

THE INTERSECTION OF LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE TEACHER  
IDENTITIES IN THE EXPANDING CIRCLE

by

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## **The Intersection of Language Ideologies and Language Teacher Identities in the Expanding Circle**

### **Abstract**

Standard Language Ideology has historically permeated second/foreign language education, disseminating the belief that a homogeneous “standard” language, which belongs to its native speakers only, is ideal and preferable. In the context of English language teaching (ELT), this type of language ideology has traditionally impacted language policies and functioned as a gatekeeping mechanism for non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). In the field of second language acquisition, a limited number of studies have explored the interconnectedness of ideology and learner identities (e.g., Anderson, 2009; Bartlett, 2007; De Costa, 2010, 2011, 2016; Razfar, 2005), but this explicit connection has not been examined through the lenses of language teacher identity. Furthermore, most studies that look at NNESTs identities have focused on Asian English teachers. Studies about South American teachers have started to recently surface (e.g., Khami-Stein et al. 2017) but countries such as Venezuela, where this dissertation took place, are practically invisible in the literature.

This study relied on the theoretical underpinnings of poststructuralist perspectives of identity (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2017; Bucholtz & Hall, 2012; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), and combined a semiotic approach to textual analysis (Gal & Irvine, 1995) with qualitative methods such as single case studies, thematic analysis, and ethnographic data collection tools to answer the following research questions:

1. What are macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela?
2. How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers?

Through the critical analysis of two reports on ELT in Latin America, Venezuelan national education policy documents, and the curriculum of a teacher education program, I uncovered the language ideologies that perpetuate the hegemonic position of Inner Circle Englishes in this context. I also present two single-case studies of English teachers whose professional identities and teaching practices were directly impacted by the circulating language ideologies in the region. The findings of my study shed light on the intricate nature of language teacher identity construction and yield important implications for policy makers and teacher educators.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The spread of English around the globe is a well-known and irrefutable phenomenon. Although Chinese and Spanish are the most spoken languages in the world, English follows them with approximately 360 million native speakers and half a billion people who speak it as an additional language (Lane, 2018). Crystal (2003) clarifies that for a language to obtain “global” status it should have a special role recognizable in multiple countries. Getting this recognition is not limited to having large numbers of individuals who speak the language as their mother tongue; instead, the language should be adopted by people who give it a special role in their communities. This special role can be given in two possible ways: 1. making the language official as is the case with the English language in over 70 countries including India, Singapore, and Nigeria; 2. giving it priority over other languages in a country’s foreign language teaching, which is seen in places, such as Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, and more than 100 other countries around the globe (Crystal, 2003).

The global spread of English can be attributed to multiple geographical, historical, and sociocultural factors, such as colonization, industrialization, armed conflicts, and mass migrations (Crystal, 2003). English is a colonial language associated with some of the most powerful countries in the world, who have played a significant role in promoting the status of the language and giving it a maximized internationalization. For example, in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, England was the leading colonial nation as well as the leader of the industrial revolution. Similarly, The United States has been a major economic power since the late nineteenth century until now (Crystal, 2003). English has gained so much international traction that it is the official language used in 85% of international organizations, such as NATO



and the Council of Europe. English is also the preferred language of publications, and it is the dominant language in the motion picture industry and pop music (Crystal, 2003), earning the popular title of *the* global Lingua Franca or *the* international business language.

Popular discourses usually attribute English's popularity to globalization and present it as a harmless natural evolution of the language, but there is a vast body of literature that problematizes the spread of English and describes it as an inherently a political/ideological issue (Adamo, 2005; Canagarajah, 2013; Phillipson, 1992). Canagarajah (2012) highlights that dominant communities have historically portrayed English as "a superior language that was more conducive to human progress and intellectual advancement" (p. 3), dismissing the value of other languages and presenting it as the only option for advancement. In the same way, Matsuda (2012) criticizes the idea of English being "the" international lingua franca arguing that it is not only unrealistic, but it also gives English more power than it actually might possess. Matsuda capitalizes on the multiple proven multilingual situations in which other languages are used for international communication.

Phillipson (1992) labels the spread of English as a form of imperialism, linguistic imperialism, which reinforces the dominance of English at the expense of other languages and serves as a means of transferring and imposing the Western culture across the globe. Bunce et al. (2016) go even further and compare English to the Hydra, a Greek mythology monster that develops two heads for every head that gets cut off. They find this metaphor appropriate to represent "the diversity of ways and means by which English threatens the vitality and diversity of other languages and cultures in the modern world" (p. 1). Although Bunce et al. (2016) claim that English is not or cannot be intrinsically evil or responsible for its own spread, it continuously has a negative impact on other languages and their cultures. One of the most

impactful ways in which English continues to have such a strong influence around the globe is through English language teaching (ELT). Problematizing the ideologies that surround ELT are at the center of this dissertation.

The symbolic power attributed to English usually results in the glorification of dominant English-speaking mainstream monolingual societies (Skuntnabb- Kangas, 2016) while positioning other varieties and speakers of the language less valuable. Even though scholars like Graddol (1999) talk about the “death of the native speaker”, ideologies such as Native Standard language (Train, 2007), and native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005), which enforce and perpetuate the idea that a standard variety of English spoken by native speakers is the ideal and that native speakers are therefore “better” at teaching it, are still very much alive in the field of ELT. These powerful ideological discourses tend to force users of non-prestigious varieties of English to reconcile with the idea that their local English varieties are inferior or deficient, denying them ownership of the language and entrance into the English-speaking community (Bolton, et al. 2009; Canagarajah, 2013).

Even though “nearly 80 % of today’s communication in English takes place between bi-/multilingual speakers of English” (Graddol, 2006 in Marlina, 2014, p. 2), non-native English speakers, who currently constitute the vast majority of teachers worldwide, still experience professional and social marginalization in and outside of schools (Johnston, 1999). Furthermore, as explained by Bunce et al. (2016), “while English opens the doors of privilege and access for *some*, often the *few*, the way many countries organize education systems means that the English door is closed for the *many*” (p. 1).

When exploring issues related to the identities of English teachers, it is important to consider the previously discussed issues as they are fundamental to the profession. Furthermore,

language teacher identities are intrinsically linked to linguistic identities (Kiernan, 2010) and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse, it is important to explore how non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) construct their professional identities and negotiate their place within the English-speaking community. Although there are multiple examples in the language teacher identity (LTI) literature that demonstrate how ideological phenomena impacts teacher's professional identities (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2016, Song, 2016), very few studies have made explicit connections between ideologies and teacher identity formation. In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), a limited number of studies have explored the interconnectedness of ideology and learner identities (e.g., Anderson, 2009; Bartlett, 2007; De Costa, 2010, 2011, 2016; Razfar, 2005), but this has not been case in LTI. In the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), language ideologies have been mostly explored in isolation with a focus on educational policy (e.g., Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007) without making explicit connections to LTI. Hence, there is a significant need for LTI research to pay attention to the role language ideologies may be playing on shaping language teacher identities.

Although LTI research is in the spotlight in the field of TESOL, most studies that look at NNESTs identities have focused on Asian English teachers. Studies about South American teachers are only recently surfacing (e.g., Khami-Stein et al 2017) and countries such as Venezuela, where this dissertation took place, are practically invisible in the literature. Exploring the intersection of ideologies with language teacher identity construction is vital to understand who teachers are and how internal and external factors influence their professional lives and teaching practices. In the case of NNESTs from Venezuela, it is important to make their experiences visible and understand their contextual realities as sample of what happens in the Expanding Circle.

Following the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (Catalano & Waugh, 2020; Paffey, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) and the theoretical underpinnings of poststructuralist perspectives of identity (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2017; Bucholtz & Hall, 2012; Kayi-Aydar, 2015, Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), this dissertation investigates the following research questions:

1. What are the macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela?
2. How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers?

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

There are six remaining chapters of this dissertation, which revolve around the previously stated research questions. In chapter 2, I thoroughly describe the theoretical framework that guided this study and discuss the relevant literature in the field that framed this dissertation. Chapter 3 talks about the methodology of the study and the rationale of the study design, data collection methods, and analysis. Chapter 4 explores the findings regarding the circulating ideologies that shape the linguistic market in Venezuela, and chapter 5 reports the findings of the two single case studies in which I explored the intersection of the circulating language ideologies in the region with teacher identity construction. Finally, in Chapter 6, I engage in a discussion about the findings of the study in relation to the existing literature in the field.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework and Review of the Literature

This dissertation research examines the intersection of circulating language ideologies and language teacher identity. This is a Critical Discourse Analysis (Catalano & Waugh, 2020; Paffey, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) study situated within poststructuralist perspectives of identity (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2017; Bucholtz & Hall, 2012; Kayi-Aydar, 2015, Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). This dissertation investigated two research questions: 1. What are macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela? 2. How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers?

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical frameworks that informed this dissertation. In the first section, I discuss important theoretical underpinnings such as poststructuralism, language ideology, and discourse. Then, I examine other important ideas that frame the study, such as the role of language ideologies in English language teaching (ELT) and the emergence of non-traditional approaches to ELT. Finally, I explore the literature on language teacher identities guided by the following question: how does research on language teacher identities inform us about English language teachers' development and teaching?

#### Theoretical Framework

##### *Poststructuralism, Discourse, and Power*

Poststructuralism is a school of thought rooted in the philosophical beliefs of postmodernism. Although the two are similar in terms of their core principles, poststructuralism is primarily a language-centered movement and postmodernism is a broader movement with influence in many fields. Poststructuralism emerged in direct response to structuralist perspectives such as those of

Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure (1966) who emphasized the importance of studying linguistic knowledge by looking at language as a set of established fixed signs and emphasizing the lack of relevance of what users did with the language. In his distinction between *langue* and *parole*, Saussure defined *langue* as the homogeneous idealized rule-driven system that makes a language, and *parole* as just what speakers do with the language (how they interpret it and reproduce it), which has no influence on the system itself, making it difficult to analyze. Saussure specified that *langue* was truly the only aspect that could/should be studied because *parole* was too abstract and unstable to look at, which was problematized by sociologists and philosophers who viewed language from a social stance.

Preserving the positive aspects of his theory, poststructuralists continued to view language as a set of signs, signifiers, and signified symbols, but radically modified most of the core principles of Saussure's ideas to clarify that language is neither fixed nor stable. Authors such as Derrida (1987) argued that language is in a constant state of flux as making meaning of any kind of sign is directly and completely dependent of its discursive context, which varies across time. Similarly, Bakhtin (1981) emphasized the idea that language is not an idealized set of principles in isolation from users, proposing instead that it is a situated phenomenon in which users, in dialogue with each other, attempt to form meaning. Bakhtin argues that language does not exist outside its use and that usage is social in nature.

SLA, as an interdisciplinary field, has drawn upon poststructuralism in investigating numerous issues in language learning and teaching (see Pavlenko, 2002). Poststructural theory of SLA attempts "to investigate and to theorize the role of language in construction and reproduction of social relations, and the role of social dynamics in the processes of additional language learning and use" (Pavlenko, 2002, p.283). This theory promotes an exploration of

“how linguistic, social, cultural, gender and ethnic identities of L2 users, on the one hand, structure access to linguistic resources and interactional opportunities and, on the other, are constituted and reconstituted in the process of L2 learning and use” (Pavlenko, 2002, p.284).

