn a good deal. Schools and universities should include classes about the multilingual configuration of the country in order to promote the learning and appreciation for all languages. Personally, I had to come to a university in the United States to be aware of the existence and value of so many indigenous languages and Creoles in Colombia. I adventure to say that my experience is not *sui generis* but rather it is the commonality of Colombians; we are educated facing back to our ancestors, praising the language and culture of the colonizer, whoever it is.

Revisit theories and concepts to combine mainstream and critical positions to make sound decisions

Finally, the MEN needs to revise and revisit the theoretical concepts used to support the standards described in the handbook. Given the preeminence of the “Estandares,” which is intended to be **the** compass that will determine the proficiency levels of all students during ten years, the concepts included there have to be scrutinized. This sole purpose should be enough to justify a serious and deep discussion and study of the theoretical and ideological approach this project will follow. As shown earlier in the analysis of data, key concepts like bilingualism, communicative competence, foreign language vs. second language, or acquisition vs. learning are presented superficially in a dictionary-like fashion and as absolute truths that usually resemble a mainstream ideology.

A simple look at the list of references cited on page 38 of the standards shows that only 6 works were published between 2000 and 2006; the remaining pieces are from the 1990s and two from the 1980s. It is undeniable that there are always classic authors who are always in place, but it is also necessary to balance them with new interpretations or application of their ideas, and even confront them with other points of view. Furthermore, only four Colombian authors are included despite the number of publications various TESOL scholars have on related topics. On top of that, although listed in this page, there

is a reference of Nancy Hornberger and one of Jim Cummins, although nothing in the content of the “Estandares” suggests their ideas are in any way incorporated or considered.

The MEN has to stop underestimating its teachers and its academics and start listening what they have said and have to say. There are hundreds of teaching experiences and ideas that could inform the PNB; just by looking up in one of the three major Colombian journals dedicated to publishing issues in SLA, the MEN would hear a polyphony of teachers’ voices and could incorporate the local with the global to make the most of each one.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has focused on the exploration of three issues from a CDA perspective. The document analyzed here is only one of many produced within the framework of the Colombian government’s National Bilingualism Program, and one genre of the multiple ones in which discourses about the same topic are circulating in the country. Bearing this in mind, this document offers potentialities for other researchers to look in depth at issues of their own interest. Also, I think it is very important to confront the findings presented here with what students, teachers, parents, and other members of the community think

about them. It would be very enriching to conduct such a study in multiple sites which allow the inclusion of a wide range of participants' profiles, in order to have a more comprehensive perspective of the meaning of this project in Colombia, particularly listening to all these voices that have been silenced and ignored during the whole process of designing and implementation of the "Estandares."

Since this is not the only text in which the discourse of bilingualism (as understood in this document) is circulating, a cross examination of texts and genres would provide an understanding on how texts are weaved together to legitimize certain views of the world.

The actual practices of school teachers in relation to the "Estandares" would be another topic of interest to examine their consistency with the national guidelines; again, this study should be conducted in multiple sites in order to include as many profiles as possible.

In terms of consistency, research needs to be conducted in order to examine to what extent mandatory tests reflect the content of the courses, to what extent these tests respond to our particular needs, what is the use and interpretation given to those tests, what ideologies are being spread through them, and who benefits economically from those tests; and these are only a few questions researchers may ask.

All in all, there are many interesting topics and issues that need to be investigated, and I do hope that the study presented leaves so many questions unanswered that they serve as an inspiration for further research.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 1

Power Point Presentation given By Grimaldo, J (2005) manager of the PNB, to Colombian Teachers.

Goals of the project	Goals 2007-2010	Goals 2019
Improve elementary school children and junior school children's proficiency in English	30% of the students in 11 grade achieve B1 level of competence in English	100% of students in 11 grade achieve B1 level of competence in English
Improve teachers' proficiency and methodology	45% of English teachers achieve B1 level 55% of English teachers achieve B2 level	100% of teachers achieve B2 level in English
Improve the proficiency in English of BA students (future teachers of English)	25% students in C1 level 75% students in B2 level	100% of new undergraduates achieve C1 level

APPENDIX B: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 2

Excerpt of a Power Point Presentation given by Cely, R (2005), MEN Consultant, to Colombian Teachers

