

Reflective teaching from Language Policies Appropriation.

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Abstract

This research focuses on the reflection on the influence of linguistic policies on teaching pedagogical practices. This, thanks to the recent events related to world health that did not allow the conduct of research in the field, was carried out through a literary discussion, where an exhaustive search of the texts was first made and authors who talk about language policies, and language skills and the different conclusions found from some articles that were coded to answer the research question and related categories: language policies in Colombia, teacher reflection on their practices, teachers As language policy makers, the success of language policies and the role of the curriculum. Throughout the research, these categories are discussed in order to find an answer to our research question: How is the Reflection of Language Policy related to pedagogical practices? in order to identify the importance of language policies and how they are used by teachers.

Keywords: Languages policies, Pedagogical practices, Reflection on languages policies.

Resumen

Esta investigación se centra en la discusión sobre la influencia de las políticas lingüísticas en las prácticas pedagógicas docentes y su reflexión sobre la misma. Esta, gracias a los recientes eventos relacionados con la salud mundial que no permitieron llevar a cabo la investigación en el campo, fue llevada a cabo a través de una discusión literaria, donde primero se hizo una exhaustiva búsqueda de los textos y autores que hablan sobre las políticas lingüísticas, y además se discuten y comparten las diferentes findings de algunos artículos que fueron codificados para responder a la pregunta de investigación y las categorías relacionadas: las políticas lingüísticas en Colombia, la reflexión docente en sus prácticas, profesores como creadores de políticas lingüísticas, el éxito de las políticas lingüísticas y el rol del currículo. A lo largo de la investigación se discuten estas categorías en pro de encontrar una respuesta a nuestra pregunta de investigación: *How is the Reflection of Language Policy related to pedagogical practices?* , para así identificar la importancia de las políticas lingüísticas y como son utilizadas por los maestros.

Palabras Claves: Política Lingüística, Práctica Pedagógica, Reflexión a las políticas Lingüísticas.

Degree Requirement

This research project is presented as a fundamental requirement to graduate from the Bachelor of Education in English Teaching Program (licenciatura en Inglés) at Facultad de Educación, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, in Medellín, Colombia.

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Introduction

The purpose of this investigation is to analyze the different perceptions that teachers have about linguistic policies and how they identify them in their pedagogical practices. It will be achieved through the rigorous research of theoretical antecedents and the construction of an information retrieval technique. This process will allow teachers to reflect on the impact that linguistic policies have on current education and inside the classroom. The appropriate context to carry out this research will be the facilities of the Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, with Participants, professionals immersed and permeated by the teaching of the foreign language, 4 Teachers of Higher Education who will give their input through the experience thus contributing to new knowledge and thus analyzing the following problem. However, considering the current situation with Covid-19, the methodology has changed into a literature review based on the important topics we will develop through this paper.

In order to understand the importance of this research it is important to be aware that, for being competitive in a globalized world the national government of Colombia has formulated a number of language policies to lead the country to have an advanced English level (MEN, 2004). However, the degree of foreign languages of the Universidad Católica Luis Amigo also seeks from its mission and prior objectives the formation of teachers who are critical and reflective in their teaching practices based on the framework that the government imposed by applying language policies for the success development of a curriculum. Nevertheless, when we had our first approach to Trabajo de Grado I in the line of Language Policies, we found that there is a distant relation and few interests in students related to language policies even considering the lack of knowledge that students from this career have about what language policies are. However, from our teaching experiences we have identified certain reasons why language policies are not well presented in teachers' practices (Gomez, M 2017), for example teachers unfit for the area, the lack of resources and the problems presented in specific contexts of the city. Outside of the classrooms we can perceive an unfair country according to the violence situations that do not even allow practicum students to carry on their practice in some institutions of the urban area.

However, young people seem to be away to the context of our country considering that society perceive we are going to become only in teachers. That is the reason why we are interested to know what is the role of language policies in developing critical teachers aware of the reality that we are living but also in the appropriation of a real use of the language for a purpose in different educational contexts in our city.

The proposed research seeks by means some research techniques to discover how teachers implement linguistic policies in their practices, how they are understood as their reflection on these fundamentals, and finally understanding how these programs established by the (MEN) contribute to teacher training but also how this understanding enriches their critical thinking. This process will allow us to discover the understanding of the arrangements established by the government to teach a second language and how these projects contribute to the teacher's academic development.

