

Raising High School English Teachers' awareness of EIL

El incremento de la conciencia del inglés como lengua internacional ILI en profesores de educación media

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Abstract

The present study is a three-stage action research that aims at raising EFL teachers' awareness of English as an International Language (EIL) and World Englishes (WE) within a critical perspective of inquiry. Through a taught module on English and its varieties, a survey, a reflection paper, and a semi-structured interview were used to collect the data. The results of the study showed that there was a clear change of conception, at the theoretical level, in teachers' papers. However, WE was regarded as future possibility for action. On the one hand, all of the participants said the module changed their conception of other varieties of English different from British and American ones. They all went from identifying themselves with either American or British variety, a celebratory perspective, to acknowledging and accepting other English varieties, a critical perspective of English as an international language (EIL).

Keywords: *Teachers's awareness, English as an international language (EIL), introducing EIL, World Englishes, Critical applied linguistics.*

Resumen

El presente estudio es una investigación acción de tres etapas cuyo objetivo es el incremento de la conciencia de los profesores sobre el inglés como lengua internacional (ILI) y sobre las diferentes variedades de inglés en el mundo (IM) dentro de una perspectiva crítica. A través de un módulo de enseñanza de inglés y sus variedades, se usaron una encuesta, un trabajo de reflexión y una entrevista semiestructurada para recoger los datos. Los resultados del estudio mostraron que había un claro cambio en la concepción, en términos teóricos, en los trabajos escritos de los profesores. Sin embargo, las variedades de inglés en el mundo IM se vieron como una posibilidad de acción. De un lado, todos los participantes dijeron que el módulo cambió su concepción de otras variedades del inglés diferentes de la británica o la americana. Ellos cambiaron de identificarse con la variedad estadounidense o británica, una perspectiva celebrista, a reconocer y aceptar otras variedades de inglés, una perspectiva crítica del inglés como lengua internacional (ILI).

Palabras clave: *Conciencia del profesor, inglés como lengua internacional (ILI), presentación de ILI, variedades de inglés en el mundo, lingüística aplicada crítica.*

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Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is the term used in an all-expanding circle countries, which share some similarities. Nayar (1997) states that the label of EFL ought to be used for situations or countries where there is not history of prolonged British or USA political presence. This is the case of Colombia where English has no special status or internal function like in ESL contexts. Although the expansion of English in Colombia has taken place in the last decade, the aim of English here is still to facilitate contact with other speech communities in the wider international context. "Several developments that account for the importance attached to English are increasingly contributing to securing its status in the curriculum" in Colombia, according to Velez-Rendon (2003, p. 196).

American English should be the option for Colombia due to the proximity and cultural influence. However, the decision of what kind of English to teach is not an easy task any more for EFL teachers in any given context, especially in today's ELT challenging panorama where, as far as I am concerned, EFL teachers are agents of the spread of the English language in various multicultural and pluri-lingual contexts all around the world. Furthermore, incorporating English varieties in ELT is a need, teachers themselves must be aware of the current landscape of the English language. According to Matsuda (2003), programs for pre-service EFL teachers tend to focus on the inner circle (Kachru, 1992) and would benefit greatly from incorporating a World Englishes perspective.

Two interconnected critical issues are now part of EFL teachers' professional identity, one is their view of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and the other is the variety of English required and used in their own particular context. Not only cultural and intercultural awareness is a must for a language teacher, but also a critical language

awareness, especially, the political awareness of privileged English varieties, in the sense of how these can perpetuate linguistic imperialism, on the one hand, or how they marginalise speech communities for the sake of not responding to powerful and hegemonic structures in the established ELT community of practice, on the other.

High school teachers might not be aware of either issue, however, I would like to centre my attention on the varieties of English teachers use in the classrooms and the reasons why they still seem to stick to the two well-recognised varieties, either British or American. The purpose of this study is to change teachers' mentality in regards to using another English variety and to empower them to make their own informed decisions in the present context of ELT where static conceptions of language, linguistic imperialism, native-speakerism and marginalisation processes around the world are hegemonic perspectives.