One of the most important contributions of poststructuralism to SLA, which is also the central claim of this dissertation, is the idea that the study of discourse is more important than the study of language in the traditional sense. Moving away from the linguistic definition of discourse as merely a means of connected writing or speech, Foucault (1984) argues that discourse is a system of representation that is above language itself. He claims that language only exists within discourses that are socio-historically situated and power dependent. Discourses are then a way to produce meaning and such meanings directly influence how humans conduct themselves within a society, putting discourse above the grammatical, phonological, and pragmatic levels of language study.

Discourse is connected to power relations and social positions. The concept of power and its role in society are at the core of how poststructuralists approach language studies. Simpson and Myr (2010) identify two streams of research that look at power from multiple perspectives. The stream led by scholars such as Weber (1978), who mostly explore power in relation to dominance imposed by the state and the entities ran by it, and the second stream, which aligns better with this dissertation, studies power with a focus on its persuasive influence. Beyond the power of the state, power is exercised routinely rather than coercively, and it heavily influences people’s beliefs based on the cultural foundations acquired from family, education systems, religion, mass media, and other civil society institutions (Gramsci, 1971). In a similar manner, Foucault (1977) defines power as a ubiquitous, socially exercised, network of relations that is not unilateral and is never really concentrated in a single place. Rather than looking at power only

through the lenses of oppression, Foucault presents it as productive phenomenon that actually involves constant processes of negation and contestation through social and discursive relations. Hence, poststructuralism links language to power in two important ways: 1. Language is seen as social action and interaction and as a way for humans to influence others. 2. Language is a symbolic resource used to gain access to and exercise power (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

The work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu views linguistic practices as a form of symbolic power, convertible into economic and social capital, which tends to be unequally distributed within speech communities (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). Bourdieu (1991) argues that language rarely functions as a mere instrument of communication; it is instead an economic exchange between “producers” and “consumers” in a particular “market” with the hopes of obtaining certain material or symbolic profit. Language is more than a set of signs to be deciphered, and utterances should be considered “*signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed” (Bourdieu, 1991, in Jaworski & Coupland, 2006, p. 480). Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power is central to this study as I explore how circulating language ideologies shape the linguistic market in a particular region in Venezuela and shape teachers’ professional identities.

### ***Poststructuralism and Language Teacher Identities***

In general terms, identity could be defined as “the social positioning of self and others” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2012, p. 2). Teacher identity could be defined as the mental image or model that guides what “being a teacher” means and informs the acts of teacher identity that enable instructional practices (Pennington, 2014). Teacher identities are fluid, dynamic, and influenced by external factors and interactions related to teachers’ working lives (Varghese et. al., 2005). In light of poststructuralist theory, identities are “multifaceted, dynamic, a site of struggle, and



shaped by power relations between the individual and others” (Kayi-Aydar, 2015, p. 138).

Identities are also constructed, and constantly negotiated over time in relation to social interactions and realities, and they are primarily a linguistic phenomenon (Bucholtz & Hall, 2012). Barkhuizen (2017) offers a comprehensive definition of language teacher identities stating that they are:

Cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical - they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material, and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged, and valued by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and overtime - discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, in the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, places, and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online. (p. 4)

Bucholtz and Hall (2012) propose 5 fundamental principles that guided my approach to understand identity construction: emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness. The emergence principle refers to the emergence of identity from the specific conditions of linguistic interaction; rather than seeing identity as a pre-existing source of linguistic and semiotic practices, it should be seen as a social and cultural phenomenon that arises through linguistic interaction. The positionality principle emphasizes that “identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2012, p. 20) these positions are influenced by macrolevel demographic

categories, cultural positions, and temporary interaction-specific stances. The indexicality principle claims that:

Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own and others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participants roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems there are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (Bucholtz & Hall, 2012, p. 21)

The relationality principle emphasizes that identity is at its core a relational phenomenon. Identities are never autonomous as they acquire social meaning depending on identity positions available and social factors. This means that “identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice and authority/delegitimacy” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2012, p.23). Finally, the partialness principle highlights the dynamic nature of identity exceeding the boundaries of the individual self. Since identities are inherently relational, they “will always be partial, produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2012, p.25)

Exploring LTIs is particularly complex as language teachers become members of the community of speakers of the language they teach and must negotiate their place in that linguistic *market* and new social order. Since “identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25), teachers' professional identities are intrinsically linked with their social, racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities;

all of which are influenced by socially constructed power dynamics. Furthermore, teacher identities and teaching practice are “inextricably linked as identity formation and practice support each other in a symbiotic manner” (De Costa, 2015, p. 136). Given this complexity, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) propose to look at three types of identities that are bound to sociohistorical realities: “imposed identities (which are not negotiable in a particular time and place), assumed identities (which are accepted and not negotiated), and negotiable identities (which are contested by groups and individuals)” (p. 21). Similarly, Varghese et al. (2005) propose to look at identities-in-practice versus identities-in-discourse to better understand the link between discursively constructed identities and action-oriented practices of teachers. Both proposals are valuable in investigating who teachers are, how they construct their identities, and how that impacts classroom practices. A more extensive report on what the literature has found regarding language teacher identities is found in the literature review section below.

### *Language Ideologies*

The term “ideology” was originally coined in the 1800s by Destutt de Tracy, a French philosopher who proposed the term as a way to explore a new science of ideas aiming for it to be the foundation of all sciences (Gee, 1996). As a counterargument to the idea of absolute truths such as God, biology, or established authorities, de Tracy’s original definition of ideology was built on a more socially-shaped way of seeing the world. He claimed that what people think and how they act is a direct reflection of their upbringing, surroundings and how they interact with the physical world, a concept that, at that moment, was in complete opposition to the established class systems and was perceived to be quite outrageous (Gee, 1996). Based on what Gee (1996) calls the “Napoleon’s Move,” and Marx’s own definition of the term by presenting it as an apparatus of oppression imposed by the powerful onto the people, the meaning of ideology took

a turn and became pejorative/negative. However, in the past few decades, this definition has evolved, and ideologies have been at the core in a wide array of studies by anthropologists, philosophers, and sociolinguists.

This study aligns with the theory of ideology that defines it as a system of belief (Seliger, 1976), and I understand ideologies as ubiquitous principles deeply-rooted in ourselves as individuals or members of a group, which have some kind of influence on how we see the world and how we conduct ourselves in it. In his critique of Marx's definition of ideologies, Seliger (1976) clarifies that ideologies are present in *all* political belief systems (my emphasis), which involves top-down and bottom-up ecologies, while Friedrich (1989) defines them as "a system or at least an amalgam, of ideas, strategies, tactics and practical symbols of promoting, perpetuating, or changing a social and cultural order; in brief, it is political ideas in action" (p. 301). It is important to clarify that referring to ideologies as political systems does not limit them to ideas imposed by the powerful or by official entities. Instead, ideologies are personal, social and born out of social phenomena (Paffey, 2012), which means that they cannot be studied in isolation and should always be situated within particular social contexts (Thompson, 1984).

Thompson (1984) discusses three modes by which ideology operates: legitimation, dissimulation, and reification. The first one signifies power being rooted in the notion of legitimacy, which is usually appealed to by using the rational ground. The second one, dissimulation, refers to the inherent feature of ideologies denying or concealing the idea that what benefits a particular group does not necessarily benefit everyone. The final one, reification, is about the strategy of naturalizing ideologies in the form of history or common sense.

Thompson (1984) clarifies that these modes are not unique – there may be many more that will

only be discovered through research in this field – and that they are not mutually exclusive as they sometimes overlap and intersect with each other.

When attempting to understand human behavior, it is inevitable to address language as the center of ideological issues. Irvine and Gal (2009) describe language as being an “ideologically-defined social practice” that constantly indexes ideological processes of dominance and contestation. Language ideologies are complex systems that function as a usual site of conflict tending to be unnoticed, taken for granted, and not always contested (Bloomaert, 2006; Mackiney, 2016). Gal (2006) defines language ideologies as “cultural conceptions about language, its nature, structure and use, and about the place of communicative behavior in social life” (p. 179). Citing the work of Woolard and Schieffelin (1994), Gal (2006) further argues that language ideologies are “those cultural presuppositions and metalinguistic notions that name, frame and evaluate linguistic practices, linking them to the political, moral and aesthetic positions of the speakers, and to the institutions that support those positions and practices” (p. 163). In simple terms, language ideologies refer to what people believe about language, its use, and its users.

Language ideologies are never unitary, they are grounded in social positions, as well as moral and political stances, and they are never really only about language (Gal, 2006; Paffey, 2012). Paffey (2012) argues that there is a two-way relationship between socio-political factors and language ideologies as socio-political issues directly shape linguistic practices, language views, and the values attached to languages. Considering that languages are “dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries” (Shohami, 2006, p. 205) and that the “boundaries between languages are not natural or utterly outside of human will and political forces” (Gal &

Irvine, 1995, p. 992), it is important to critically examine how language ideologies are constructed, disseminated, and sustained within society.

Similar to the modes presented by Thompson (1984), Woolard (1998) suggests 3 likely contexts in which language ideologies can be found:

1. Linguistic practices, which inform and shape ideologies by creating the status quo via repetition and naturalization. This refers to conscious decisions made about language use such as appropriateness based on context, acceptance of certain varieties, or preference over others. These are real-life decisions made by individuals as well as macro level stakeholders.
2. Explicit metalinguistic discourse, which are explicit conversations about how speakers use and how they must use languages. Explicit metalinguistic discourse is shaped by “experts” who intervene on language use. These experts can be actual language professionals who influence language policy and planning, but they could also be language users who enforce how/how not to use language.
3. Implicit metapragmatics, through which users utilize strategies of linguistic signaling such as contextualization cues that inform the way in which the language is interpreted by its users and creates social relations that align with forms of conversation.

As seen in this section, language ideologies are an essential part of language use and society. Language ideologies are reproduced and enacted by individuals in everyday situations, and they have a significant influence on how identities are shaped and negotiated, which is a central construct of this study.

### *Standard Language Ideology*

One of the most pervasive language ideologies is standard language ideology (SLI). SLI is defined as a “bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions” (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64). SLI is common in societies where global languages such as English, Spanish, or French are used, and are referred to as *standard language cultures* (Milroy, 2001). People living in these cultures tend to believe that “a homogeneous, standardized, one-size-fits-all language” (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 65) is desirable and a central part of their culture, a belief that tends to be enforced through the education system.

Milroy (2001) explains that language standardization is a socio-political conscious human intervention of a language that is, at its core, not about language uniformity. Language standardization disregards the core principle of language as a pluricentric living organism in constant evolution, and it is an inherently contradictory principle, as acknowledging the need to impose uniformity on a language’s structure highlights the fact that it is not naturally uniform (Milroy, 2001). For Fairclough (2001) standardized language varieties are *mythical national languages*, and for Lippi-Green (1997) they are idealized varieties of language that only exist in the minds of the speakers.