This result will allow the acquisition of new knowledge about the different perceptions and thoughts of teachers regarding linguistic policies and how this policy is assigned to their pedagogical practices, academic development, identity and critical thinking.

To develop our investigation process in order to demonstrate how teachers, through the appropriation of L.P develop a critical reflection about their teaching practices, we propose the following specific objectives:

- To describe the different perceptions of teachers regarding the programs established by the (MEN) and the benefits subtract from their academic development.
- To compare the different critical thoughts and reflections that teachers have regarding to language policies after being immersed on the topic.
- To evidence through teaching experiences the self- change teachers have inside the classroom.

Literature Review

To contextualize our investigation, we have defined 5 categories in terms of finding information, authors and relevant data for nurturing our research.

From different authors language policies are rules that nations draw up to dictate which form of language will be taught in schools and used as the official tongue of the nation (Schiffman, 1996). Even governments are not able to assure the correct application of those policies, they have to be assumed as part of the administration of a specific territory in which teachers and all the participants in educational contexts have to be part of this. When talking about language policies it is related to language culture that is, “the set of behaviors, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religion-historical circumstances associated with a particular language” (Schiffman, 1996). The connection between these concepts is the relevant importance of background and previous contexts of a community, territory, city or country in terms of making decisions when the application of language policies for educational processes. Others authors reflect about language policies as a “hidden agendas which operate behind language policy, examining the decisions surrounding language use and emphasizing the effects of these decisions and potential constraints on different groups within society” (Shohamy 2006).

Ricento and Hornberger (1996) said: “politics are inseparable from any discussion of something so central to human society as language” (p, 411). Therefore, these authors stated that politics play the central role among language use and implementation, even more in a society where language is ruled by a bunch of different policies proposed by the government which wants to make it an instrument for competition, a business.

In the appropriation of language policies, it is important to define the role of teachers as owner of their processes evidencing those policies inside the classroom. By this process, teachers get an invitation that H. Richard (2018) reflects proposing: “teachers must construct, reconstruct and deconstruct the knowledge of critical pedagogy in the preparation of teachers.” By doing this, teachers will be able to reflect about their practices in the

classroom. Usma (2015) stated that teachers are working in collaborative groups in order to modify the curriculum and apply new methodologies and approaches that contribute to the change in their teaching practices and beliefs, focusing on what students like and their plans to choose a career. However, the majority of these results are low due to the lack of materials, school structures and social strata. Despite all the efforts made by the governmental entities, results have shown a higher level of success in higher strata society and low results in lower strata society (Usma, 2015, Usma & Pelaez, 2017).

In the research process carried out by Garzon, E (2018) is possible to identify teachers' perception about policies or guidelines as it is referred on the paper based on the lack of chance teachers have to actively participate in the general adaptation of those curriculums, so they have to assume the role inside the classroom as maker of success teaching and learning processes. It helps them to reflect about what is happening in the institutional level and obviously reflect about their weakness and strengths between their performance in language teaching and students outcomes

Pelaez (2019) stated: "the current context of Colombia demands more reflective and political stances from future teachers" (p, 6). This means that the new age of teachers who are coming to take place in the education world, must be aware of the importance that this subject has, and how it plays against and with them at the moment of teaching a second language. In order for this to happen it is necessary for them to get in touch with it, to explore it, use them and create new policies.

Once we understand what language policy is, is important to develop this concept into our close context in which a new proposal appears: Language Policy Appropriation. This concept is developed by different authors who from different experiences and perspectives found how teachers of foreign languages have to appropriate all the policies created around the language in terms of giving students the best learning environment. Shohamy, E (2006) develops an idea of how language policies allow society to construct society itself in a perfect paradigm considering what is written on the paper. On the other hands, the author also demonstrated how language s are manipulated by governments and authorities to

regulate the use of language in society, something that affects language teaching. From the text we could consider that the author contradicts herself through the whole text, however this is a relevant perspective in which we can identify why teachers have to become Language Policy Maker beyond being Language Policy Authors.

In those contexts, teachers are facing different challenges to make students feel engaged and motivated or nurture them (Usma, 2015). There are different factors that play against teachers at the moment of doing this action, such as, student's lack of motivation, student's view of language, previous experiences with the language, and self-confidence at the moment of using it.

