

Native speakerism in a Colombian bilingual context?¹

¿ElhablanativoenuncontextobilingüeColombiano?

Prononciation native dans un contexte Colombien?

A ideologia do falante nativo em um contexto bilíngüe Colombiano?

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Cómo citar este artículo: Espinosa-Vargas, J. A. (2019-1). Native speakerism in a Colombian bilingual context?. *quaest.disput*, 12 (24), 97-111

Resumen

Este artículo describe cómo el inglés es el foco principal de las políticas bilingües en Colombia. Se presenta la revisión crítica del autor sobre diferentes textos para llamar la atención en cómo se ha incorporado el bilingüismo a las políticas actuales. Se cuestiona la importancia de la lengua inglesa y se toman en cuenta opiniones diferentes sobre la dicotomía del hablante nativo y del hablante no nativo para describir cómo puede verse un profesor de inglés cualificado en un contexto en el que las políticas parecen no funcionar bien. En el caso de Colombia, programas ambiciosos para la enseñanza del Inglés usualmente favorecen el estatus y el conocimiento del hablante nativo por encima del docente colombiano que no puede ser categorizado dentro de un modelo nativo (Guerrero, 2008). Para poder entender tal situación, se analizaron las opiniones de diferentes autores en relación con el concepto de bilingüismo y sus efectos en las actuales prácticas de enseñanza y aprendizaje colombianas. Además, la forma en la que el mito del hablante nativo ha dado forma al modelo ideal del

1 Recibido: 08/03/2018. Aprobado: 29/10/2018

Este artículo científico, fue escrito para llevar a cabo uno de los requisitos de grado de la Maestría en Docencia de Idiomas.

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Palabras clave: Bilingüismo, profesores nativos de habla inglesa, profesores no nativos de habla inglesa, políticas lingüísticas, idioma inglés en Colombia.

Summary

This article describes how English is seen as the main focus of the bilingual policies in Colombia. In this reflective paper the author's critical review of different texts is presented to draw attention to bilingualism in the current policies. The importance of the English language is questioned and different views on the Native Speaker and Non-Native Speaker dichotomy are taken into account to describe how a qualified English teacher may be seen in a context where the policies seem not to work well. In the case of Colombia, ambitious programs for English teaching usually favor the status and knowledge of the native speaker over the Colombian teachers who cannot be categorized into what a native model features (Guerrero, 2008). In order to gain understanding different authors' views were analyzed in regards of the idea of bilingualism and its effects on the Colombian current teaching-learning practices. Even more, the way in which the native speaker myth has shaped the ideal model of language teacher in a context where opportunities to practice English are limited.

Key words: Bilingualism, Native English Speaking Teachers, Non-Native English Speaking Teachers, language policies, English language in Colombia.

Résumé

Cet article décrit comment l'anglais est considéré comme l'axe principal des politiques bilingues en Colombie. Cet article de réflexion présente la critique de l'auteur sur différents textes afin d'attirer l'attention sur le bilinguisme dans les politiques actuelles. L'importance de la langue anglaise est mise en doute et différents points de vue sur la dichotomie des locuteurs natifs et des locuteurs non natifs sont pris en compte pour décrire comment un professeur d'anglais qualifié peut être perçu dans un contexte où les politiques semblent ne pas bien fonctionner. Dans le cas de la Colombie, des programmes ambitieux d'enseignement de l'anglais favorisent généralement le statut et les connaissances du locuteur natif par rapport aux enseignants colombiens, qui ne peuvent pas être classés dans les caractéristiques d'un modèle natif (Guerrero, 2008). Afin de mieux comprendre le point de vue des différents auteurs, nous avons analysé l'idée de bilinguisme et ses effets sur les pratiques actuelles d'enseignement et d'apprentissage en Colombie. D'ailleurs, la manière dont le mythe de la langue maternelle a façonné le modèle idéal de professeur de langue dans un contexte où les possibilités de pratiquer l'anglais sont limitées.



Mots-clés: bilinguisme, professeurs anglophones, professeurs non anglophones, politiques linguistiques, langue anglaise en Colombie.