Milroy (2001) argues that standard varieties tend to equate with the “highest prestige variety” rather than with the variety that is characterized by the highest degree of uniformity” (p. 532). The chosen standard may not be the most uniform, but the one selected based on power, which is then presented to the general population as the homogenous language variety that should be used and maintained. A clear example can be seen in the use of Castilian as the variety historically chosen to represent standard Spanish across the world. Castilian was selected for being the

language of the Spanish monarchy, which was then imposed as the standard across Spain and its colonies. Now labeled Spanish, it is used by most of the population in Spain and in most Latin American countries (Paffey, 2012).

Language varieties on their own cannot carry prestige, it is the speakers of such varieties that are assigned such attributes. Therefore, the prestige, or lack of it, attributed to language varieties is indexical of the social lives of its speakers, which includes social class, race, etc. (Milroy, 2001). Once a language has been promoted as *the* standard, it is not only viewed as a functional tool but also as an icon of national identity, making it indexical of what a good speaker of this language should look and sound like (Lippi-Green, 1997; Mackiney, 2016). Rosa and Flores (2015) coined the term *raciolinguistic ideologies* to describe the phenomenon of standard language varieties in association with racial features of its speakers. Standard varieties tend to be associated with a specific country and the stereotyped image of its citizens, which in the case of English tends to draw a direct relationship between nativeness, linguistic legitimacy, and whiteness.

The process of language standardization also creates a division between those who speak the standard and those outside the community of speakers of the idealized variety (Fairclough, 2001; Paffey, 2012), a connection that tends to be associated with national identity. As a consequence arises the belief that native speakers – those born in the place where the language is spoken – have undeniable authority and ownership of the standardized language. To refer to this belief system, I will abide by Train's (2007) term "Native Standard Language ideology" which is defined as "a constellation of hegemonic ideologies of language, (non)standardness, and (non)nativeness that has come to define within the dominant culture of standardization the constructed realities of language, community, and identity" (p. 209). The construct of nativeness



is ambiguous and problematic as it only confers “privileged native-speakership” (Train, 2007, p. 213) to select members of the community who speak the Standard and fit into the determined characteristics of what a *good* speaker of this language is. This may exclude a significant part of the population and position them as outsiders even within their own countries. This is one of the most widespread ideologies in the field of language teaching, especially in the case of global languages such as English and Spanish.

Given the relationship between power and standardization, the divide it creates among language users functions as one of the strongest lines of demarcation between groups within a society and can be considered to be an aggressive process of linguistic domination (Silverstein, 1996). In order to clarify how this domination typically works, Lippi-Green (1997) proposed a model of the language subordination process. This model highlights eight steps that are usually followed in the subordination of non-standard/non-prestigious language varieties:

1. Language is mystified: language users are told that their language is such a complex system that they need the help of experts to truly understand it and learn how to (not) use it.
2. Authority is claimed: a certain group of people claim extraordinary knowledge of the language and exert their power as experts over the community of language users.
3. Misinformation is generated: information is framed as common sense and the notion of one language form being more valuable/superior to others for historical or logical reasons is disseminated.
4. Non-mainstream language is trivialized: the “unwanted” variety(ies) are belittled in comparison to the prestigious one(s).

5. Conformers are held up as positive examples: language users who have assimilated to the standard are portrayed as evolved, accomplished, and role models to follow.
6. Explicit promises are made: privileges are promised to those who comply with the proposed changes.
7. Threats are made: just as some users are promised privileges, the ones who do not comply are threatened with losing certain benefits if they refuse to abide to the common-sense arguments.
8. Non-conformers are vilified or marginalized: users within the community who refused to assimilate to the new linguistic status are excluded and viewed as bad.

Paffey (2012) uses the term “ideology brokers” to refer to ideology creators/enforcers and identifies the three pillars to enforce a standard language: the dictionary, grammar, and orthography. In standard language cultures, these three axioms are used by language authorities as a way to codify and spread normative features of the standard language. These 3 are usually presented as canonical entities indexical of the language level that should be attained and function as ubiquitous authority enforcers. This enforcing is initially done through language planning and language policies and then maintained by members of the community who may also become ideology brokers and participate in the perpetuation of SLI.

According to Kaplan and Baldauf, (1997) “language planning is a body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change rules, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities” (p. 3). Rubin (1984) identifies four steps to follow in the process of language planning: fact finding, policy setting and strategy consideration, implementation, and evaluation. In the first stage, language planners collect information about the particular setting and their objective with the

proposed language changes. This is the stage where needs are assessed, and the language problem is identified. Looking at these through the lenses of ideology studies, this would be the stage where the prestigious variety is identified as the chosen standard. In the second stage, goals are set, best strategies and resources to accomplish the goals of standardization are determined, and these determinations tend to happen at multiple levels: first in the legal realm, then in the areas or institutions where the change will be applied, and finally at the specific local levels of those who will implement it. The final two steps are implementation and evaluation, and these stages are usually managed by stakeholders from four main areas: governmental agencies, education agencies, quasigovernmental or nongovernmental organizations, and other influential groups - or in some cases influential individuals creating language policy as an accidental (or purposeful) part of their normal activity (Kaplan, & Baldauf, 1997). It is essential to look at these stakeholders when studying the enforcement of SLI in education, so I will discuss each of them separately and provide empirical examples of how they work below.

Governmental and education agencies are the highest level of stakeholders. It is commonly at this level where the decisions of language standardization take place. Sometimes, the decision to impose a standardized language variety is used as a political decision to solve political conflicts, as it was the case in South Africa (Kamwangamalu, 2007), where English was proposed as *the* unifying language after the Apartheid to ease the tensions among different ethnic groups. When language standardization occurs this way, it tends to become a major source of tension for the citizens. Another appropriate example of this would be the language policies imposed on indigenous populations in the US as a form to assimilate them to the culture of the colonizers.

Quasigovernmental or nongovernmental organizations that are usually involved in the implementation of language standardization include language academies, which are not official

branches of the government that hold a farfetched power for language control. An example is the Real Academia Española (RAE) which is the self-proclaimed keeper of “proper” Spanish. RAE was created before the “discovery” of America and has been historically in charge of regulating and enforcing the use of standard Spanish (Paffey, 2012). RAE has always been located in Spain and even after the independence process of the Latin American continent they attempt to maintain full control over Spanish use in the peninsula and the former colonies. Spanish is an appropriate example of how there can be levels of legitimacy among native speakers depending on who abides by the rules of the standard and who does not. Those who resist the impositions of RAE tend to be denied access to the community of *proper* speakers of Spanish and face stigmatization.

Other influential individuals or agencies that are commonly enforcers of SLI in the context of English are institutions such as the Peace Corps (their educational branch), the British Council, and the Summer Institute for Linguistics. Authors such as Phillipson (1997) have categorized the existence of these institutions as a form of linguistic imperialism as they significantly influence English teaching outside of the Inner Circle and enforce Western ideologies. In particular, the British Council is in a position of power in South America as they are directly involved in language policy creation and implementation as I will further explain in the findings of my study.

Although in this section I have discussed how language ideologies are imposed and maintained from the top-down, language users play a crucial role in this process as well. They are key players in sustaining language ideologies or resisting them, which I will further discuss and exemplify in the literature review section below.

***Standard Language Ideology and ELT***

SLI is at the core the English language teaching (ELT) industry. Mahboob (2011) expounds that the industry of ELT has been built at the expense of myths and perpetuation of ideologies that marginalize vast populations. He describes the *English industry* as a multi-million-dollar business that profits on maintaining Western hegemonic interests based on political and economic reasons. Mahboob (2011) estimated the worth of the English textbook industry, which is mostly centered in American or British English, at £5,455 billion at the time of his research. This demonstrates the economic forces that drive ELT towards the notion of Native Standard language. The fastest and further English spreads, the more this industry grows generating a greater need for materials, instruction, and other profit-generating services. The backbone of this commercialization of language is based on the myth of native standard language.

Native standard language ideologies, even though not always identified as such, have been vastly discussed in the literature of critical applied linguistics with the purpose of explaining the negative effects this brings upon language teachers. Native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005), similarly described by Phillipson (1997) as the native speaker fallacy, is defined as an established belief in which native-speaker teachers represent Western culture from which the ideals of English language and of ELT methodology unequivocally come from. In other words, this is the belief that native speakers have more authority over the language, which inherently makes them more qualified to teach English. At the same time, Western-centric models are portrayed as the ideal teaching models to follow. Such assumptions marginalize many teachers and students and position them as deficient users of the language if they were not born in a country where English is spoken as an official or dominant language.

The pervasiveness of native standard language ideologies in ELT has functioned as a gatekeeping device for Non-native English Speaker Teachers (NNESTs) who tend to be downgraded even though they currently represent the vast majority in the field. Within ELT, there is an almost ubiquitous notion of an idealized speaker of English from which ethnic and linguistic minorities are automatically excluded (Leung et al.1997 in Norton, 1997). These ideal speakers tend to be associated with White monolingual English speakers from Western countries (Norton, 1997), while other minority populations immediately receive the market sanction of exclusion. Since language ideologies are usually presented as natural and related to common sense, the so-called non-native speakers play a role in reproducing the ideologies that lead them to self-marginalization. Llorca (2009) criticizes the preference of prestigious standard varieties of English by NNESTs and makes a radical claim saying that NNESTs suffer from something similar to Stockholm syndrome since they continue perpetuating the ideologies that keep oppressing them. However, in the past few decades there has been a growing trend to not only problematize the issues related to native-speakerism, but to generate change in the field.

### ***Non-Traditional Approaches to ELT***

World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and English as an International language are non-traditional paradigms currently gaining momentum in the critical applied linguistics field. They challenge oppressive views on language use by recognizing that English, as all languages, is pluricentric in nature and belongs to all its users. These non-traditional approaches defend the idea of multiple varieties of English that should be recognized as more than defective versions of the native dialects, which gives language legitimacy to all users.

Kachru (1985) developed the “World Englishes” (WE) paradigm, which strongly opposes to the idea of promoting one single English variety that all speakers should learn and/or use.

Kachru's concentric circle model distributes countries into three groups, or circles, based on the types of spread, patterns of acquisition, and local functions of English. The Inner Circle is composed by the historically dominant users of English: countries like Canada, England, and the United States, which also represent the population that is commonly recognized as native speakers. The Outer Circle is formed by countries where English spread because they are former colonies of Inner Circle countries. Some of these countries are India, Singapore, and Nigeria, where English commonly has some official function within societies. Finally, the Expanding Circle represents countries like Brazil, China, and Venezuela, where English does not have the extended functions it has in the other Circles, but is it often taught as the most popular foreign language, and it is used widely for its symbolic effect in areas like advertising, marketing, and pop culture (Matsuda, 2012). The concentric circle model is important for this study as I am referring to Venezuela as a part of the Expanding Circle.