Despite all the efforts made by the governmental entities, results have shown a higher level of success in higher strata society and low results in lower strata society (Usma, 2015, Usma & Pelaez, 2017). It shows how big the difference is among the social divisions regarding education, this will be reflected what Usma (2019) mentioned about some influencing factors such as: the majority of teachers did not have the oral competence required by the new approaches, the intensification of school hours, the way in which teachers taught was the most comfortable, and the use of a European model that did not take into account the Colombian context and its environment, he also mentioned about some factors for teaching English such as lack of resources and hard work in gaining the student's attention and lack of training, since most of them did not have the oral capacity and development of language skills. This result provides higher strata education a higher position in the competitive race schools have to be in the best range among other schools.

It is quite interesting to notice the difference between both sectors public and private, when education is supposed to be the same for everyone all over the country. However, in every dark place there is a shining light, which means that in some cases some teachers according to Usma (2019), accepts the linguistic policies but chooses the most comfortable way to teach them, and implement these designs in his classes and complies with implementing them.

This adaptation and implementation of language policies are not the only concerns that education beholds, because some of the biggest challenges are the proficiency of language and lack of preparations by teachers in a second language. Correa & Gonzales assured that the biggest challenge is to be able to respond to the state's demand regarding the levels of English and to be able to respond to the needs that arise in order to carry out the language in the public school. Pointing this out brings to the discussion whether it is language or values what makes a teacher. Of course the lack of enough prepared teacher to teach English in primary school is probably the most pressing and enduring challenge that public elementary schools have had to face since the issuance of the General Education Law in 1994. In fact, in a historical article written by Cárdenas (2001), based on a series of surveys carried out in the cities of Cali and Popayán between 1995 and 1999, Cárdenas discussed how English licensed teachers were being absorbed primarily by private institutions, leaving aside the public ones.

All this generates a conflict in the education system, because the more laws, strategies and plans are set up to make the learning and teaching English process easier the more blurry it gets. A deadline to make a whole country bilingual will not work out, it will only do it when the governmental plans start thinking about students and teachers needs and not in the country needs. “The project (COFE) offered professional development to local teacher educators; provided material resources to promote the use of self-access centers; proposed a framework for the reform of teacher preparation programs; and introduced local university and school stakeholders to mostly U.S. — and U.K.— oriented notions of reflective practice, practitioner research, and autonomy in language learning” Usma, J (2009). At the time, the government of Colombia was aware of teacher’ situations, that is the reason why the formation teachers received helped them to develop a critical autonomy regarding to their teaching practices and how language policies were accomplished. All this process was possible thanks to the formation in educational research and the tools teachers got to improve their own teachers’ educational programs.

Methodology

Regarding our research process and considering the emergent situation at the moment to develop this research presented by the Covid-19 which did not allow us to go into the field, We made the decision to make a methodological change which was implemented with the intention to evidence our objectives and, therefore, provide a solution to the question initially posed, carrying out a literature review of different related documents and based on 3 guiding questions: *What ideas did you find related to Teachers' process in developing curriculum and classes based on LP?*, *Do Language Policies mean success in teaching learning process?* And the point of view of different authors regarding our research question: *How Language Policies relates to teachers' reflection on their teaching practices?* Our investigation is based on a Qualitative approach with an interpretative paradigm which will be achieved through a Literature Review based on different authors regarding our research question. From these papers we found different information that will be presented along the text where it could be identified the importance of linguistic policies inside the curriculum role.

Discussion and findings.

In order to depart from the curriculum it is necessary to define the necessities that can be found in the different context where the second language is going to be taught, then the support that can be provided from the different educational entities and the issues that can affect the teaching process, everything leading and related to the teaching role.

Now, it is important to mention the field of language policies in Colombia, where the view of language is an instrumentalization and all the governmental efforts to have a better level of English along the country is reflected itself on teachers, Usma (2009). Teachers whose all expectations relies on them, but not only coming from the government or schools where they work, but as well from students, from society and from themselves, this last one regarding to the demands that a language teacher must have in order to teach it, because it would be contradictory to demand students to be proficiency in language when the same teacher is not well prepared to do.

The biggest challenge is to be able to respond to the state's demand regarding the levels of English and to be able to respond to the needs that arise in order to carry out the language in the public school and to students in actuals encounter a variety of professional challenges. These challenges refer to the difficulties that primary teachers experience even before enter their classrooms. They understand the lack of preparation of teachers to teach the language, and poor design of the initiatives established by the MEN to provide this preparation; namely the PD programs Lack of enough teachers prepared to teach English in primary schools. This is probably the most pressing and enduring challenge that public elementary schools have had to face since the issuance of the General Education Law in 1994.