Resumo

Este artigo descreve como o inglês é visto como o foco principal das políticas bilíngues na Colômbia. Neste artigo reflexivo, a revisão crítica do autor de diferentes textos é apresentada para chamar a atenção para o bilinguismo nas políticas atuais. A importância da língua inglesa é questionada e visões diferentes sobre a dicotomia do falante nativo e do falante não nativo são levadas em conta para descrever como um professor de inglês qualificado pode ser visto em um contexto onde as políticas parecem não funcionar bem. No caso da Colômbia, programas ambiciosos de ensino de inglês geralmente favorecem o status e o conhecimento do falante nativo sobre os professores colombianos que não podem ser categorizados no que um modelo nativo apresenta (Guerrero, 2008). A fim de obter entendimento, diferentes visões de autores foram analisadas em relação à ideia de bilinguismo e seus efeitos nas atuais práticas de ensino-aprendizagem colombianas. Ainda mais, a forma como o mito do falante nativo moldou o modelo ideal de professor de línguas num contexto em que as oportunidades de praticar o inglês são limitadas.

Palavras-Chave: Bilinguismo, Professores Nativos de Língua Inglesa, Professores de Língua Inglesa Não Nativa, Políticas Linguísticas, Língua Inglesa na Colômbia.

Introduction

In the field of Language Education, many beliefs and perceptions appear as important sources of concern. Taking into account such elements can contribute to a better understanding of the interests and needs when teaching or learning a foreign language. Foreign language policies are a common subject in the Colombian context due to the outstanding role English fulfils in order to become part of today's world, and the status given by the English language seems to favor the quality of life for the citizens involved in it according to Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN, 2015). In Colombia, since the English language became the main focus for bilingual education (Guerrero, 2008), many anxieties not only on the part of the teachers but also on the students about the proper form to teach and learn English appeared. The term Bilingualism is rather a product of the framing of concepts from the public in general, learners of English, teachers and public policies to what it can be constituted in the Colombian context when a clear objective has not been set. In the last few years bilingualism (understood as Spanish-English) has become a big issue in public educational policies, and in doing so many different efforts have taken place to achieve the so-desired bilingual status within the students' capabilities.

It is surprising that even the official tests that measure the quality of undergraduate programs in Colombia, such as SABER PRO (suggested as the standardized external evaluation instrument) only focuses on testing the knowledge of students in a particular language which is English; other languages studied by an undergraduate student are not taken into account, so to prove ability in a foreign language, the only option to do so is in English (Even though that person did not study it during a professional career). The SABER PRO test is administered to students who are about to complete their college education and it is mandatory as a requirement for graduation. This may show low results in the proficiency of the English language since many students did not consider English for their career plans. Some students may choose some other options, such as French or German which are not taken into account nor in the policies or the official exams by Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación in the Colombian context (ICFES, 2015) which also favors the policies of Colombia Bilingüe or Colombia Very Well, since it reduces the meaning of Bilingualism to the use of English alongside with the Spanish language (Baker, 2006).

Nowadays the importance of the English language and its use around the world has increased and gained more popularity. In Colombia we are not far apart from this reality thanks to the campaign of the British Council to spread the use of English worldwide (Philipson, 2000). The English language has appeared in our education settings by undermining the use of other languages due to the global aspects that favor the use of such language and the haste of the country to become part of the globalized world (Valencia, 2005), so the English hierarchy is evident from different points of view. Graddol (2006) highlights the importance of English around the world in educational contexts, and he points out the fact that 53% of students from Non-native English Speaking countries, including ours, are taught English as a foreign language. Besides more than 80% of formal international institutions of world relevance see it as the official language (Crystal, 1997).

To favor the strengthening of the foreign language the Ministry of National Education in Colombia (MEN) first established the Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (National Bilingual Program) back in 2004. The main objective was to promote the learning of a foreign language as a state policy aiming to improve the teaching and use of the new language by focusing in the English language (de Mejía, 2006) towards economic and political worldwide inclusion and in such a way to achieve the desired “Bilingual Status” (already mentioned as English-Spanish). Later on the Colombia Very Well program appeared to counter the flaws of the former program under the advice of the British Council. But only after five months of implementation it did not succeed, just to open the path for the latest program: “Colombia Bilingüe” (Bonilla & Tejada-Sanchez, 2016). These policies became the main source for reference and goals produced within the English teaching and learning for the public institutions agenda.