EVALUATION	
Actions	Institutions
Base line diagnoses (regions) (Quick Placement Test, Teaching Knowledge Test) Application and reports	Universidad Autonoma de Bucaramanga Centro Colombo Americano (Medellin) Universidad del Norte, Universidad Nacional (Manizales), Fundacion Universitaria del Area Andina, UPTC (Tunja), British Council
Colombian Benchmarking Test (8th, 10th, last year university students) Development logistics	University of Cambridge, ICFES, Ministry of Education
Evaluation of last year students in BA in Modern Languages (First Certificate in English) Phases 1 and 2	2005, 280 students from Universidad Nacional, Universidad Pedagogica, UPTC, U Narino, U Valle, U Antioquia, U Andes, U Gran Colombia, U Bolivariana. 2006: 400 Students, 22 Universities

APPENDIX C: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 3

Some reasons why children do not attend school. Taken from the document: “Estrategias para la retención escolar”, by Alfredo Sarmiento. MEN.

	Total	5 to 6 years old	7 to 11 years old	12 to 17 years old	18 to 24 years old
Think they are not school aged or they finished already	5.1	36.7	4.6	1.08	3.07
High educational costs or lack of money	39.6	27.3	41.29	42.24	46.4
Lack of time	7.5		0.35	1.53	5.4
Family responsibilities	18.3	1.6	2.3	6.68	14.81
Insecurity	0.1			0.28	0.06
Lack of quotas in schools	0.7	7.7	3.11	1.75	0.83
No school nearby	1.5	6.0	6.49	2.36	1.09
Need to work	11.4	0.1	2.55	7.34	11.69
Do not like to study	9.7	1.7	7.05	23.03	11.21
Had to flee their place or residence	0.4	1.8	5.06	1.09	0.16
Sickness	1.2	1.8	3.51	2.01	0.81
Need special education	0.9	3.0	3.81	2.21	0.72
Different reason	3.7	12.4	19.88	8.43	3.74

APPENDIX D: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 6

Basic standards for competences in social and natural sciences, p. 103.

It is thus appropriate that training in science in primary and secondary education cover the tackling of problems that require holistic understanding (for example poverty, environmental pollution, violence, development models, technological development ...) so that the study in context, in addition to linking interests and backgrounds of students, enable them to use concepts, procedures, approaches and proposals presented by the natural and social disciplines to the service of the understanding of situations, relationships and environments specific to these areas of knowledge.

APPENDIX E: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 8 & 16

Excerpt of the invitation letter sent by the MEN to validate the standards.

To accomplish this, and according to that established in the National Development Plan, the Ministry of Education in 2005 will initiate the creation of basic standards in English, its dissemination and promotion at local authorities and educational institutions. For this process, the Ministry of Education has decided to hold a Special Agreement of Cooperation with the British Council, upon the following considerations: 1. In the year 1979, a Cultural Agreement which remains in force between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Colombia was signed; the first is represented by the diplomatic mission in Bogota and the British Council (British Council), an official entity responsible for carrying out its educational and cultural relations. 2. Under the Convention, both the Ministry and the British Council have expressed their desire to undertake joint action to promote the teaching and learning of English in formal education in the country, especially in strengthening strategies for improving the management of English of the students, teachers and general population. 3. It becomes necessary to implement a national program to develop standards of competence for the area of English, to develop assessments of competence in English in elementary and secondary students and to bring forward teacher training programs aimed at 3.1. "Improved results in terms of language learners and teachers with reference to the standards that are formulated ...". In this vein, the agreement with the British Council aims to strengthen English as a Second Language for teachers and students as the result of standards, systematic evaluation of English in elementary and secondary students, and training programs that develop with reference to the standards defined and the results of the assessments used.

APPENDIX F: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 9

Documents referring to the economic benefits of learning English in Colombia

Document	Statement
ASOCOPI Newsletter (October, 2003)	Objective: "To the world, Bogota and Cundinamarca will be characterized as having more productive people. Mastery of a language other than Spanish, English being the first one, will enhance the competitiveness of the region ".
British Council Web Page (n/d)	Similarly we could implement a certification program for bilingual competence, through which citizens of Bogota who meet the requirements of the standards of the city, acquire a certification that recognizes these domains and use them to guarantee job mobility, as a complement to the recruiting programs of companies.