As teachers had to face all those policies developed by governments they had to overcome different challenges, for example: Professional challenges: Regarding difficulties they presented to teach a language. As can be seen, the problem of lack of enough teachers prepared to teach English in primary schools in Colombia is ancient and its solution is not in sight. This is because the Colombian government has refused to address its main causes: (a) that the few English teachers that are coming out into the market prefer to go into

universities or private schools since these provide more attractive packages that incorporate better salaries, more incentives, better access to resources, and more motivated students than the public schools (Álvarez et al., 2011); and (b) that the government itself does not allow secretaries of education to hire English licensed teachers for primary schools (Usma, 2015, p. 100).

Correa & Gonzales (2006) said that the learning opportunities are related to the social status and that teachers need to find the causes of this problematic to apply a solution. In the Colombian context it is well known that not all the social status have the same opportunities, for example in the rural area where most of curriculum is focused on the real context that students live, from the urban area where it is more open wider. It is quite interesting to notice the difference between both sectors public and private, when education is supposed to be the same for everyone all over the country. However and as we mentioned before considering Usma (2009) words: “In every dark place there is a shining light” which means that in some cases some teachers accepts the linguistic policies but chooses the most comfortable way to teach them, and implement these designs in his classes and complies with implementing them.

By the time when teachers decide to transcend what they do, they will have to reflect on their practices having into account the language policies and decide if they will remain being policy doers, or become policy makers (Pelaez 2017), starting from the bases of educational processes, the Curriculum. Garzon (2018) talks about the reflection in action and the reflection on action (RIA, ROA), where the collaborative work is required to success in the curriculum design. This will bring challenges in the professional development and of course the adaptation of the curriculum (Contreras 2001), relying this responsibility on teachers. According to Usma (2019), the teacher accepts the linguistic policies but chooses the most comfortable way to teach him, implements these designs in his classes and complies with implementing it, this teacher also mentioned about some factors for teaching English such as lack of resources and hard work in capturing the student's attention and lack of training, since most of them did not have the oral capacity and development of language skills.

In the reflection of the teaching practice, there are a number of questions that are asked about how to carry out the teaching course or what should be taught based on what teachers need to know regarding how to teach “properly”. In this reflection, there is a challenge for these teachers and it is to respond to the government demand regarding the linguistic levels and the professional development of future teachers. The text by Ball, D. L., & Cohen, D.K. (1999) highlighted some questions like these: What is working? What doesn't work? For whom do certain things work or not work? In order to teach well, given the reformers' ambitions and the situational and uncertain nature of teaching and learning, teachers would need to use what they learn to correct, refine, and improve instruction.

“As is evident, the discourse of autonomy and improvement in public education contrasted with the lack of teachers, few materials, limited professional development opportunities, and constraining school structures that conflicted with the policy mandates”. Usma, J (2009). Language Policies relate to teachers ‘reflection on their teaching practices considering the resilience perspective teachers have to develop an English environment with our context and all the situation presented.

Everything is related to the importance of the challenges of teachers in adapting language policies in the classroom, the importance of the context in the creation of the curriculum, the reflection of the professional teacher on the development of their pedagogical practice.

This can be identified in Usma (2019), where teachers' ideas to carry out the English teaching to secondary schools in contexts of public sectors were pessimistic, since there were few resources and the work was difficult. Five years after the (Ley Nacional de Educación) the foreign language had been implemented for the entire system, according to the conditions that were lived at that moment and it does not vary from nowadays. The teacher positioned the student and had a direct effect on the student's attitude and interest, however the teachers mentioned in this case manage to achieve with the policy by applying the established designs.

This literature review brought us to discuss about the importance of language policies in Colombia, its creation and application in the different schools context that exist inside the country, its role at the moment of the learning process and the challenges that teachers face

in adapting them to the classroom. In order to face those challenges it is expected from teachers to reflect in their self-practice to identify what issues and necessities exist inside the class and turn them into opportunities to success and provide solutions to the society in which they are immersed.