The National Bilingual Program (NBP) was established not only as an instrument to improve the quality of education, but as a strategy to promote a competitive



society (MEN, 2006). The implementation of the NBP is based on the fact that foreign language use is seen as a fundamental feature to any society interested in becoming part of the global dynamics of economic, academic, technological and cultural aspects (Fandiño-Parra, 2012). At the same time the improvement of the language competence in English leads to increasing opportunities for the citizens, recognition of other cultures and personal and group growth. Speaking English is seen as a beneficial instrument to those who use it since they can get access to the modern world which is characterized by innovation, use of technology, economic power, and scientific knowledge (Maurais, 2003). These aspects have continued to be the focus points of the different policies in regards to the use of English so far with little or no significant changes among their policies (MEN, 2015).

Quality of English teaching in the Colombian context

Sánchez-Jabba (2012) estimated that the quantity of high school graduates in Colombia who could be considered as bilinguals was really low, approximately 1% of such population. This may indicate that the advances in terms of bilingualism (understood as English use) have been really slow, despite the prestige of the English language (Vélez-Rendón, 2003). Teachers are considered to be the responsible for the low levels of bilingualism among Colombian students since an important number of the English teachers do not have a proper dominance of the language they teach (Barón & Bonilla, 2011). That is a reason why the quality of the English teachers in the public schools of Colombia is seen as bad. From this view it is understood that the language teachers in most of the cases do not even get to the A2 level of English of the Common European Framework (CEFR, 2004) categorization according to Barón & Bonilla (2011).

Such a slow process for English learning is attributed in most of the cases to a low teachers' language usage, but not to the designed policies. According to a research of the "Centro de Estudios Económicos Regionales del Banco de la República," in 2013 just 35% of the teachers in the public sector had an intermediate level of B1. Based on the same study none of the teachers had the level of language required for teaching which is C1 or C2 agreeing with the CEFR for English Teaching, which is the main standard used for teaching languages in Colombia adapted by MEN and having implicitly a native-like use (Sanchez, 2013).

At the moment of getting to the in-service teaching practices teachers face the fact that there are materials, policies and even tests based on native models that demand them to have a native-like function and use of the language instead of a communicative setting which is the main premise for using a language. Sauvignon (1983) describes the function of a language as "the use to which language is put, the purpose of an utterance rather than the particular grammatical form an utterance takes" (p.13). It can be said that the main purpose

of the language is not to sound as a native, but to be able of giving meaning to what we say or want to express in a given situation in any language.

If we were to ask any English learner in a Colombian educational context to define a good level of English, what would they say? Would they say something like “as native-like as possible”? Probably most of them would say yes, because as students and teachers have been continuously exposed to the conception that native speakers use the target language in a perfect way. But, do we know where the concept of native speaker comes from? Or in which ways it is defined? Even more, which people can be categorized as native speakers and if those aspects are merely assumed on physical appearance or a country of origin? These previous questions may serve as a way to find what considerations are taken into account to enhance the place of a Native English Speaker (NES) over the Non Native English Speaker (NNES), if there are such. Do we realize that these ideologies may shape teachers and students’ professional development? And probably add to the undermining of what being bilingual really means in a context where English is taken as a Foreign Language and opportunities to take it to its practice are scarce.

After a bilingual goal

The obligation to become part of a competent society in the world makes individual institutions and governments to look for strategies to grow and expand into new markets. Among the strategies implemented, the inclusion of a foreign language is seen as a fundamental tool to access the scientific knowledge as well as a factor to get to know new cultures in order to do other academic activities. Student mobility becomes a major for internationalization and in doing so there is implicit the need of using a foreign language that allows the institutions and the country to be part and competent in the globalized world (Ardila-Muñoz, 2016).

In the last years we have observed many different native speakers (as it has been nominated by the Ministry of National Education) from different countries (MEN, 2015) where English is not even the official language as a strategy from the policy designed; they have arrived in Colombia to support the Colombian English teachers so the students can achieve the expected level of B1 by the end of high school studies. These native English speaker teachers (NESTs) seem to have an advantage over Colombian teachers who are non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) and it is the fact that they are considered to be more competent in the use of the language they are teaching no matter their didactics and pedagogical background (Medgyes, 1992), since the only aspect that seems to matter is the fact that they are proficient users of the language. It is not surprising to find in the collective beliefs and as an administrative decision that the native English teacher is a good choice, or even a better one for teaching a foreign language over the NNEST. Yet more not only the native teacher



but the native speaker with no pedagogical formation due to an “automatic extrapolation from competent speaker to competent teacher based on linguistic grounds alone” (Seidlhofer, 1999, p.236).