Twenty or thirty years ago, the American or British variety was still well established and historical, socioeconomic and political issues heavily determined the hegemony of these two varieties of English. Nowadays, EFL teachers, who do not belong to English speaking speech communities (expanding circle), have to understand the complexity of choosing a "standard variety" of English, the implications of promoting English as an International language (EIL), or of selecting one of the World Englishes (WE) at hand. Also, they have to recognise that their own variety of English is a valid expression of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jenkins, 2007, 2009) in international scenarios where non-native speakers use English for different communicative purposes. However, it is not a personal decision because there are foreign language learning policies, institutional requirements, social demands, and social representations that surround this decision and they need to be challenged.

There are many working powers that determine the use of a particular variety of English. The purpose of this study is to explore how socio-political awareness of World Englishes can be raised through a taught module on English varieties for high school EFL Colombian teachers, and how these sessions can empower teachers to change current practices. Its aims are to evaluate the situation in practice and evidence if any change can take place in the High School EFL Colombian context.

Contextual background

The Colombian school system is divided into two types of schools. One is the private school sector and the other is the official school sector. The first one is self-funded and it represents only a 10% of schools in the country. The second sector is the official school where most of the children study; it represents the 90% of schools and is funded by the State, the Ministry of Education. Schools are structured into common levels of study for basic education. Basic primary education, levels 1 to 5 and basic secondary education, levels 6 to 9. Years 10 and 11 of secondary education are supposed to be years for humanities, sciences and technical vocational secondary education. This study concentrates on teachers of secondary education who teach 11 to 17 year-old children.

The private school sector has played an important role in foreign language teaching in Colombia. Due to the importance of English as a global language, basically all private schools -bilingual or not- have incorporated English as a priority. This is also increasingly the case of state-funded schools where English is now offered from the pre-school level up to the 11th level of education. However, the levels of English command are very low at the end of secondary school. This is due to different factors concerning the number of hours per week devoted to English but also the low proficiency of some English teachers, especially in basic primary school where most teachers do not have the

qualifications to teach English. The situation in secondary schools is a bit better because English teachers have a better English proficiency and are specialised in the area of teaching EFL.

Problematic situation

The National Ministry of Education (MEN, 2006) point out how our students are not accomplishing the desired international standards, recently established by governmental authorities. The ministry of Education, in an attempt to provide institutions with a coherent framework to approach English language teaching, has decreed the standards and level of EFL in Colombia. They adopted The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR, 2001; MEN, 2006). This framework of reference states, in general terms, a perspective of language and language learning, and the means through which a communicative competence of any foreign language could be developed.

There seems to be a problem with the proficiency levels established by the Ministry of Education based on the CEFR. At secondary school level, students are supposed to reach a B1 (intermediate) level of proficiency in English according to the descriptors for common reference levels given in the CEFR (2001: Chapter 3). A descriptive scheme and the common reference levels were developed to describe levels of proficiency required by existing standards, tests and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different systems of qualification. However, these standards are more situated in an European context and do not respond to the reality of our educational settings, where traveling, for instance, is not as easy as in Europe, resources are not as easily accessible as in other contexts and opportunities for exposure to the target language are limited.

In 2006, The Ministry of Education decreed that English in schools had to be strengthened and

created a “Bogotá Bilingüe” programme, and afterwards, a “Colombia Bilingüe” programme. These programmes are targeted at the whole private and state-school sectors, aiming at fostering standard varieties of English in primary and secondary education. However, these programmes were not welcomed or fully supported by scholars in Colombia.

Theoretical framework

A. Critical Applied Linguistics

Critical applied Linguistics (CALx) has to do with the politics of knowledge, the politics of language, the problematizing view of reality which is a multifaceted reality determined by ideologies, power, and the politics of the difference, access and domination (Pennycook, 2001). Later, Pennycook (2010) also states that CALx aimed largely at the dual foes of structuralism and positivism. He argued that the dominance of these perspectives rendered it almost impossible to link applied linguistics concerns to central social and political problems of inequality, discrimination and difference.