As an alternative to the gaps within the WE paradigm emerged the scholarship on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). ELF shares the core values of Kachru's paradigm by acknowledging and defending language variation and ownership outside of the Inner Circle. ELF scholars rely on the basic definition of a lingua franca as a language used for communication by users who do not share a mother tongue or common culture (Seidlhofer, 2005). In this context, the Lingua Franca status of English does not necessarily equate to a specific language variety; it is instead seen as a combination of multiple varieties that were merged to fulfill the purpose of intelligibility in particular international contexts (Jenkins, 2009). ELF studies started rising in the 1990s, and they focus on describing the linguistic features of English interactions between non-natives in the Expanding Circle through the lenses of descriptive linguistics (Dewey & Jenkins, 2010). In this way, ELF positions Expanding Circle users of English not as outsiders trying/expected to imitate

native speaker varieties, but as “languagers” who are fully involved and engaged in English language use and transformation (Seidlhofer, 2009).

There is major debate about the differences at the core of these three approaches but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My study is framed under the umbrella of English as an international language (EIL) as used by Bayyurt and Sifakis (2017), who argue that EIL is an umbrella term that covers the core principles of both WE and ELF. EIL is “a paradigm for thinking, research and practice” (Sharifian, 2009) that emerged in response to the complexities associated with the spread of English as a global or international language. In my study, I present my findings as an example of the Expanding Circle and discuss English use through the lenses of EIL.

### **Literature Review**

In this section, I discuss important studies in the language teacher identity literature that relate to my study by following these questions:

1. How does research on language teacher identities inform us about English language teachers’ development and teaching?
  - a. What are typical research findings across the literature on language teacher identities in the Expanding Circle?

### ***The Professional Identities of Language Teachers***

In the 1980s, studies on language teachers were mostly centered on their cognition, beliefs, and learning processes, but rarely engaged with their identities (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Language teachers used to be perceived as specialists defined by their knowledge and the methodologies they used for teaching, but the research on who they were and how they constructed their identities was almost non-existent. However, in the late 1990s there was shift in the literature and



scholars began to pay attention to language teacher identities (LTIs) (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). In this section, I review studies in LTI that inform us about English language teachers' lives and the factors that influence their identity construction. This dissertation research builds on the work I review below.

Teachers' professional identities could be defined as how they see themselves and how they enact their profession in particular settings (Varghese, 2006). Exploring the professional identities of teachers encompasses a wide array of internal and external factors that influence identity construction. Duff and Uchida (1997) outline key elements of language teachers' professional identities:

Language teachers and students in any setting naturally represent a wide array of social and cultural roles and identities: as teachers or students, as gendered and cultured individuals, as expatriates or nationals, as native speakers or nonnative speakers, as content area or TESL/English language specialists, as individuals with political convictions, and as members of families, organizations, and society at large. (p.451)

The lives and experiences of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) have been in the spotlight of LTI research due to their diverse and complex backgrounds. NNESTs are a diverse group that make up a majority of the teacher population worldwide (Braine, 2012), making it a unique and relevant study population. De Costa (2017) argues that "teacher identity development does not take place solely within the individual teacher; rather, it occurs in relation to the larger societal context within which the teacher is embedded (p.159). Hence, it is important to explore the internal and external factors that impact teachers' professional lives to have a better understanding of teaching and who teachers are. Mahboob (2017) outlines three important aspects that influence language teacher identities: "1) teachers' use of language, 2)

teachers' classroom practices, 3) teachers' presentation of curriculum" (p. 51). This indicates that teacher identities are shaped and negotiated by teachers' linguistic choices in and out of the classroom, the actions they perform in class and how those are perceived by external stakeholders (e.g. school administrators, parents, etc.), and the policy/curriculum requirements in their particular settings. In the particular case of minoritized English teachers, "language teachers' and linguistic minorities' needs and identities go beyond language and are inextricably linked with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, immigration, class, and religion" (Varghese, 2017, p. 45).

The interconnectedness of linguistic and professional identities of NNESTs has been at the center of LTI research. Scholars have problematized the political nature of the native/nonnative dichotomy as a socially constructed phenomenon with a potential negative impact on teacher identities (Aneja, 2016; Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Pennycook, 1994). Graddol (1999) talks about the "death of the native speaker," claiming the myth of native speaker superiority has been debunked, but this ideology is still very prevalent in ELT. Although the native/non-native dichotomy is not an objective way to understand language and language use, it influences hiring decisions, proficiency assessment, and professional development opportunities in ELT (Clark & Paran, 2007; Leung, 2005, Llorca, 2004). The industry emphasis on the innate qualifications of native over nonnative speakers has led to *unprofessional favoritism* (Medgyes, 2001) in the field, which results in discriminatory hiring practices and tensions among the NNEST community (Clark & Paran, 2007; Flynn & Gulikers, 2001; Mahboob et al 2004; Moussu, 2006). The issue of (non)nativeness and language ownership is a central construct explored in the LTI literature.

The marginalization and complexities associated with (non)nativeness are well documented in a study by Aneja (2016), who presents the case of four English teachers from diverse backgrounds who experienced (non)nativeness in diverse ways. Two participants, Oliver and April, were multilingual English users whose legitimacy was not challenged because they were perceived as fitting into the characteristics of the idealized native speaker. In contrast, the other two participants, Mark and Neha, were “marginalized native English speakers.” Mark self-identified as a user of a “broken” variety of American English and his linguistic legitimacy was challenged in academic spaces; however, he was able to benefit from his national identity to avoid marginalization to a certain degree, which was not possible for Neha. Neha self-identified as a native speaker because English was one of her home languages growing up, but she was challenged by others because she spoke with an Indian accent, which was still perceived by others as a nonnative English variety. Similarly, Kayi-Aydar (2015) provides another account of the complexity of (non)native identity negotiations. In her exploration of Janelle’s story, she highlighted the process of identity transformation and the impacts of identity negotiation on teacher agency. Although the study does not explicitly discuss issues of nativeness and language ownership, one of the main reasons why Janelle gave up her teaching Spanish career for one as an English teacher was her lack of agency to negotiate her position as a nonnative in the Spanish-speaking community. Both studies shed light on the fluid and complex nature of the construct of nativeness and the intrinsic connection between identity construction and linguistic recognition.

Varghese et al. (2005) present three case studies of teachers to evidence identity in relation to agency and positioning by others. Their study yielded important findings regarding marginalization and positioning of non-native teachers, the professional status of language teaching, and relations between teachers and students. Another seminal study that accounts for

the complexity of teachers' professional identities in relation to issues of membership and language legitimacy is the one by Tsui (2007). In his case study of Minfangm Tsui found that marginalization had a profound effect on the participant's sense of self-worth and identity, which became an issue that continuously surfaced throughout his career. Similarly, Park (2012) explored the feelings of linguistic powerlessness faced by, Xia, a Chinese teacher enrolled in an MEd TESOL program at a University in the United States. Xia's linguistic identity was transformed and challenged due to local ideologies that determined who was identified as a legitimate English user. However, with proper mentoring, Xia was able to claim and embrace her nonnative-speaker identity from a different perspective.

There is an emotional burden associated with teaching, identity construction, and the negotiation of (non)nativeness (Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016; Reis, 2014; Wolf & De Costa, 2017). Emotions tend to be deemed as *not professional* although they are a key component in the formation, maintenance, and performance of all professional identities (Reis, 2014); however, the intersection of emotions and teacher identity construction is well recognized in the LTI literature. Song (2016) offered insights on the identity negotiations of five in-service teachers in Korea who experienced emotional difficulties due to their non-nativeness in relation to the social expectations set up for teachers. These teachers felt intimidated and threatened by their students who had participated in study abroad programs in the Inner Circle, which resulted in constant emotional labor and tensions in their teaching practice. In another account of the emotional process of adaptation and its impact on teacher identity, Wolf and De Costa (2017) investigated the complex interplay of teachers' emotions, identity development, and adaptation strategies. Their case study of Puja, a 30-year-old English teacher from Bangladesh studying in the United States, examined the complexities of Puja's emotions and identity negotiation. Puja was

conflicted with issues regarding her non-nativeness, but she was able to adapt to the expectations of her new teaching context and develop new pedagogical approaches with a positive attitude. Puja's identity work demonstrated that she did not have to give up her Bangladesh teacher identity to adopt an American one; instead, she was able to move between both identities and expand her teaching repertoire strategically and fluidly. Lasky (2005) also offered insights on teachers' vulnerability in the context of externally mandated educational policies. Lasky's participants faced emotional difficulties when forced to negotiate their beliefs about teaching due to conflicting expectations of the nationally imposed curriculum. Her findings shed light on the intricate process of bottom-up educational policy implementation and the impact it has on teachers' emotions, identities, and classroom practices.

Sociocultural aspects such as race, ethnicity, and gender also intersect with the construction of NNESTs professional identities. As discussed in the previous sections in this chapter, there is an intrinsic relationship between ELT, colonialism, and the power dynamics that shape social constructs such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity. However, the study of race, racialization, and racism in the field of ELT has not been thoroughly explored yet as English teaching tends to be portrayed as a neutral matter by scholars and practitioners outside critical applied linguistics (Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009; Motha, 2006, 2017). The concepts of race and empire are difficult to separate as colonization has been historically linked to racial divisions and "because it is empire that produced and sustains formations of race, and it is notions of race that construct relations of empire" (Motha, 2017, p. 218).

The connection between race, language ownership, and teacher identities in ELT was studied by Amin (1997). Amin examined the experiences of five "visible-minority" female teachers in Canada and exposed a direct connection between perceptions of language appropriateness and

race. These teachers were positioned by their students as unauthentic/illegitimate users of English because they did not fit the physical characteristics (i.e., Whiteness) of stereotypical perceptions of ideal English teachers, which resulted in the participants having difficulty negotiating their teacher identities. Motha (2006) also offered an account of how four K-12 ESL instructors negotiated their racial identities and found ways to resist institutional policies that perpetuated hegemonic discourses favoring Whiteness and native-speakerism. In an account particularly relevant to this study, Chacón (2009) investigated pre-service and in-service English teachers' perceptions of language and race in Venezuela. Her findings provide important insights regarding the prevalence of color blindness in this context, the importance of self-reflection to identify teachers' racist attitudes, and the influence of the Venezuelan media on racial prejudice maintenance and stereotype construction. Chacón's study yields valuable information to better understand Venezuelan English teachers.

In another study of the interrelations among race, gender, and the professional identities of English teachers, Nagato (2014) examined the professional lives of 38 foreign female English teachers in Japanese universities. Nagato detailed the adjustment experiences of these teachers in relation to the gendered expectations of Japanese society at large and institutional practices that they perceived favored foreign male colleagues. The tensions and difficulties the teachers experienced in their workplace had a significant impact on their identity construction and teaching practices. Likewise, Simon-Maeda (2004) investigated the life history narratives of nine female EFL teachers working in universities in Japan and reported similar findings. Female teachers worked in male-dominated environments, struggled adjusting to the institutional and cultural impositions based on their gendered identities, which in turn made them feel like second class citizens and impacted their professional identity. Lawrence and Nagashima (2020) also

report on the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and nativeness in the construction of language teacher identities. Using a duoethnography approach, the authors compared their personal narratives to determine how their personal identities interacted and intersected with their professional ones, and how the sociocultural context of language teaching influenced their professional identities and practice at the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and linguistic status. In the context of Japan, Luke was not perceived or respected as a *real* teacher due to his foreigner status; however, his nativeness made students perceive him as authentic and legitimate, which gave him certain cultural power. In contrast, Yusuko claimed a hybrid identity as bilingual and bicultural, which made her appear respectable and perceived as a native speaker by domestic students; however, this was not the case for students with international background who perceived her as less authentic and competent. These studies demonstrate the complexity of identity construction, the context-driven nature of sociocultural markers such as gender and race, and the intersectionality of internal and external factors in the construction of professional identities, which in turn influence teaching practices.