At the present time general tendencies in Colombia seem to favor the NES teachers, and probably this situation helps to enhance the privilege position of the NEST over the NNEST. Some authors see the dichotomy “NES vs. NNEST” as politically incorrect (Medgyes, 2001), declaring that NNEST teachers offer a good learning model to the students highlighting the advantage of sharing the same L1. Some research trends are favorable to the side of non-native speakers (Braine, 2010; Medgyes, 1992) and come out to defend their position. A NNEST teacher has more things in common with his or her students by having been a language learner him or herself. And so many other differences and characteristics could be mentioned in favor or against, but this is not a matter of comparing, but a matter of finding what is right for a Colombian-like context.

The native model comes to be present in daily teaching practices as a goal to achieve and it deals with an outdated and strict concept of bilingualism such as Bloomfield’s (1933) who claimed that a bilingual should possess “native-like control of two or more languages” (p.56). During undergraduate programs pre-service teachers are required to achieve a certain level of language knowledge and use which is expected to have a native-like portrait, due to the materials used for learning, syllabus designs and the approaches presented (Lee, 2004). Disregarding the fact of being in an EFL context, the language knowledge only seems to be measured by the results obtained in tests designed to measure the native-like use of the language, when opportunities to put into practice such use are vague or scarce in the Colombian context.

Butler and Hakuta (2004) defy Bloomfield’s (1933) definition of having native control of two languages, because this strict view limits the number of individuals and groups that could be classified as bilinguals, not to mention that such definition makes difficult to operationalize “native-like fluencies” (p.114). In the phenomenon of bilingualism some definitions are proposed based on language use rather than language competence, such as Weinreich (1953) and Grosjean (1997) who define bilinguals as individuals or groups of people who acquire knowledge and use it in more than one language.

Following that line of thought some other not so strict views on bilingualism appear, and so an individual with different proficiency degrees in both languages could be considered as a bilingual. According to Butler and Hakuta (2004) bilinguals are people who can use their abilities to communicate or interact in oral or written form in one or more languages despite the proficiency level. Before knowing the range of different definitions that bilingualism may have, it is helpful to see bilingualism as an always evolving term that is more complex than the superficial concept of mastering two languages as a native speaker. However, the term “bilingualism” has been used for different purposes and its use may be apart from what it entails according to García (1997). Bilingual

education has been reduced to merely the use of two languages as the mean of instruction where the mother tongue is seen as something not worth of using and it is put aside as another subject of the curriculum. It is such practice that gives power to the narrow viewpoints on what bilingualism is and involves.

Native or Non-Native in a desired bilingual context?

Native English speakers are traditionally seen as the primary standard-providers of a model of language use – Kachru’s “Inner Circle” of his Three Concentric Circles model (Kachru, 1992), and here appears one problem that may not allow students or even teachers to get to the desired level of language use. Teachers and students are expected to use perfect structures and know the rules of the language in order to be considered proper or proficient users, and even certain aspects apart from communication as pronunciation, accent and grammar. That is why at this point the native model stands out and puts aside a communicative model. If observed in a global way this position may not describe accurately the huge number of NNEs that goes up to 80% of all English teachers around the world (Canagarajah, 1999).

Beyond numbers, it is important to highlight the context where Non-native use of English is institutionalized or has a historical setting, as in the case of former British colonies or in the instance where it has an unofficial performance variety (Kachru, 1982). This specific group is usually known as Kachru’s “Expanding Circle,” the outmost of the three concentric circles, which according to Kachru depends on native standards (Kachru, 1992). The Expanding Circle as suggested by its name, includes a rapidly increasing number of speakers from other countries (Crystal, 2003) where English is predominant in the media, and English as a foreign language is often required by the time students reach a certain level of schooling.

Due to the obstacles presented by the native-like use and the actual use given by Non-native English Speakers the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) movement has developed. (Graddol, 2006). This movement aims to ignore native standards completely and in its place to identify those structures NNEs have in common. But the ELF movement endures many disapprovals; by disregarding native English standards, the movement defies a history of pedagogical custom. It is assumed that speakers share a common target that is not Standard English, yet specialists can only provide weak evidence defining precisely what that common target is (Berns, 2008), besides NNEs have political and economic power influences over the language and in that way the so-called nativeness appears to have become the (imposed) goal and in doing so, adding up to the enhanced myth of native-like achievement.