He also says that the very core of CALx lies on the development of a political vision of language, that is to say, how forms of power affect language use and how power may operate ideologically through language. The fact that EFL teachers in Colombia still believe that the only valid variety of English is either American or British in an attesting proof that, despite the 20 or 30 years of theories of world Englishes, the hegemony of standard varieties of English is a fact and many efforts are to be made in the future to dismantle unwanted ideological structures that reflect the real existing forms of oppression in the ELT world. This study within the critical action research tradition is an attempt to change unwanted structures and to sustain wanted structures that help empower EFL teachers, what Corson (2000) calls emancipation.

As Pennycook (2001) puts it, critical applied linguistics involves an unrest scepticism, a constant questioning of the normative assumptions of applied linguistics. It demands a restive problematisation of the givens of applied linguistics, and presents a way of doing applied linguistics that seeks to connect it to questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology and discourse. Pennycook (2010) also says that critical work has always sought to challenge an assumed centre, in our case, inner circle, where power and privilege lie, and to rework both the politics and the language that sustain them. It has thus always had to struggle against the language and ideas through which the world is defined. For example, the “given” that native speakerism is a fact, the “assumptions” such as a privileged language is better than any other, and the “generics” that the fact that speaking English can bestow on people superior cultural and working conditions in a globalised world. CALx fights the inequalities these ideas maintain as well. All in all, an action we can take is to orient towards a form of politics that is grounded in local language activity rather than being reliant on the grand sweeping gestures of imperialism, language rights and globalization, in the same track of thinking.

B. English as an International Language

The spread of English in the world is due to different factors that can be regarded from different perspectives. From the apolitical approach to language that serves very clearly to maintain the social and linguistic *status quo* of English to a critical view of language in relation to critical views of society and the political and ethical vision of change. According to Pennycook (2001), there are different ways to understand language policies in the context of the global spread of English. A colonial celebratory position which promotes the innumerable benefits of English over other languages. A liberal *laissez-faire* attitude which celebrates the universalism of English

while maintaining diversity and language rights by sustaining local cultures and traditions.

This second perspective, besides reinforcing the “diffusion-of-English paradigm”, fails to account for the power of English and the inequitable relation between English and local languages. The third view, related to linguistic human rights, is linguisticism (Skuttnabb-Kangas, 2001) or linguistically argued racism, a process by which an unequal division of power is produced and maintained according to a division between groups on the basis of the language they speak. Phillipson (1992) is part of this position with his English linguistics imperialism, which implies the maintenance of the domination of English done by the establishment and the continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages.

Other perspectives such as language ecology, language rights and linguistic hybridity embrace the complexity of local languages and cultures but fail to acknowledge the global forces and multilingual and multicultural urban contexts. One final perspective is the postcolonial and resistance view, which provides for the possibility that, on an everyday basis, the powerless in post-colonial communities may find ways to negotiate, alter and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their cultures, languages and identities to their advantage. However, some might argue that colonial discourses have kept on residing in the postcolonial trend, becoming more a neo-colonialism. Others may go even further and suggest that in order to change colonial discourse, we need to decolonise the power structures and create or recreate other epistemologies, other wanted structures, different from those of the western society.

Mignolo (2009), one of the most important representatives of the Decolonisation movement, states that “Geopolitics of knowledge goes hand in hand with geopolitics of knowing” (p. 2) but who and when, why and where is knowledge generated

is a question that intends to change the attention from the current loci of enunciation, that is to say, the geo-historical and bio-graphics of euro-centred epistemologies, to the “other” epistemologies of the oriental or southern countries. Geo-politics of knowledge, according to Mignolo, emerged in the Third World contesting the imperial distribution of scientific labour, as well as the body-politics of knowledge.

Given that the loci of enunciation for ELT community has always been the inner circle countries, what does the ELT community have to do with this geo-politics of knowledge or the body politics of knowledge? According to Mignolo (2009) some people might assume that knowing a subject in a discipline, in our case English, is “transparent, disincorporated from the known and the untouched by the geo-political configuration of the world” (p.1) in which teachers are racially ranked and regions are racially configured. In the ELT world, teachers are native speakers or they are not, and the native speakerism ideology (Holliday, 2005) has been pervasive not only in ESL (English as Second Language) teaching contexts but specially in EFL (English as Foreign Language) teaching contexts where the hegemony of this ideology seems to be a rule.