Although, in the past, most studies that addressed teachers' lives overlooked the intricate layers of identity construction, the field of LTI has gained momentum in the fields of applied linguistics and TESOL. As seen in this section, the lives and experiences of NNESTs have been explored and the intersection of their professional identities with their linguistic, racial, social, and gendered identities has been analyzed. However, there are two important gaps in the literature that this dissertation contributes to. First, most of the studies that have investigated EFL teacher identities have been conducted in Asia or the United States. Studies situated in Latin America tend to focus on language policies, ideology, and instructional practices, which are all related to teacher identities, but the topic is not explicitly addressed. In the case of Venezuela,

most studies focus on proposing practical classroom tools or describing the current state of ELT in the country. Hence, my study fills an important gap in the literature by exploring the lives and professional experiences of Venezuelan teachers, whom up to this point are practically invisible in the LTI literature. The second contribution my dissertation makes to the LTI literature is the explicit connection between circulating language ideologies and teacher identity construction. Several of the studies described in this section address the issue of hegemonic language ideologies and policy implementation as essential parts of identity construction; however, most of these connections are made through the teachers' narratives. My study instead offers an extensive analysis of policy and legal documents, and other macrolevel devices that shape teaching practice in Venezuela. By conducting this thorough investigation, I was able to not only richly describe the state of language policy in Venezuela but also document how circulating language ideologies are reproduced and enacted at macro, meso, and micro levels through the identities of my two focal participants.



### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

This dissertation is a qualitative research study that explores the intersection of circulating language ideologies and language teacher identities. Van Maanen (1979) defined qualitative inquiry as “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (p.520). In contrast to quantitative research, which attempts to prove a hypothesis from a deductive and numerical manner, qualitative research attempts to understand how humans make meaning of their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and how they understand others’ interpretation of their experiences (Merriam, 2009).

Since I was interested in understanding two English language teachers’ experiences in the context of ideologies and language teaching, qualitative inquiry was the most appropriate choice for this study. Through qualitative research methods, I addressed the following questions: 1. What are macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela? 2. How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers? The goal of this study was not to outline generalizable findings, but it was instead to understand and describe a particular context in detail, gain an in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences, and and share those experiences with numerous audiences.

In this chapter, I describe the methodological choices made in this dissertation and the research-based rationale behind those decisions. First, I describe the theoretical aspects that guided the study design and outline the research questions. Second, I provide a positionality statement

and discuss the ethical considerations that guided the design of the study. Then, I provide a description of the study participants and setting as well as the data collection procedures and instruments, and I offer a description of the data analysis procedures.

### **Study Design**

This is a Critical Qualitative research study (Merriam, 2009) that aimed to uncover power dynamics in the English language teaching (ELT) field in Venezuela, expose and challenge the circulating ideologies that inform educational policies in that context, and investigate their influence on the identities of two in-service English teachers. Rather than attempting to simply understand a phenomenon and its meaning to the research participants, critical qualitative research has the goal of critiquing and challenging to generate change in society (Merriam, 2009). Taking a critical research stance, I looked beyond individuals and explored larger societal structures that influenced power dynamics and shaped educational practices in the setting where this study was conducted. More specifically, I aligned with the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to design the methodology of my study.

CDA aims to analyze “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.2). CDA looks beyond textual discursive features to examine the social processes and structures that inform the way in which individuals and groups create meaning and interact with written and oral texts in a sociohistorical context. Hence, three central concepts of CDA are: power, history, and ideology (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). CDA is an interdisciplinary research movement that combines different approaches, methods, and theories with the common goal of exploring the intricate relationship between language, power, and ideology in sociohistorical contexts (Catalano & Waugh, 2020; Paffey, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

CDA aligns with the purpose of this dissertation as my goal was to expose the ideologies that inform educational practices in Venezuela and to demonstrate how those ideologies impact language teacher identities and maintain oppressive structures against users of English as an additional language. I critically analyzed texts produced at macro (national), meso (institutional), and micro (individual) levels to uncover power dynamics and institutionalized practices that enforce and reproduce language ideologies and marginalize certain populations. Unlike other research approaches that claim to be impartial, CDA demonstrates “solidarity with the oppressed” and “unlike much other scholarship, [it] does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position. That is, CDA is biased and proud of it” (Van Dijk, 2001). In the case of this study, my goal was to express my solidarity with so-called non-native English-speaking teachers and challenge the language ideologies that reproduce and perpetuate the marginalization of minoritized English users.

This study relied on the theoretical underpinnings of poststructuralist perspectives of identity (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2017; Bucholtz & Hall, 2012; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Kayi-Aydar, 2015), and combined a semiotic approach to textual analysis (Gal & Irvine, 1995) with qualitative methods such as single case studies, thematic analysis, and ethnographic data collection tools to answer the following research questions:

1. What are macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela?
2. How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers?

### **Researcher Positionality**

My identities and personal experiences have influenced the design and motivations for this study. My professional, linguistic, and ethnic identities were an important source of motivation to this research topic and context. I am a Venezuelan national, a teacher, and I identify as a user of English as an additional language. I have experienced the negative burden associated with being a *non-native English speaker* in multiple contexts: in my home country, I received lower salaries than my American coworkers at school solely because of my nationality, and in the United States, I am constantly the target of microaggressions due to my *non-nativeness, foreign accent, and racioethnic identity*. For a very long time, I believed that I was an illegitimate language user because of my non-nativeness, and this was a constant source of anxiety for me. When I started reading and learning about language variation and non-traditional approaches to second/foreign language teaching, I could make better sense of my own experiences and became interested in the experiences of others. I became deeply invested in giving a voice to other teachers who might be going through similar experiences and facing the tensions I have felt over the years.

Given my personal background and critical stance, I am aware that I am taking a position on the issues I explore in my work. I want to give voice to non-native English-speaking teachers in this particular setting, a voice that I myself did not have for a long time. I identify as part of this community, and I feel the responsibility to expose the power structures and language ideologies that may negatively impact Venezuelan English teachers and sustain the oppression of users of non-prestigious varieties of English. My ultimate goal is to generate change in language teacher education and contribute to my country's advancement.

I also recognize my privilege as a highly proficient English user coming from an Inner Circle Country. After living in the United States for eight years, I understand that I am typically

positioned, by my fellow Venezuelan colleagues and peers, as someone who has *native-like* proficiency, which may seem intimidating. This positionality informed my methodological choices as I gave my participants the option of using Spanish to communicate with me and engage in my research activities. I also stated since the beginning of the data collection that I would not be assessing their English or teaching skills with the hope to make them feel more comfortable and less threatened.

Finally, I want to address the ethical considerations that informed the study design based on my positionality. First, since I did not have information regarding the participants' English proficiency, all the research instruments were translated to Spanish to ensure a clear understanding of the research study. Second, given the complex political context and the negative diplomatic relations between Venezuela and the United States, it was important for me to disclose my academic affiliation with an American university and assure school stakeholders and participants that the data collected for this study was not going to be used for any type of political publication. Before obtaining permission to conduct the study, I met with all school administrators and provided paperwork to demonstrate that I did not have any type of affiliation with the United States government or any local or international political party.

## **Participants and Setting**

### ***Setting***

This study was conducted at Los Campos (pseudonym), a public high school in San Diego, Carabobo, Venezuela. San Diego is a county of Carabobo state that could be considered a suburb outside of the big city of Valencia. Even though there are low-income areas in this county, most of the neighborhoods are middle or upper-middle class. The school where this study took place was founded in 1987 and, with a total enrollment of approximately 2000 students and around 51 sections of secondary education classes, this is the biggest public school in San Diego. Classes in

this school were held in two groups, some sections had classes in the morning and some in the afternoon, so there were different school staff members for each group. This study focused on the morning group; I did not have any contact with the afternoon staff.

Venezuela has been immersed in a political crisis since 1999 that has negatively influenced the country in various ways. During the time of the data collection, the country was facing a devastating economic crisis that led to serious infrastructure issues and a mass population migration. Given the socioeconomic crisis, the infrastructure of this institution was in a dire condition. Most of the classrooms did not have electricity, the windows were broken, and many students' desks were damaged. Teachers in this institution worked with chalkboards in most classrooms (some had whiteboards) and did not have access to instructional resources such as textbooks, photocopies, or even notebooks for students. There was a small computer laboratory, but it did not have internet access, and it could only accommodate up to 15 students while most classes had at least 40 students enrolled.

Based on the national curriculum, English classes are mandatory for all high school students in Venezuela. Grades 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> receive 6 hours of English instruction per week as the result of a recent curricular change nation-wide. 11<sup>th</sup> graders receive only 3 hours per week. There were only 4 English teachers for the morning group in this school but one of them had been on sick leave for the entire first trimester when the data were collected. Due to this teacher's absence, most sections of 9<sup>th</sup> graders were not receiving any English instruction during the first trimester of the 2018 school year. Even though there was a nationally mandated textbook for English from the Bicentenario Collection, students had not received the books by the time of the data collection, so they did not use any textbook for English class. Students only had access to this textbook through their school library, but they were not allowed to take them outside the

library, and there were not enough copies for all students. Due to a mandate from the Ministry of Education, teachers could not require other textbooks for class.

This school was selected based on convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009) due to accessibility and my safety as a researcher. Given the high levels of insecurity in Venezuela at the time, I had to choose a site where I would feel safe. Based on a University of Arizona risk assessment for my trip, I was advised to not conduct research or travel to the South side of Valencia because there were high risks of getting robbed or even kidnapped. Considering this factor, I had to rule out all public schools in that area. Choosing San Diego was the most convenient and safest choice because this is where I grew up and one of the safe areas identified in the risk assessment report. Among the public schools in this sector, I chose Los Campos (pseudonym) because it is the biggest public high school in the area and the only institution big enough to have more than one English instructor – most small schools had only one teacher for all grades and sections. Figure 1 illustrates the location of San Diego in the map of Carabobo state.

Figure 1  
Map of San Diego



### ***The Participants***

The selection of the participants was done following the principles of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling refers to selecting *information-rich* cases that help the researcher understand the explored phenomenon in depth (Patton, 2002). Although the school was selected on the basis of convenience, I used criterion sampling as a strategy to select my teacher participants (Dörnyei, 2007). I looked for a certain set of characteristics in identifying and choosing the teachers for this study: they had to a) be in-service English teachers; b) identify as non-native English speakers; and c) work at a public Venezuelan school. The criteria to select participants were informed by the research questions and the gaps identified in the literature review.

The participants of this study were two in-service English teachers in San Diego, Venezuela. By the time of the data collection, the teacher participants were working in a Venezuelan public high school. One of the participants was a novice instructor with only two years in the field and the other was an experienced teacher with a career of over 15 years. To protect the participants' identities, I use the pseudonyms Milo and Kamila throughout the study.