APPENDIX G: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 11

Standards for elementary school

Chart 1:

1. I rely on my mother tongue to show understanding of what I read or hear
2. I speak English, using short words and short phrases to express my ideas and feelings about topics related to school or family.
3. I participate in conversations using a clear pronunciation and good intonation
4. I have started to structure my writings; I'm learning to read and write in my mother tongue. For this reason, my proficiency in English is lower.

Chart 2:

1. In this level
2. I understand short stories narrated in a simple language
3. I develop strategies that help me understand some words, expressions and sentences I read.
4. I understand basic language about family, friends, games and known places, if people speak slow and with a clear pronunciation

Chart 3:

1. In addition to what I learned in the previous level
2. I understand short texts, simple and with pictures about topics of the daily life, personal things and literature
3. I understand short stories or what my teacher says in class
4. I participate in short conversations using sentences with predictable structures

Chart 4:

1. I speak about myself, my classmates and our daily activities using simple sentences, logically chained and sometimes by memory. Still, it is difficult to talk about topics different from my family or school routine.
2. My pronunciation is understandable and I speak slowly
3. I write short simple texts about topics of my environment
4. My vocabulary is limited to known topics

APPENDIX H: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 12

Relationship between knowledge and economic gain.

Document	Statement
Amendment to the strategic plan for Bogota and Cundinamarca. May 2004	To promote an export culture: Bilingual region: training teachers and business people; export practices and free trade agreements.
Prospective Agenda for science and technology in Bogota and Cundinamarca. April 2005	<p>General objective:</p> <p>Build along with the actors of city-region, the prospective vision to develop in the short, medium and long term, and endogenous capacity for science and technology as the base of competitiveness within the public and private organizations, and create the condition for the generation, diffusion, and use of knowledge that improve productivity and the life quality of its inhabitants.</p> <p>FHC:-8 Guidelines for teachers' training programs addressed to the development of basic competences in the mother tongue and the foreign language.</p>
Call for Standards April 2005	<p>JUSTIFICATION</p> <p>The Education Revolution</p> <p>Education is a primary and strategic factor and an essential condition for social and economic development of any human conglomerate. It is also a universal right and a duty of the State and society, and an essential tool in the construction of independent, fair and democratic societies.</p> <p>The coverage and quality of education are the most important determining factors in ensuring the competitiveness of a country. The social and economic development is directly associated to the increment of productivity which motivates the need for policies to ensure linear and incremental increases in coverage, equity and quality of different education levels.</p>
Proyecto de Acuerdo Bogotá bilingüe. 2006	<p>Furthermore, the district administration, promotes the project "Bogota and Cundinamarca Bilingual in ten years" directly referring to this issue in the development plan 2004-2008. "Bogotá without indifference. A commitment against poverty and social exclusion ", thus:</p> <p>Article 12. Objective of the Urban Regional Area. Move forward in shaping a city's people and for the people with a human environment that promotes human rights, equity and social inclusion. A modern, environmentally and socially sustainable city, balanced in its infrastructure, integrated into the territory, with a competitive economy and participative in its development.</p>

APPENDIX I: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 13

People write their opinions about the result of an English test taken by elementary school teachers. Taken from “El Tiempo”(april 08/08) newspaper.

But of course. Test them in Spanish!!! I know elementary and secondary school teachers who make such grammar and orthography mistakes, that it is a pain they are teaching!!! So what to expect in another language. They have to reaaaaaaaad a lot!

I don't think this is weird, in a country where any girl who spends her vacations in Miami is hired as an English teacher. Even more, if all teachers were tested in their areas of “knowledge,” the result would be the same.

This is terrible! Poor kids! The idea to start with, teachers from San Andres don't make any sense, they do not speak English! They speak Papiamentu and similar languages...is insane. And to jammca36 who speaks about English education in India, bear in mind the word “British Colony.” furthermore, have you ever tried to understand an Indian speaking English? It's impossible! The most practical solution for this is to bring teachers from English-speaking countries, not necessarily USA or UK, if those abroad who teach Spanish are Latinamericans, those who teach English here should be Anglo speakers, isn't that logical?