C. *Incorporating englishes varieties*

The prevalence of World Englishes (WE) and English as an International Language (EIL) in the World has to do with at least three facts among others, according to Jenkins (2009). First, English is the most widely learned and taught language and is the international *lingua franca*. Secondly, English is used commonly as a means for communication in many different contexts such as scholarship, commerce, and computer assisted communication among people with varying levels of English proficiency. Third, English has been appropriated and adapted to meet the needs of glocal (global and local) users of English for identity and expression.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned facts, WE are not typically taught in English Language Learner (ELL) teacher education courses (Matsuda, 2012). Previous research has shown that teacher proficiency in English and teacher competence has been a major concern in ELL teacher education instead of the variety of English that is taught (McKay, 2012). Nowadays, WE have created a new perspective on the types of standards and pedagogical approaches that would be relevant within a specific teaching context (Sharifian, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2006). Such a focus views language proficiency as a difference rather than a deficit.

Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman (2008) suggest that incorporating WE into ELL teacher education can be advantageous for various reasons. There is a need of WE and EIL in teacher education because they are needed to make teacher candidates effective educators across cultures. Besides, focusing on one standard is limited in practicality and scope and marginalizes teachers whose proficiency level does not match the perceived standard. Also, knowledge of WE/ EIL enables ELL teachers to set appropriate standards for their students' proficiency levels and linguistic goals in their particular context. In addition, English teaching materials are increasingly being produced in Outer Circle countries; therefore a WE/EIL perspective is needed in order to match materials and practice with instruction.

Additional benefits can be obtained from this. It would promote a tolerance of different proficiency levels of English with the goal of making students comprehensible to diverse English speakers. In addition, such a focus can help teachers to prepare students to be multi-competent users of WE (Alptekin, 2010). WE/EIL can be helpful to meet the needs of various ELLs who may come to the classroom speaking different dialects and with different proficiency levels of English, and they can easily develop a critical language awareness.

Awareness of WE / EIL / ELF implies awareness of multiple forms and functions of global English; hybridity of EIL interactions; and de- and then re-nationalization of English (Llurda, 2009; McKay, 2012). ELL teachers will be able to develop the ability to negotiate one's meaning in EIL communication to ensure effective communication through the use of repair strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, requests for repetition, paraphrasing, strategies for seeking agreement, conversational gambits, etc.

This awareness implies as well the view of language as process rather than product. Also, awareness begins with a shift in linguistic and pedagogical perspective (Canagarajah, 2006) as shown in the list below:

- Mastery of grammar rules --> Metalinguistic awareness
- Focus on rules/conventions --> Focus on strategies
- Correctness --> Negotiation
- Language/discourse as static --> Language/discourse as changing
- Language as homogeneous --> Language as hybrid
- Language as context-bound --> Language as context-transforming
- Language as transparent --> Language as instrumental
- L1 or C1 as problem --> L1 and C1 as resources

All previously mentioned understandings are requirements in order to accept the multiple identities of multilingual EIL/ELF/WE speakers (Norton, 2000; Alsagoff, 2012) In this way, it is evident the need for a situated/contextualized view of English language proficiency for local affiliation (language for identification) and global negotiation (language for communication); and to reach a "non-deficit" orientation to EIL (Seidlhofer, 2002).

However, it is not enough for teachers to gain critical awareness, it is also necessary to make decisions

and implement changes in the classrooms such as turning critical understandings into pedagogical decisions and actions, fomenting individual and group reflections on the practical implications of what is learned in SLA, methodology, linguistics and sociolinguistics courses, encouraging teachers testing their own perceptions of various Englishes (Pedrazzini & Nava, 2010); and implementing course design projects in courses grounded methods in particular contexts of learning.

In conclusion, if we are preparing teachers to teach English as a global language to diverse learners, then what we do in teacher education should reflect the global reality of Englishes and reinforce the social situatedness of ELT within the needs of a particular learner group. As Modiano (2009) puts it by saying that, “an understanding of the diversity of English, for production as well as for comprehension, makes one a better communicator” (p. 59). Such an understanding also makes one a better teacher.