Besides the teacher participants, I had contact with a number of school stakeholders such as the academic coordinator and the vice-principal of the school. They approve the study, served as the liaison to recruit the teachers, and helped me obtain the textual artifacts to analyze school and national education policies. Given the disconnect of the English program from the institutional bracket, I decided not to include school stakeholders in the data collection procedures. In this school, there was no English coordinator or particular guidance from the institution regarding English instruction; teachers followed the national guidelines without administrative support and



were supervised by the Spanish coordinator, who had no particular expectations of English instruction according to the teacher participants.

***Participant I: Milo.***

Milo was an English teacher at Los Campos high school. He was in his early 40s and is originally from the Andean region of Venezuela. Milo had a diverse career experience before deciding to become an English teacher. Before starting his career in education, he worked as a hotel receptionist, received a degree as a cost analyst, held accountant positions at supermarkets, and then became a baker. Milo lived in an English-speaking country in Europe from 2003 to 2008 where he worked at a restaurant and had the opportunity to take English classes before his deportation back to Venezuela. In 2017, his brother, a teacher with over 20 years of experience, offered him an English teaching position in the central region of the country based on his English knowledge and the significant need for teachers in this school. Milo accepted the position, and after one year of teaching he decided to transfer to the Los Campos.

Milo had been teaching for 2 years by the time of data collection. He had experience working with 8<sup>th</sup> graders in a rural school in a nearby state before moving to San Diego where he had been teaching the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes for the 2018-2019 academic year. Even though he did not have an education-related degree, he expressed a lot of interest in learning more about this field and completed some training in the *Micro-Misión Simón Rodríguez*, a government program that prepares people with diverse professional backgrounds to teach English in public institutions in response to the shortage of English teachers due to the mass migration crisis. Milo was not able to finish this program due to his relocation to San Diego, but he was very eager to resume the program in January or February 2019.

Milo was a full-time teacher with approximately 35 students per classroom. He taught 6 sections of 10<sup>th</sup> grade English and 5 sections of the same class for 11<sup>th</sup> graders. The classes were held from Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 12:15pm, and each section received 3 hours of instruction per week, making Milo's in-class load of 33 hours. Besides his teaching responsibilities, he had 2 hours of preparation time per week along with 1 hour to meet with parents. Milo was also in charge of overseeing lunch and dismissal breaks on Mondays.

***Participant II: Kamila.***

Kamila was a Venezuelan English teacher from Valencia, Venezuela in her mid-30s. She obtained her BA in Education with a major in English language teaching from the most prestigious university in the central region of Venezuela in 2004. Besides her university training, Kamila also completed an English course in a well-respected language institute in Valencia. Kamila had never lived or traveled to an English-speaking country and did not have any family members who spoke English. Her first teaching experience was as a volunteer during high school. This, along with her interest to learn other languages led her to become an English educator.

Kamila's first official English teaching experience was a 3-week teaching practicum in a private high school in a wealthy county of Valencia teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade English. After this, she obtained a position through the Ministry of Education and was assigned to a public school in a rural low-income county of Valencia where she taught all sections of English from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. After working there for 5 years, she requested a transfer to Los Campos, where she had been for 10 years by the time of the data collection.

Kamila taught 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade English classes and had approximately 35 students per class. She had a total of 34 in-class hours teaching five sections of 8<sup>th</sup> grade and one section of 9<sup>th</sup>

grade. Students in these classes received 6 hours of instruction per week and the classes were held Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 12:15 pm. Besides her teaching duties, Kamila had two hours of preparation time, one hour to meet with parents or administrators, and was excused from lunch duty due to personal commitments outside of school. Table 1 summarizes the participants' demographic information.

Table 5  
Participants' Demographic Information

	Milo	Kamila
Ethnicity	Latino - Venezuelan	Latina - Venezuelan
Gender	Male	Female
Age	Early 40s	Late 30s
Region of origin	Venezuelan Andes Region	Venezuelan Central Region
Academic Degree	(BA) Cost Analysis	(BA) Education
Years of teaching experience	2	15
Number of total institutions where they have taught	2	3
Years in current institution	1	10
Travel abroad experience	5 years in London	0
Languages spoken	English, Spanish, Portuguese	English, Spanish
Mother Tongue	Spanish	Spanish

## Data Collection and Procedures

### *Procedures of data collection*

The data collection procedures were divided in two phases: first, I collected the textual artifacts and identified the participants; second, I interviewed the teacher participants and collected other relevant artifacts.

*Phase I: Selecting the research site, identifying the participants, and gathering textual artifacts.*

As previously discussed, the research site was selected on the basis of convenience. The selection was made in July 2018, when I conducted an exploratory trip to prepare for the data collection in the fall. Once I identified the school, I met with school stakeholders and followed the necessary procedures to request permission to conduct the research study in this site. The school administrators provided me with an updated version of the Bolivarian curriculum, sample textbooks from the Bicentenario Collection, and documentation of school policies for English language teaching in their school setting. They also talked to the teacher participants about the research study and connected me with them to start the recruitment process. During this first field trip, I was only able to recruit Kamila to participate in the study.

In November 2018, I made my second field trip to Venezuela to collect the data. Since the connection with the school had already been established, I was able to start the data collection as soon as I arrived in the country. The data collection took place within six weeks. During the first week, I met with administrators and teachers to discuss the details of the study again and ask them to sign the consent forms. Then the schedule for class observations with the teachers was determined and dates for the interviews were set, based on the teachers' availability. The remaining four weeks were dedicated to the classroom observations and interviews. All the data had to be collected in the school because the teachers did not have time outside of their working hours, and the lack of public transportation in Venezuela presented a difficulty for meeting anywhere else.

In order to gain a thorough understating of the circulating language ideologies and power dynamics in this context, I looked at the macro, meso, and micro levels of discourse

reproduction. To begin the macro level exploration, I identified two written texts that aimed to describe and inform ELT practices in Latin America. It was important to look at the whole region to better understand the context especially because this is an understudied area of the Expanding Circle. Another important criterion used to select these texts was the publishing company that created them. Given the significance of *who* is behind textual production in CDA, it was essential for this study to explore the influence of publishing companies and Western stakeholders on language policy decisions, material development, and classroom practices in South America.

One of the documents I analyzed was a Pearson-funded text published by the Inter-American Dialogue. This document evaluates English instruction in South America and proposes ways to improve language education in the region. The second text was a British Council edited report that discussed current projects in the region and assessed their efficiency, as well as discussing future possibilities for the field in Latin America. I describe these artifacts further in the data instruments section.

To narrow the scope, but still looking at the macro level, I analyzed the two most recent publications of the Venezuelan national curriculum and a sample textbook from the Bicentenario collection, which complements the English curriculum. These documents outline official language policies including a description of required content, classroom materials to be used, and the philosophy of teaching of the national approach to language learning. In line with the goals of CDA, analyzing the legal documents that frame educational practices in this context was vital to understand how power structures were constructed, maintained, and resisted in this context.

After this, I looked at the meso level by exploring the curriculum of the teacher education program one of the participants attended. Besides being the program Kamila attended, this

school is among the biggest and most prestigious in the country, so it served as a good example of the teacher education practices being employed in Venezuela. Similar to the previous artifacts, this text was selected due to its legal framing and its influence in the systemic factors that inform ELT in this context.

*Phase II: Single-Case Case Studies.*

To examine how the macro and meso level ideologies were reproduced, enacted and/or contested at the micro level, I provide two single-case studies and analyze the experiences of in-service English teachers as well as the intersection of ideology and professional identity construction. A case study is “an empirical enquiry that has an in-depth focus of study in a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context” (Yin, 2008). I specifically used two instrumental single-case studies, which provide insight into a wider issue rather than focusing on the case itself (Stake, 2005). The cases, which are my two participants, provide insights into the ways circulating language ideologies inform educational practices, reinforce power structures in the region, and influence language teacher identities. Case studies have the potential for rich contextualization as they can shed light on the complexities of the studied phenomenon (Mackey & Gass, 2016). They are also considered to be an

Excellent method for obtaining thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context. It offers rich an in depth insights that no other method can yield, allowing researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 155).

In this phase of the study, I worked with two in-service English teachers from a public high school. I interviewed each of them twice, observed their classes, and analyzed a) their planning grids, b) student-produced materials, and c) their linguistic autobiographies. Besides using the

cases to understand a wider phenomenon, a main goal of this study was to give these teachers a voice and make their tensions, struggles, and achievements visible to a wide audience including but is not limited to teachers in similar contexts, school administrators, stakeholders, and policy makers.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The data for this study were collected in a 6-week period during the months of November and December of 2018. In this section, I describe each of the data collection instruments and provide a rationale for their selection.

#### ***Reports of English in Latin America***

Cronquist and Fiszbein's (2017) "English Language Learning in Latin America" is an 80-page document published by the US-based Think Tank "The Inter-American Dialogue." This document, sponsored by Pearson Education, is an assessment of language policies of 10 Latin American countries in which the authors compare and contrast which countries are teaching English effectively and increasing English proficiency in the region. It provides detailed descriptions of teacher education programs and recommendations for improvements. Hernández-Fernández and Rojas's (2018) "English Public Policies in Latin America: Looking for Innovation and Systemic Improvement in Quality English Language Teaching," is a 507-page edited volume that reports on dialogues held across the region to encourage collaboration and working groups to address the identified challenges for language teaching in Latin America. This text was sponsored and published by the British Council.

These texts were downloaded from the British Council and Inter-American Dialogue websites. These documents served as useful data sources as these rankings and assessments are used to justify the investment of English education in Expanding Circle countries, and Western

stakeholders play a role in the top-down power structures that shape educational practices in the region.

### *Language Policies in Venezuela*

Education policies in Venezuela are framed by the constitution, the law of education, and the national Bolivarian Curriculum. In order to explore language policies in Venezuela, I analyzed the two most recent versions of the Bolivarian Curriculum (2007/2017), and one sample of the Bicentenario Collection English textbooks, which interweave with the national curriculum implementation. All documents were obtained from school officials to ensure their authenticity.

The Bolivarian curriculum of 2007 is a 115-page document that outlines the “historical, pedagogical, philosophical, social, political, and methodological foundation of the secondary education program” (Bolivarian Curriculum 2007, p. 5). The Bolivarian Curriculum of 2017 has 162 pages, and it outlines the plan for secondary education by discussing the areas of instruction and the suggested methodological approaches to address the educational content. This document also thoroughly describes and justifies the newly amended educational policy for secondary education in the country. I only focused on the language education sections for my analysis, given the dissertation’s focus on English language teaching.

As a sample of the Bicentenario Textbook Collection, I looked at two editions of “My Fourth Victory,” the English textbook designed for 11<sup>th</sup> grade. These textbooks serve as a major component to the Bolivarian curriculum as they outline the learning progression and content for English instruction. These textbooks are essential to understand Venezuelan language policies as they served as the unofficial English curriculum between 2007 and 2017. I obtained physical copies of the books during my trip and used them for the analysis.