APPENDIX J: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 14

Presentation of the actions proposed by the MEN to improve English learning and teaching

Areas of Action “Estandares”	
Actions	Institutions
Basic standard of competences in a foreign language: English. Formulation and validation	U Surcolombiana, U Javeriana, U Norte, EAFIT, U Nacional (Bogota and San Andres), U Distrital, U Pedagogica, ASOCOPI, UPTC, ICFES, British Council, Private and State Schools.
Presentation of the standards Workshops for their design and implementation	U Norte Research Group (Colciencias AAA), Ministry of Education, regional allies
Accreditation of Language institutes Formulation and validation	More than 100 language centers and universities extension programs, Ministry of Education (Coordinated by the British Council)

In service teachers’ development program	
Ministry of Education Initiatives	
Actions	Institutions
Immersion programs in Language+socio-cultural component in San Andres	U Nacional: Caribe headquarters Foundation: Living in English And British Council
Workshops and regional seminars Emphasis in oral skills and use of resources	Experts Fulbright Comission
Methodology scheme for in service teachers Piloting and research study (ICELT-TKT)	U Industrial de Santander, U Sabana, U Norte, U Tecnologica de Pereira, U del Atlantico, Corporacion Universitaria, U Javeriana, U Valle, U Autonoma de Bucaramanga, U de la Amazonia

APPENDIX K: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 15

Invitation letter to participate in a committee to formulate and validate the standards

National experience in the definition of standards, competence assessment, and development of improvement plans has shown its potential for mobilizing the knowledge areas in educational institutions and has led development dynamics in the pedagogical, methodological and administrative areas. Therefore, the Ministry of Education considers it appropriate to advance the definition of basic standards for the area of English, and to take advantage of the many years of experience in the area and to encourage their proper implementation in all education institutions in the country.

Consistent with this, the Directorate of Quality of Early Childhood Education, Basic and Secondary Education, Ministry of Education knowledgeable of your work and experience in teaching English are glad to invite you as a representative of your institution to participate in the executive committee to "Develop national standards of English for primary and secondary education and their subsequent validation."

Response from the *Colegiatura*

From the Ministry of Education and ICFES, it was decided that the work done by the Colombian team would provide a basis for decision making in the field of policy evaluation for the Colombian educational system and higher education. There are no known results of assessments of the work done by the *Colegiatura*. However, it has been decided that the British Council leads the design of the test being consistent with the European Framework. The *Colegiatura* in the area of English demonstrated their ability to make this work, coordinating national and international frameworks and involving, through a variety of strategies, teachers of different educational levels and regions. On the other hand, we are concerned for the pressure on the part of the program-project Colombia Bilingue for the adoption of the tests of Cambridge University. Proofs of this are in the test applied to students in basic, secondary, and higher education, and English teachers.

APPENDIX L: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 19

“El Tiempo” newspaper, November 2/06

Susana Gonzalez, a member of Radical Change, said the agreement seeks to expand the labor market for college graduates because when there is an official call for a position where the person is required to be bilingual, the first students who are dismissed are students from District schools.

For city council member Baena, we should not lose sight of the new economic realities such as the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a scenario in which a student or a professional who speaks English has more advantages.

APPENDIX M: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 20

“Bogotá bilingüe en diez años” bill, pg. 6

LONG-TERM GOALS**Business Sector**

80% of workers linked to the promising sectors of the region will be certified in the bilingual competence defined within the Certification of working competences.

APPENDIX N: TRANSLATION FOR TABLE 21

People write their opinions about the result of an English test taken by elementary school teachers taken from “El Tiempo” (April 08/08) newspaper.

By: frestol

After living 20 years in North America, I came back to my home town due to family affairs, and I ended up living there again. For six years I worked in the secondary schools of the city under temporal contracts, until the government open an official call for secondary school teachers. My final score was the best in the department, much higher than the one in second place, but the lack of a professional degree hindered my contract. In situations like this, there should be certain kinds of considerations as opposed to legality and bureaucracy. Now, back in new york, I am preparing to take the cambridge TESOL (teaching english as a second language) test with the firm idea of returning to my people and share what I've learned and am hoping a better reception from the Ministry of Education. such failures are written in non-existent curricula and the lack of pedagogical criteria in hiring.

By: berracol

The English language cannot be learned in two hours a week, it's only learned if all the courses are spoken English, which means teachers who speak English as their native language. a teacher of global institute in Broward, Miami, told me: you can study English all you want for 8 years or more but you are never going to speak like a native. So let's accept an understanding of it, read it and make ourselves understood.

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