There are many studies about teachers’ attitudes towards a given variety of English. These studies aim at describing and interpreting attitudes. They all registered how positive teachers and students of English regard American, Australian and British varieties (Zhang & Hu, 2008), favouring the variety they have been more exposed to and/or how negatively they regarded other varieties or their own accented variety (Pishghadam & Sabouri, 2011; Tukomoto & Shibata, 2011) in comparison to native speakers’ varieties. However, there is very little research on teachers’ awareness of world Englishes. This type of studies, which is scarce, aims at changing teachers’ views and empowering them to generate transformations.

Methodology

A. Paradigm and tradition

Situated in the Colombian EFL context, the methodological focus of this study is framed within

the transformative perspective of enquiry and the critical action research tradition. Standard English is a “reality” that is essentially coercive, it involves native-speakerism, privilege of standard Englishes and linguistic imperialism as part of the working powers, and the created truth imposed by central countries to the unaware EFL communities in peripheral countries. The basic assumption of language rooted in these ideologies is that language is a static entity owned by hegemonic groups. Despite the fact that the history of language evolution shows that language is a live entity and its study depends on social, geo-politic and economic interest, the static and hegemonic view of it remains the same. Therefore, the process of research must be seen as transformative and emancipatory and its purpose should be to bring about a change in consciousness and the unequal and oppressive structures maintained by the injustice of current power relationships.

Within the critical paradigm, action research is the research tradition that is more pertaining to this perspective since the ultimate goal of this tradition is the change or the transformation of taken for granted theories and wanted structures. The action research approach adopted for this study has more philosophical stance and goes beyond the traditional view of it as a powerful tool for change and improvement at the local level, as stated by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). The participants regard it as a form of self-reflected inquiry, which is undertaken in order to improve their understanding of their practices in context with a view of maximising social justice. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1992) consider action research is concerned actually with changing individuals as well as culture of the groups, institution and societies to which they belong.

I followed the cycle of action research proposed by McNiff (2002, p.15), which includes diagnosis, action and reflection. I corroborated my assumption about teachers’ use of standard varieties of English through a survey. I took action by guiding master’s

students in the exploration of socio political factors involved in the selection of an English variety. Also, I reflected and analysed the data collected in surveys, and artifacts produced by participants in the module. Finally, the interviews helped me see if any changes in teachers' socio-political perspective of world Englishes have taken place throughout the procedure of the research process. Also my foregrounded assumption was that teachers can think about incorporating other varieties of English in their every day so that their students can be better prepared for the current use of English in a multilingual and multicultural world and they themselves feel more at ease with their professional identity, being aware of why they select a given English variety to teach and for what purposes.

Action research or participatory action research seems to have limitations such as the fact that the reflection remains in the intervention and some changed thinking is not achieved, however, the real impact of this type of research takes time and its effect has to be traced systematically for a long time or through different small scale studies with the same scope and purpose. Kemmis and MacTaggart (2005) refer to this point when they talk about the transition between changed thinking to actual action in a broader community:

Although action research is often incremental in the sense that it encourages growth and development in participants' expertise, support, commitment, confidence, knowledge of the situation, and understanding of what is prudent (i.e., changed thinking), it also encourages growth and development in participants' capacity for action, including direct and substantial collective action that is well justified by the demands of local conditions, circumstances, and consequences (p. 556).

The more teachers become conscientious and critical, the better the individual action is increasingly informed and planned with the support

and wisdom of others (collective). Kemmis and Mctagart (as cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) say that "the collective provides critical support for the development of personal political agency and critical mass for a commitment to change." (p. 571) Therefore, the action and research aspects of action research require participation as well as the disciplining effect of a collective.

According to Kemmis and Mctagart (2005) people are constrained by the institutional discourses that prevent them from becoming critical. The issue we have to come to interpret is how we create (or re-create) new possibilities for what Fals Borda (1988) called "vivencia", through the revitalization of the public sphere, and also promote decolonization of life worlds. This is another concern of CALx, the critical analysis of texts and discourses that I am not going to touch in depth in this paper.