Different studies and research have focused on defining the advantages or disadvantages, the strengths or weaknesses of the models involved in the



dichotomy, and how NNES teachers themselves perceive those strengths and weaknesses in regard of language and teaching abilities. Some of the first reflections regarding the differences between native and non-native speakers came in the 80s (Coppieters, 1987; Kachru, 1982; Kresovich, 1988; Nickel, 1985). Nonetheless, is Peter Medgyes a non-native speaker in The UK, who appears to be the first one to bring up the studies concerning the NNES teacher model. He published two articles in the *ELT Journal* with the titles “The schizophrenic teacher” published in 1983 and “Native or non-native: who’s worth more?” in 1992 which were his starting point to publish the book “The Non-native Teacher” (first published by Macmillan in 1994 and re-released by Hueber in 1999), there he showed his own experiences as a NNES teacher and direct observation to colleagues of his same so-called status.

Hueber (1999) worked on four hypothesis to show that NES teachers and NNES teachers are “two different species” (p.25). And those differences were stated in (1) language proficiency, and (2) teaching practice (behavior), that (3) most of the differences in teaching practice can be attributed to the difference in language proficiency, and that (4) both types of teachers can be equally good teachers on their own terms. Benke & Medgyes’ study (Llurda, 2006, pp.195 - 215) is one of the first to defy the idealized status of the NES teacher by “highlighting the benefits of being a NNES teacher” (Llurda, 2006, p.196). Based basically on differences in language proficiency (NES teachers are more proficient in the language), allocated roles in the language class (NNES teachers are stricter on grammar) and teaching styles (NES teachers are more casual).

As a way to see it today it is more important to get to know the NES teachers’ and the NNES teachers’ experiences in the language teaching field and how they perceive themselves in it. Because according to the above mentioned, each model has its own advantages (or disadvantages), and it is not a matter of being native or not but a matter of education, professionalism, experience and why not, self-esteem. There is no need to contribute to the debate of which model is better, but to educate and learn about the need to be competent in the current world. First, everyone can learn one or several languages; and second, the success of this learning depends on the real need or wish to use the new language(s) in authentic communication (Snow, 2007 as cited by Ordóñez, 2011). In Colombia, despite the fact we as teachers know the importance of another language, the monolingual context where we and our students interact make it a hard job since we do not use English to function as society.

It seems that for NNESs the use of the language is not in most of the cases an issue, but the low self-esteem they have may influence their development because they may feel a certain discrimination on behalf of others when not sounding as the proposed standards or not even looking as the proper users of the language (Ordoñez, 2011). Reves and Medgyes (1994) led a study where the perpetual fear of their students’ judgment made NNES teachers feel constantly self-conscious of their mistakes. According to these authors such “self-discrimination” often conducts to a poor self-image, which further can

deteriorate the language performance, and in doing so it can lead to an even stronger feeling of inferiority, despite their experience and extensive education.

Any teacher with a poor self-esteem, might experience these feelings. It is remarkable to see, that it seems acceptable for NES teachers to make some occasional mistakes while teaching, or not to know all the details about the English language (Amin, 2004). Contrary, when NNES teachers make the same mistakes or do not know everything about the English language, their teaching abilities and competencies are often immediately questioned (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005). This attitude from the students, NES teachers colleagues, and often even from the NNES teachers themselves, will often lead to feelings of inadequacy when teaching the language. Cullen (2001) complements, "A teacher without the requisite language skills will crucially lack authority and self confidence in the classroom, and this will affect all aspects of his or her performance" (p.29).

In an article named "A qualified non-native English-speaking teacher is second to none in the field," Astor (2000) describes that "a qualified teacher of English should be a professional in at least three fields of knowledge: pedagogy, methodology, and psycho and applied linguistics" (p.18). He complements by saying that being proficient in just one of these areas is not enough and that "no amount of fun or good relationship will make it up to the students" if the English teacher lacks competence in any of those areas already mentioned. Nonetheless, according to Astor, (2000) none of these three fields of knowledge comes naturally to anyone. Rather, all these different areas must be learned and practiced. Without proper education, NESs will not have a good experience in applied linguistics or pedagogy. In the same way, NNESs might know grammar but will also need to be educated in methodology and pedagogy, especially if they plan to teach in an ESL environment. For Astor (2000), so the NES-NNES dichotomy becomes outdated and is replaced by a "professional-non-professional," or "competent-incompetent" dichotomy, in which NNES teachers and NES teachers could fall regardless of their native language.