This reflection leads teacher to change their way of thinking and practices, adapting the language policies to the reality, heading to one of the most important teacher's labor, which is the creation of curriculum, and in some cases the adaptation and change of the same. Having into account that it is the studies plan proposed to teach which will guide to the success of education, and in this case the success in language policies as matter of aid factor to improve the English teaching and learning inside the country. Teachers become Agent of change when they develop curriculum considering all the necessities they find in the schools. Garzón, E (2018) gives an important role to the concept "Collaborative Work" considering the great impact and influence it has in learning community constitute. Teacher have a far opportunity to contribute in the curriculum construction, so they are invited to make few changes inside the classroom as their individual work-table in which they can build meaningful process for their students.

Through the history, even if teachers seem heroes trying to carry out their processes with a strong resilience and a professional soul, a general feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration could be perceived in the field as related to education, mostly in language teaching. As Valencia (2006) concluded in a study of the times:

Many students feel that success in English language learning is only achieved outside the realm of the public school. The ideas that teachers have about the possibility of learning English in public school contexts are equally pessimistic. There are few resources and difficult working conditions, and the way teachers position the learners also has a direct effect on the attitude of the students; however, teachers, such as those in this case study, do manage to comply [with the policies] (p. 34). This is consider the first view regarding Language Policies in Colombia, no resources, no knowledge, no possibilities to learn in context.

“Learning a foreign language, in this way, loses most of its cultural and cognitive development motivations, and becomes another strategy to build a better resume, get better employment, be more competitive in the knowledge economy (Guile, 2006), or, as Lantolf and Sunderman have clearly explained, even participate in wars taking place overseas”. “As happens in Colombia, these instrumental views of education and policy are tightly connected to particular notions of “development”, “competitiveness”, “human capital”, and “knowledge economy”. These notions shape current policy and public perceptions of formal education and foreign language learning, especially when people see in education and foreign languages a real opportunity to succeed and find a better job.”

Instrumentalization of language learning based on language policies.

To conclude, despite the adversity, ups and downs that arose due to the worldwide health emergency, alternative ways were found to carry out the completion of the investigative process. Likewise, it was possible to appreciate, based on the literature review, some common aspects such as the reflection of teaching practice, the challenges that teachers have in adapting the programs established in the country, the importance of the context and the teacher in the realization of these policies, and language as an economic improvement.

In the same process it was reflected that in the country the needs and opinions of teachers should be taken into account and also the context to proceed with the design of language policies, the reflection of teaching practice and professional development as well as the teacher meet the state's demand and how the government has tried to implement the different programs established and cause a positive impact.

This paper has allowed us to know the process of a research project, the analysis of a literature review, the importance of designing programs for teaching contextualized English, reflect on our practice and through it acquire new knowledge and perspectives from some authors.

It seems that the big entities in charge of creating the language policies are not aware of the several difficulties and obstacles that teachers have against them at the moment of teaching or designing a class. In order to create a policy it is important to be immersed in the context where it is going to be applied, because implementing the new technologies in

the English classroom will not be useful in rural school where students do not have the possibility to access online. Therefore, we dare to say that every teacher should be in charge of creating their own language policies, focusing on their own context, so it in this way the teaching-learning process might have better results, leading from the fact that the only person who is in charge of the teaching process is the same teacher. This person is the only one who can make feel students engaged and willing to learn.

For this to happen teachers need to face several challenges and overcome their own fears to become competent in teaching the language, so it is required as well to reflect in the own practice and participate in the change of the school curriculum, to open more language opportunities focused on the real needs presented.

Language policies are different proposals that come directly from the entities in charge of improving the quality of education. In Colombia, language policies have been the subject of discussion in the field of education, thanks to the high demand and expectation of proficiency in a second language such as English, and the low results that most of these show.

The vast majority of these policies are created in a decontextualized way, since the low results are due to different factors present. The creators of language policies overlook taking into account the same teacher and his context, highlighting that not all are equal. However, not all of them present the same contextual difficulties, but from the same teacher. With this we refer to the teacher's abilities to teach a second language, entering into the discussion whether the linguistic level is the most important or the teaching of values and preparation for life with service to the community. Change is in our hands. Being reflective on/in our practices depends of certain factor, but we are the ones who know our reality and based on that, we must identify in what we do, the chance to offer our students the best learning process possibilities.

Conclusion

Despite the adversity and ups and downs that arose due to the worldwide health emergency, alternative ways were found to carry out the completion of the investigative process. Likewise, it was possible to appreciate, based on the literature review, some common aspects such as the reflection of teaching practice, the challenges that teachers have in adapting the programs established in the country, the importance of the context and the teacher in the realization of these policies, and language as an economic improvement.

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