B. Participants and instruments

In the initial stage of the study, a diagnostic survey on the current situation of the use of English varieties in a Colombian EFL context was given to 20 master's students enrolled in third and fourth semesters of the teacher education program. 12 students completed this survey. This is a survey that "gathered data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions or standards" (Cohen et al 2011, p. 256) of the teaching of World Englishes in a particular context. It did not seek to make generalisations but it aimed at establishing the current EFL high school teachers' views of the use of English and their awareness of English varieties.

For the intervention stage, I designed and taught a short module on English and its varieties which was offered as a strategy for reflection and empowerment for teachers. This module was taken by 7 seven in-service teachers. These students signed the informed consent form to use their papers and three of them signed the interview

consent form. In the first stage of action of the study that I called exposure to WE as a critical issue in ELT in this module, teachers had to engage in presentations and discussions, prompted by readings assigned in the module. Next, teachers had to produce a reflective paper after taking the module, this paper was the second instrument used to evidence a second stage of action of the study, called reflection on critical issues.

On the third stage, called reconstruction and transformation, three out of seven students in the module agreed to participate in the interviews. Interviews took from 24 minutes to 30 minutes, within a semi-structured frame that allowed for follow-up questions and probing. These interviews were meant to go deep into teachers' positions towards WE and to verify if any change took place in teachers' conception.

I selected the choice of a semi-structured interview because there are certain characteristics of this type of interview that suit both my purpose in the interview, and my personality as a researcher. The type of interview suits me in a certain way because as Rubin & Rubin (2005) puts it "the personality, style, and beliefs of the interviewer matter" (p. 20). Besides, I feel more comfortable with a flexible frame that allows the respondents and me to contribute with what we think is relevant information in a given topic, instead of a fixed set of questions to follow.

Semi-structured interviews are defined by Borg (2006) as interviews typically based around a set of topics or a loosely defined series of questions; they are flexible, allowing the conversation a certain amount of freedom in terms of the direction it takes, and the respondents are also encouraged to talk in an open-ended manner about the topics under discussion or any other matters they feel are relevant. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in educational research and they can have many advantages.

In general terms, as Richards (2003) puts it, "interviewing always seeks the particular and a good interview is rich in details" (p. 52). In particular terms, semi-structured interviewing, according to Borg (2006), has many advantages, or rather principles to follow. First, it enables the researcher to develop a relationship with the participant, allowing the participants to proceed as a conversation. Second, interviewing allows the researcher to explore tacit or observable aspects of participants' lives, producing data that are more elaborate and qualitatively richer, providing the researcher with a flexible tool for data collection and responsive to the contribution the interviewee makes. Finally semi-structured interviews encourage interviewees to play an active part in the research and solicit the active involvement of individuals in communicating the sense-making processes through which they interpret their own experiences.

I designed a few questions to start my interviews. In the first part of the interviews, I wanted to delve into the participants' views based on the first document. In the second part I wanted to explore their conception of intercultural competence and go deep in the way they say they teach this competence. The three interviews, which lasted about thirty minutes each, turned out to be rewarding and enriching conversations, discovery and construction actually took place. The participants' input allowed me to expand on my set of questions, generating new insights, discoveries and mutual construction of our understanding of our view of WE in EFL settings. For the analysis, I used selective coding, which identifies the core categories of the text, to come up with the most relevant themes of the three interviews.

Findings and analysis

This section is going to be divided into three parts. The first part will present the results of the diagnostic survey. The second part will deal with the

exposure and reflection stages of the intervention. The third part will present the reconstruction and transformation stage of the study.

A. Diagnostic Survey of the Use of English Varieties

I carried out a survey among High school teachers in order to determine the use of English as the means of instruction, the English variety used and required in secondary education in Bogotá, especially in the public sector. This survey served as a general picture of the current situation as far as teachers' English varieties awareness at present. There are three parts to the survey. The first part is for the ethnographic description of the participants and their use of English as the means of instruction. The second part is about the use of varieties of English in an EFL setting. The last part of the survey includes teachers' choice of an English variety and reasons for using it in class.