### ***Teacher Education Curriculum***

Another important systemic structure to explore in order to fully understand the identity work and experiences of my participants was teacher education. I analyzed the curriculum of the English specialization program at Las Palmas University (pseudonym), the largest teacher education program in the central region of Venezuela. The text I obtained from the university is a certified curriculum of the entire education program with official stamps and the signature of the Dean of school of education to prove its validity. This 500-page document contains a detailed description of all required courses, learning goals and objectives, and rationale for inclusion of all courses in the specialization. I specifically analyzed thirteen of the required courses in the English specialization. I selected them because they required the most amount of training hours for students.

### ***The Linguistic Autobiography***

In order to explore the teacher participants' personal beliefs and ideologies, I asked them to complete a linguistic autobiography where they shared their life experience as language learners, users, and teachers. Autobiographic narratives "offer insights into people's private worlds... [and] highlight new connections between various learning processes and phenomena..." (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 165). In this study, the autobiographic narratives enabled me to fully understand who my participants were and how they constructed meaning of language teaching and learning. It was through these narratives that the two teachers shared their experiences learning English, their transition into language teaching, and their beliefs on language use based on their L1 and English.

Stories are an essential means of communication through which people understand others as well as the world around them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Narrative inquiry uses personal stories

to reconstruct “a person’s experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5). Narratives are effective ways to examine past, present, and future identities as well as understanding “socio-historically situated experiences” of the participants (Kayi-Aydar, 2015). Furthermore, autobiographic narratives serve to shift power relationships between researchers and participants and give the subject agency and voice to describe their lived experiences. (Pavlenko, 2007)

My participants had the option to write their autobiographies or narrate them orally. They also had the option of doing the autobiography in English or Spanish and were encouraged to choose the language they felt the most comfortable with. Milo originally chose to narrate his biographical narrative orally, and he was the first participant to submit it. However, it was too short and did not provide enough information, as I believe he did not understand this genre. I further discussed what an autobiography was and asked him to redo it. His second version was written in English and even though it was also a short story, he did use a narrative approach and provided a good text that I could use in combination with his first version to get a better understanding of his story. Kamila also first tried writing her narrative but instead of elaborating on her journey using the instrument’s questions for guidance, she answered each question very briefly. After realizing she did not have time to write an elaborate version of this document, she decided to tell me her story orally. Kamila’s narratives were in Spanish, and I translated both written and oral versions to English for analysis.

The linguistic autobiography prompt was comprised of three principal tasks to elicit stories regarding the participants’ experiences as language learners/users. The first one prompted them to talk about their experience learning English while the second one targeted their experiences as language users. The third one asked them to discuss their experiences as users of English and

Spanish to explore their beliefs about language use from a broader perspective. There were questions to help them remember stories in each of the tasks:

- Task 1: Tell me a story from the time you spent as a language learner? A story that is still very important to you, an impactful or unique story about your learning experience? Were there any particular teachers that marked your language education? Do you remember any stories about that? Who played a significant role in your language learning experience? A family member, a teacher? Describe your relationship with them and tell me a significant anecdote (or story).
- Task 2: Tell me about a moment or experience when someone made a positive or negative comment about your English proficiency.
- Task 3: How has the way you learned/use Spanish influenced your views on English use?

Eliciting autobiographic narratives allowed the teachers to tell their personal stories and reflect on the extent to which their personal lives and professional experiences influenced their instructional practices. From a methodological standpoint, autobiographic narratives also serve to “challenge Western views of scientific research in which notions of data validity, reliability, and generalizability are paramount” (Kamhi-Stein & Vandrlick, 2014, p. 9), an important aspect of the critical focus of this study.

### ***Individual Semi-Structured Interviews***

Since interviews are known social communication routines, they are easily adaptable tools for research (Dörnyei, 2007). The main purpose of conducting interviews is to gather information that is not easily obtained through observation or other data collection instruments. Through interviews, researchers can elicit stories that provide information about the participants’

feelings, thoughts, intentions, and experiences, making this an effective way to enter into other persons' perspectives (Patton, 2002). Interviews are also essential to learn about past events that cannot be replicated and to get an in-depth perspective of how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 2009).

In the span of 5 weeks, I conducted three interviews with each participant. The first one was an informal off-the-record interview to establish a connection with the participants and gather general information to prepare for the observation. During this interview, I informally talked to the participants, described the specifics of the research study, and provided information about who I was, where I came from, and what I intended to do in/with my research. This interview was not recorded or used for the purposes of data analysis as this was part of an exploratory meeting to establish rapport between me and participants. The first semi-structured interview was designed with the purpose of exploring participants' personal backgrounds and their views on language use, English ownership, and English teaching. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to elicit specific data from both participants without following a rigid structure. I was able to include a mix of structured interview questions with exploratory follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. The focus during the first set of interviews was on the participants' professional experience, decision to go into a career in ELT, academic training, English learning experience, challenges, and beliefs about English teaching practices and English ownership. Given the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, both participants talked about the same topics, but they did not respond to the same questions.

The second set of semi-structured interviews was a follow-up to the class observations. In this final interview, I asked the participants specific questions that emerged from the class observations. During this interview, they also shared samples of student work and talked about

their beliefs about classroom instruction, assessment, and pedagogical choices. This interview was less structured than the first one, but still addressed 3 main topics: a) the teachers' teaching methods, b) their assessment practices, and c) the rationale behind these choices. The questions for these second interviews were individually tailored for each participant.

Dörnyei (2007) offers important insights on the need to conduct multiple interviews to obtain a richer data set. Citing Polkinghorne's (2005) recommendations, Dörnyei argues the importance of administering a sequence of three interviews with each participant to obtain sufficient depth and breath in the data collection process. Based on this recommendation, my first interview functioned as a way to break the ice and develop rapport with the participants, the second interview explored their beliefs and ideas from a more focused standpoint, and the third interview focused on their teaching and assessment methods, and other lingering questions to help me fully understand the participant cases.

The participants had the option to conduct the interviews in English or in Spanish depending on their comfort level with each language, but none of the participants chose to do it in English. All the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed in Spanish, and then translated into English. Since I am fully fluent in English and Spanish, I did not require any translation services. When reporting the study findings some of the participant's words were left in Spanish as their statements did not carry the same meaning in English. Therefore, using code-switching and then offering an additional explanation seemed more appropriate.

### *Classroom Observations*

Class observations are an essential data source for educational research as they allow researchers to gain in-depth information about the types of activities, interactions, and instruction that occurs in the language classroom (Mackey & Gass, 2016). Observations also serve as a way

to obtain direct information rather than self-report accounts of classroom phenomena (Dörnyei, 2007). In this dissertation, observations were used to explore the teachers' identities-in-practice and determine what language ideologies were being enacted in and through their classroom practices.

The class observations were conducted for 5 weeks between November and December 2018. After contacting the teacher participants and receiving their schedule, I coordinated daily visits with each of them. I observed 10 hours of Kamila's 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes shadowing her through all her sections. I observed 8 hours of in-class time with Milo's 10<sup>th</sup> grade sections. During this time, I observed teacher-student interactions, content instruction, and some assessments that allowed me to further explore the participants' pedagogical choices in the second interview.

In order to avoid being obtrusive and becoming a distraction in the classroom, I adopted a non-participant role during the observations. I sat in the back corner of the classroom and observed the class dynamics without playing any active role. At the beginning of each class, I gave my recording device to the instructor and asked them to carry it with them as they taught the class. I had a second recording device placed near me to record the session from a different perspective. My non-participant role was consistent in Milo's classes, but after a few sessions, Kamila imposed an active-participant role on me. She asked students to check in with me, show me their assignments, and ask me questions about vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical rules. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders were interested in talking with me, gave me small gifts such as drawings and artwork, and were overly excited to have me as a visitor in their classroom. However, when the class was in session, they paid attention to the teacher and only came to see me when Kamila instructed them to do so.

Although I did not use a structured document to guide my observations or fieldnotes, Table 2 illustrates the aspects I focused on to guide the process. I wrote detailed notes during each classroom visit including the date of the observation, the topic being covered, and the duration of the class period. I did not only focus on identifying atypical moments, but I also paid attention to patterns in student-teacher interactions, instruction techniques, and routines the teachers followed with their students. I took notes both in Spanish and English, but I translated all the data to English prior to the analysis. Figure 2, below, illustrates an example of what my field notes looked like. After each day of observation, I completed a brief written informal reflection to go over my notes and highlight anything that stood out from the day in the field. The field notes and reflections informed my decisions for the second interview and were included in the data analysis phase of exploring the teachers' identity-in-practice. Since the focus of this study was not to conduct conversational analysis or explore student-teacher interactions, the audio-recordings of the observations were only used as supplemental data to prepare for the second interview.

Table 6  
Criteria used for field note annotations.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Specific Criteria</b>
Micro-level cues	Instruction practices focusing on how the teachers approached pronunciation, phonology, dialect, and word choice in the target language.
Macro level cues	Do they refer to their language learning experience? Do they draw personal connections in their teaching practice? What do they emphasize and why? Do they say it is important to learn because of grammar or communication? Do they bring up native speakers? What is the rationale for what they bring up as important? Are they setting objectives or goals at the beginning of their lessons? How do they set them? What are their purposes?
Linguistic aspects of instruction	Do they compare dialects, or do they dismiss them? Do they talk about sociolinguistic variations? What kind of language do they use for instructions? Do they use imperatives or inclusive language? When they explain grammar rules, what level of certainty do they use?

Other	Do they experience moments of uncertainty or challenges? Do they create certain positions for themselves or their students?
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Figure 2  
Sample Field Note Annotations

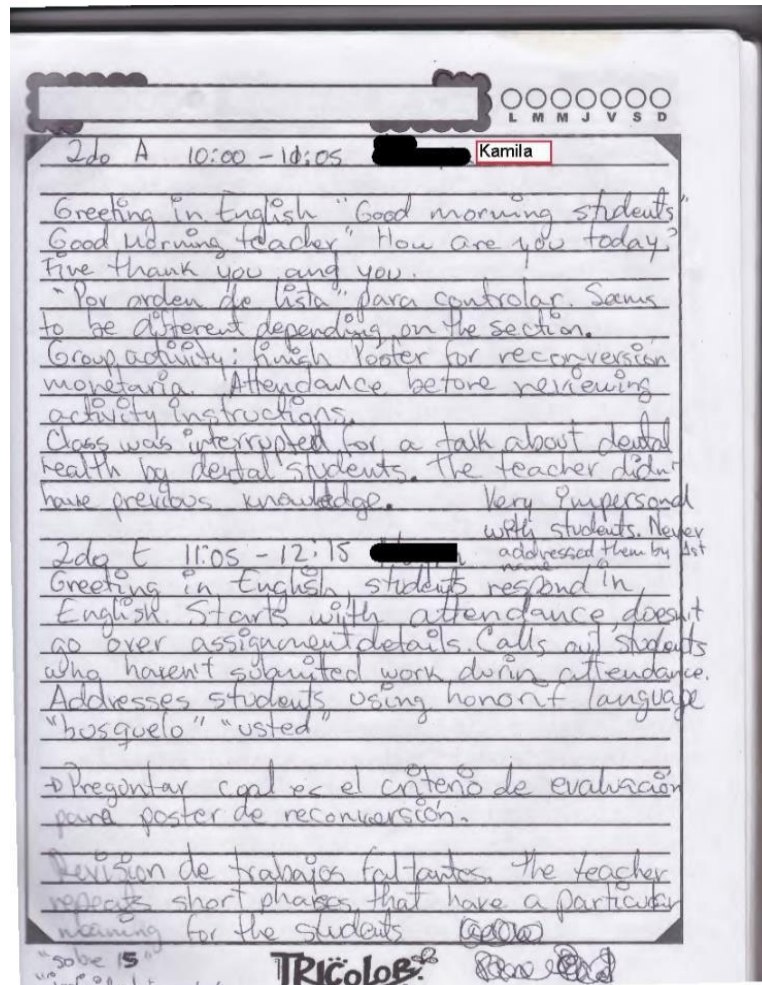




Table 7  
Summary of Data Sources

Instruments	Research Question 1: What are macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela?	Research Question 2: How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers?	Collection Period July-December 2018	Number of collected items	Data
Textual Artifacts	x		July-August 2018	5	Reports on English in Latin America National Curricula Bicentenario Textbook Samples Teacher Education Curriculum
Informal Interview			November 2018	1	Off the record 30 min average each
First Semi-structured Interview	x	x	November 2018	2	Audio-taped: 35 min average each 1.1 total hours of audio recordings
Second Semi-structured Interview	x	x	December 2018	2	Audio-taped: 45 min average time 1.5 total hours of audio recordings
Linguistic Autobiography	x	x	December 2018	2	Two written samples 50 min of audio recording
Classroom Observations	x	x	Ongoing	16	Audio-taped interactions (16 hours total) Field notes
Teaching artifacts	X	x	Ongoing	10	Planning grids Samples of successful student work