Reves & Medgyes (1994) concluded that NNES teachers are a lot more insecure than NES teachers about their English proficiency and knowledge since language proficiency constitutes the underpinning of the professional confidence of NNESTs. Language proficiency has been rated as the most essential characteristic of a good teacher (Lange, 1990). According to Doff (1987), a teacher's self-confidence in the classroom is weakened by a reduced knowledge of the English language. Poor command of the language can affect the self-esteem and professional prestige of the teacher and affect simple teaching procedures. Moreover, it can restrain the teacher from fulfilling the pedagogical requirements of a more communicative approach to language teaching. As shown by research, perceived language proficiency is an important issue for NNESTs and has an impact on their professional self-esteem and confidence (Brown, 2009).

How teachers perceive their own performance is a reflection of the way they teach (Brown, 2009). Teacher's perceptions and beliefs play an important role



in the practices they implement within the classroom in a straightforward relationship. The teachers' behaviors are highly influenced by their beliefs and in a certain way, these enhance their teaching practice (Williams & Burden, 1997). So it would be important to take into account the NNES teachers' perceptions on bilingualism and how they impact their roles led by a position from their own perspective. The perceptions on bilingualism may come from the successful view of English learning and teaching and how they are perceived in the classroom (Fishman, 1965).

Educators need to feel paired to other teachers, and such pairing can be attained by education itself. If future teachers and current teachers are taught to self-reflect on the daily activities that affect their teaching practices beyond the use of the language (without taking away the importance it deserves), it might raise awareness of the quality in language education. English-teaching proficiency is seen as a "plural system" that abandons the concept of native versus nonnative speakers and adopts instead the distinction of, "novice and expert" teachers (Canagarajah, 2005, p.27). That means, a "good teacher" can no longer be a NEST or a NNEST but can only be an educated person who masters a combination of linguistics, pedagogical, and methodological skills (Astor, 2000) matching the needs of a given context.

The dichotomy seen between NES teachers and NNES teachers seems to be present in everyday teaching practices of a foreign language learning environment and it can be probably misunderstood by the people involved in it, since as Han (2004) would state, "the concept is still assumed-based on common sense observation and intuition, instead of being understood from scientific inquiry" (p.174). Instead of widening a conceptual gap about the perceived advantages and/or disadvantages of NES teachers versus NNES teachers the intention of the policies by the Ministry of Education appear as good cooperative tools, but they focus mainly on the upper levels, instead of the elementary courses where it could be more relevant for future early-aged bilinguals. As de Mejía (2006) stated "While native English speaking teachers provide usefully language modelling, I would strongly advocate the importance of schools hiring highly competent Colombian bilingual teachers" (p.165) for an earlier language approach.

Apart from having competent teachers, which is an important fact, the main concern should be to know how bilingualism works and what it really entails. There is no need to blame it all on teachers while the policies have not been clear about the role educators should play in such policies; when teachers have not received enough tools to be considered as ideal prospects in an educational context poorly designed in a country like Colombia. A country where many different languages collide but being only English the one that has the efforts on behalf of the government (or the privilege) to be considered the language in order to achieve a bilingual society.

Conclusion

The efforts of the Ministry of Education have been productive in the eye of the public thanks to the management of the image they give to its policies, but if you go deeper into them, it is possible to see they are very expensive policies with little or no effect in the development of proper bilingual education. Such a thing is a letdown since a good policy could lead not only students but citizens in general to gain a broader view on an intercultural perspective by trying to take into account different elements of the culture needed to be bilingual as it occurs in other parts of the world. In Colombia it still appears as a utopic thing to achieve since we are not accomplishing any results, because our policies have focused on reaching aspects not pertinent to our social reality, so how do we expect students to use properly a foreign language or more specifically English by going after a native-like use of the language when it is not seen as a need but as an imposition?

Education in Colombia needs to have the attention it deserves, education in general is so important to be left on the hands of the politics, lawyers, institutions and the policy makers who only seem to look forward to favor their own or third interests instead of the ones of the community. Teachers' and students' needs should be acknowledged, and not trying to make them fit into a decontextualized policy that so far has approached in the wrong direction. Instead of looking for anyone to blame, appropriate ways to improve the quality of education for everyone involved should be the main focus by means of leading policies from the experiences of the different academics involved in the daily education practices all around the country, and only then they could worry about becoming a bilingual society after a native model if desired or seen as something necessary in the Colombian current context.

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