The survey was sent to 20 master's students. Out of the 20 students, 12 responded to the survey and were all experienced high school teachers. Therefore the return rate obtained was 60%. 10 female teachers and 2 male teachers participated in the survey. The age range of the participants went from 29 to 50 years. Out of the 12 teachers, 10 work at public schools and 2 work at private institutions. All of the participants said that they used English as a means of instruction; however, only one reported using English 70% of the class time. Four participants use it from 70% to 40% of the class time. The majority of the participants (7) stated that they only use English 30% of the class. These preliminary results give a glance at the reality of most EFL settings in Colombia where English is used less and presumably the instruction is given in the official native language (i.e., Spanish) or second language for members of some indigenous communities.

The results showed there is a clear dominant use of the American English variety in the secondary level. 75% of the teachers said they used and preferred American English and only 25% reported British English use and preference in their contexts. Linguistic and cultural hegemony of the USA English are corroborated with 2 more questions that refer to the teachers' familiarity with other varieties of English and their awareness of ownership of English. They said they were not familiar with other varieties and the ownership of the English was mainly granted to English native speakers. They demonstrated the internalization of the native-speakerism ideology in their answers to the questions 9, 10 and 11. EFL teachers in this survey think that because native speakers not only own the English language (question 10), but also represent the best models for international communication (question 15), they are better English teachers.

In question 12 to 16, a Likert scale was used to find out the current use and requirement of English varieties in the EFL Colombian context. The results showed a tendency to agree with the use and requirement of standard American English in this context. Also, these last questions reiterated that teachers identified themselves with the native speakerism ideology (average rate 3.25) because the majority agreed that even though there was not a required variety in their school, they considered that American or British English should be the medium of instruction and those who spoke them were the best model for English as an international language. Regarding the acceptability of other English varieties such as Jamaican, Asian or African in their context, teachers' answers showed reservation towards other varieties.

All in all, EFL teachers, given the data collected, are not fully aware of the socio-political factors implicated in teaching a privileged variety of English. They do not regard other varieties as valid

options for their context because they are not familiar with them. The majority of the surveyed teachers seemed to be in a colonial celebratory perspective (Pennycook, 2001) of the language and they seemed to have assimilated the native speakerism ideology (Holliday, 2005).

B. Exposure and reflection

During the sessions, students were very receptive to the new perspective introduced. We used teacher's fronted lectures, students-led discussions and students' short presentations on a research article related to the content of the module. This exposure helped students get acquainted with theories such as linguistic imperialism and native speakerism ideology and current research on the area of WE, EIL, ELF, NEST vs NNEST, and attitudes towards varieties of English.

A written paper produced after the module was analysed. They showed topics, which interested students' further research, such as: the spread of English and its implication for teaching, the advantages and disadvantages of ELF, the controversy between NS vs NNS, EIL for international communication, ELT in Colombia, English as a neo-imperial language, English nativisation, and English inclusion and ELT in Colombia.

What students wrote about showed a deep reflection and understanding of the challenges they faced as EFL teachers. Here some quotes regarding the use of ELF for students' needs at present:

ELF is an opportunity to improve my teaching practice. It is my challenge to find different ways to show my students there are English varieties and it is my responsibility to provide them with a lot of strategies they could need when they become in English users to interact in their life as students, professionals, workers or travellers. (Participant 4)

As teacher, ELF allows me to focus more on meaning rather than linguistic features, obviously grammar is important, but, in classes I spend a lot of time correcting errors that are not as relevant as the use of pragmatic strategies that help students to get communicative objectives. (Participant 6)

Regarding the use of WE in the Colombian EFL settings, teachers seem to be aware now of the challenges as well as the inconveniences they bring about. Here a few quotes that show teachers' concerns:

Introducing English varieties in a public school context of Colombia represents an interesting challenge. The exposure that the learners have had in the foreign language comes mainly from varieties of the inner circle; additionally, most of the learners hold the same believe that British and American varieties are the unique types of English. Nonetheless, presenting other kind of varieties to these learners would be really advantageous, as they will understand that it is not a priority to become a native-like model to interact in English; plus, they will be aware of the relevance that English has taken and how it has been transformed to suit the purposes of different communities. (Participant 2)

There is also a risk that mother-tongue speakers will have an unfair advantage over non-native speakers, other languages can be considered as unnecessary and people can lose their motivation to learn new languages. (Participant 7)

C. Reconstruction and transformation potential

Going through the interviews, I found evidence of slight changes that participants have gone through after taking the module. Changes in

perception of world Englishes, changes in the incorporation of World English into their lessons, and contributions teachers might make from their own teaching situation to a transformative aim of the teaching of English.

First of all, there was a clear change of conception, at the theoretical level, in teachers' papers. However, I can say that in the interviews that positive attitude towards WE was regarded as future possibility for action. On the one hand, all of the participants said the module changed their conception of other varieties of English different from the British and American ones. They all went from identifying themselves with either American or British variety to acknowledging and accepting other English varieties when they stated,

...when you recognize and accept that there are different varieties in the world, you just need to open the way that you teach because in that way students can regard those different varieties or accents. And also about rules, the syntactic or grammar rules that may change according to the variety. (Participant 1)

I liked it [the module] because I could see myself using that information in my professional life, I liked it also because I had not thought about that topic to use that as teacher. For me, it was quite surprising, because it is something we have it there, we have lived with it. But, we didn't have it like in mind, to kind of use it to make students aware that there are different varieties and this is not like the best one or bad one, no this a variety, we can adapt or we can accept. (Participant 3)

Regarding the incorporation of WE into their lessons, some are willing to try it out, but one of them does not agree because he thinks it is not convenient and he regards it as far-fetched goal in the future in the Colombian context. The following two participants express their willing-

ness to implement the incorporation of WE into their lessons,

I consider that this perspective is new here, teachers are not familiar with other varieties. I expect that in couple of years from now, these varieties will be included in the curriculum. In order for this to happen, it is necessary to start doing research more in the area in our country. If we are language teachers, we should be aware of all things that may affect a language and the way we teach. (Participant 1)

It [the module] opened my mind to differences, accepting or realising that there is not the best English, the good English, the one we should be teaching, but it is ok if we use Indian English or Australian. Obviously, we teachers, we have to use it in a very coherent way, depending on the level of students... With my high school students I am like in the process of how can I do it without making a mess. (Participant 3)

Conversely, participant 2 seemed to be reluctant to incorporate WE, in spite of the fact that he showed a great deal of awareness in his paper and interview. He said that he would not introduce WE into his lessons because,

I learned my English here, I had the opportunity to travel and live in the US, and so I am using what I learned. I don't think I would do it... I think it is related to the culture, for example, if there is a variety of English in Africa or Malaysia, it has adopted a lot of words or terms from that culture, even the accent is marked by the surroundings, by the people, the local languages. So, in that way, I think it would be difficult to impose it here in Colombia. Probably in the future, in 15 years. (Participant 2)

This view shows a very pervasive attitude towards WE among English teachers in Colombia, because

teachers are aware of the existence of WE but they have an essentialist perspective of the culture and therefore the language used by certain communities.

Reflection and conclusion

Taking into consideration that all of the participants started from a conformity or acceptance of current use of standard varieties of English, reflected in the diagnosis survey conducted at the beginning of this process, we can say the participants shifted their first perspective to a more reflective and critical perspective throughout the short intervention and after taking the module, ending up either establishing a transformative position towards the incorporation of WE in their EFL classroom or going back to the initial position that backed up the celebratory perspective of hegemonic varieties of English.

The emergence of a critical position towards the use of English varieties, and its linguistic, pedagogical and socio-political implications in the module and through the papers and critical dialogues we engaged in, was the gain in this study, as far as I am concerned.

Also, the evidence of a reconstruction of the English language in papers and interviews was another relevant outcome. All teachers are more aware of the importance of WE as papers and interviews showed. However, the necessary shift in perspective as far as the linguistic view is yet to occur, because this shift, mentioned above (Canagarajah, 2006), has to do with both awareness of language and awareness of pedagogical perspective.

I did not expect a dramatic change in the awareness of these high school teachers after this small-scale study, but I think I contributed to the slow change in teacher education in my own context with this bottom-up approach to changing

the classroom situation. I wish the actual praxis regarding a more democratic and egalitarian use of other varieties had taken place in this study, however, a dramatic change like this could only occur as the product of a collective work of which this study is just an offspring. Geopolitics and the reconfiguration of knowledge take years, if not decades, but there should be a starting point of “awareness building” (concientización) in order for a real emancipation to unfold.

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