### **Data Analysis**

Given the complexity of studying language ideologies and identities, I used a combination of frameworks to analyze my data. To answer research question number one, I used ideology as a general framework of analysis by combining a number of prominent works in the field to provide an in-depth analysis of my data from different angles. I used Irvine & Gal's (2000) semiotics framework of linguistic differentiation, Bourdieu's (1991) notions of legitimate language, cultural capital, and the linguistic market, and Phillipson's (1992) model of linguistic imperialism. To answer the second research question, in addition to the previously discussed frameworks, I used Varghese et al.'s (2005) concept of identities-in-discourse versus identities-in-practice in combination with Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) 3-type of identities approach to recognize the teachers' imposed, assumed, and negotiable identities.

The data analysis was ongoing and inductive, and it began with the collection of the textual artifacts in my first exploratory trip. Once I received the national language policy documents, the teacher education curriculum, and the textbooks, I conducted a first round of pre-coding of those artifacts. This preliminary round of coding informed the creation of the interview guides, the linguistic autobiography prompt, and my general approach to data collection. I applied the initial round of coding to the interview data from the case studies. I wanted to see the codes emerge from the bottom up, so I started with the teachers' data instead of the language policies. This initial coding consisted of reading the interview transcripts and highlighting the sections that appeared interesting to me based on the categories associated with language ideologies and teacher identities. After doing this with the interview data, I did the same with the fieldnotes, the observation reflections, and the linguistic autobiographies.

In the second round of coding of this data set, I used open coding to ensure that the codes emerged from the data and they were not influenced by my perceptions. I used a qualitative research software, MAXQDA, to do a line-by-line coding of the interview transcriptions, the linguistic autobiography, and the field notes. Over 100 codes emerged from the data including *in vivo* codes. The third round of coding was axial, and it helped me determine what categories and themes emerged from the initial codes. During this round, I also searched the data for predetermined codes related to the analytical frameworks; for example, iconization, fractal recursivity, erasure, symbolic power, symbolic violence, and linguistic imperialism. The final round of coding of this data set was done after the textual analysis had been finished. The goal of this last round of coding was to triangulate the data and make connections between the macro, meso, and micro levels of discourse reproduction. For this last round, I did not use the qualitative data software but instead I printed all the transcriptions and did the final round of coding manually to gain a more intimate relationship with the data and plan the organization of the findings' chapters.

The first step in the analysis of the textual artifacts was to select the sections to be analyzed. I only analyzed the sections from the reports on English language teaching in Latin America where they talked about the field in general. I did not examine the individual assessment of certain countries because they did not include Venezuela. From the Bolivarian curriculum, I only analyzed the sections that described English and Spanish, so I could understand the general approach to language teaching. Finally, I analyzed the entire curriculum from the teacher education program and selected 13 courses based on the number of training hours required. These courses received the most attention in the curriculum, so it felt appropriate to focus solely on those.

The coding process of the textual artifacts was slightly different because of the magnitude of this data set. There were over 700 pages of data to analyze so it was difficult to do a line-by-line coding of this data set. As previously mentioned, I had already done a close holistic reading and a pre-coding round of the textual artifacts before collecting the rest of the data. After the case study data were coded and analyzed, I did a second round of open coding with the textual artifacts where I highlighted relevant portions of the texts and applied the previously discovered categories and themes. I only added new codes if there was relevant information in the data that had not emerged from the bottom up. There were four major themes that emerged from this data that were then retroactively applied to the case study data.

The interview data and the oral narratives from the linguistic autobiography were fully transcribed in their original language using an online software. Given the limited accuracy of online transcriptions, I manually checked and corrected all transcriptions to ensure accuracy in the data. Although I could not guarantee 100% accuracy because the interviews were conducted in the school, where there was a lot of noise, I provide a detailed verbatim transcription to ensure accurate interpretation of the data. Since I was not analyzing structural speech aspects, I used simple transcription conventions that can be seen in Table 4. I did not correct the participants' language during the transcription. I only added omitted words that were necessary to understand the statement.

Table 8  
Transcription Conventions

[ ]	Omitted word(s) needed to ensure clarity of the statement
( )	Transcriber's comment with contextual or explanatory information
...	Parts of the narrative omitted in the quote
..	Pauses

XXX	Emphasis or louder tone
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A significant portion of my data sources was written in Spanish. Only the reports from the British Council and the InterAmerican Dialogue were in English. Since I am fully fluent in Spanish, I could conduct most of the analysis using this language. Some of the codes were in Spanish but most of them were done in English for easier transfer to the findings section. Once the coding of the entire data set was done, I translated the sections used in the chapters. To ensure the accuracy of my translations, I had the excerpts checked by Spanish-speaking colleague to ensure that I was not changing the meaning of the original statement with my translation. The translation was not word by word to ensure the meaning of the statements was understandable. In some cases, when the words in Spanish did not have a precise translation in English, I kept the Spanish words in the excerpts and provided a close definition in English. Because of this, I engaged in microlevel linguistic analysis of some words to explain their cultural meaning and their connection to the issues explored in the study.

### **Data Trustworthiness**

I triangulated my data by using multiple sources (teachers, official texts), an array of data-collection instruments (interviews, observations, etc.), and by analyzing the data using multiple conceptual frameworks (e.g., linguistic imperialism, symbolic power). Although my intention in this study is not to claim *the truth*, comparing and cross-checking multiple data sources from different epistemic standpoints gives credibility to my claims. The triangulation of my data enhances the dependability and consistency of this study because the results are consistent with the data sources collected, which is more important in this type of study than attempting to have results that can be replicated by other researchers in other contexts (Merriam, 2009).

Another way in which I ensured the credibility of the data sources was through the careful consideration of the authenticity of the selected texts. As previously mentioned, all the textual artifacts were retrieved from the primary sources. The international reports were downloaded directly from the websites of the publishing organizations, the national curricula and the textbooks were obtained from school officials, and the teacher education curriculum was a certified document with official stamps and signatures that prove its legitimacy. In the same way, all the interview data were collected directly from the instructors, as well as the supplementary textual artifacts such as sample student work and planning grids.

To ensure the accuracy of the data analysis, I cross-checked my interpretations of the data with my dissertation advisor and a Spanish-speaking colleague. During the coding and analysis process, I frequently met with my advisor to cross-check my interpretations and refine them whenever needed. She helped me review my coding system, data analysis procedures, and my interpretation of the findings. I also engaged in a peer review process with a fellow PhD student, whom I worked with three times a week for two semesters. During our meetings, I received her feedback regarding my Spanish/English translation of the texts and my interpretations of the data. This peer meetings were immensely helpful as we were both working on dissertations centered in CDA.

Qualitative studies such as mine do not intend to be generalizable or replicated as “replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results, but this does not discredit the results of any particular study; there can be numerous interpretations of the same data” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 221). I do not claim a single interpretation for the analysis of the texts discussed in this study and I acknowledge that my position as an insider of this community might have influenced my interpretation of the data given my understanding of local traditions, cultural

norms, and teaching practices. However, I believe that my methods of analysis were clearly delineated and justified, which enhances the trustworthiness. I also used rich descriptions to thoroughly describe the experiences of my participants and the research context, which could facilitate transferability of the study (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

## Chapter 4

### **The Circulating Language Ideologies that Shape ELT In Venezuela**

In this chapter, I define the English language teaching (ELT) field in South America, describe English teaching in Venezuela, and finally depict the local context where the teacher participants taught at the time of the study. Through a critical lens, I expose the circulating language ideologies that are reproduced and enforced by language policies and popular discourses that shape the linguistic market in this region. The research question I answer in this chapter is:

1. What are the macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela?

I address the question by analyzing two reports that assess ELT in Latin America, the two most updated national language policy documents in Venezuela, two samples of the Bicentenario textbook collection, and the curriculum of a Venezuelan teacher education program.

#### **ELT in South America**

Latin America has a long tradition of teaching English as a foreign language at multiple educational levels. Out of the twenty countries that comprise Latin America, English is mandatory by law across all education levels in Venezuela, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Panama. In Brazil, it is only mandated for secondary school (Polat et al., 2020), and in Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Uruguay it is encouraged through the national curricula but not compulsory (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). Some South American countries such as Colombia, and Chile have well-established national strategies, learning standards and objectives, and teacher education standards; while others such as Argentina and Venezuela are only in the early process of setting clear national goals/strategies (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).



In order to explore the ideological underpinnings that inform language policies and approaches to ELT in South America, I relied on data from two prominent texts that assess the status of ELT in Latin America. Hernández-Fernández and Rojas's (2018) "English Public Policies in Latin America: Looking for Innovation and Systemic Improvement in Quality English Language Teaching," is a book sponsored and published by the British Council that reports on dialogues held across the region to encourage collaboration and working groups to address the identified challenges for language teaching. Cronquist and Fiszbein's (2017) "English Language Learning in Latin America," is a report sponsored by Pearson and published by The Inter-American Dialogue, an American based educational policy Think Tank, that assessed the state of English language teaching in ten countries of Latin America and provided suggestions for future improvement. In this section, I discuss the most recurrent themes in the texts: the belief that low proficiency of English in the region is a problem that must be fixed, the need of English learning to achieve economic progress, and the necessity of foreign assistance to improve the Latin American education system. The purpose of this section is to describe the context at the macro (regional) level.

### ***Low English Proficiency as Deficit***

One of the most common ideologically constructed discourses that circulates in this region is the perceived notion of low English proficiency among the population as a problem. This discourse is mostly developed by foreign stakeholders in the field of language teaching and accepted and reproduced by local individuals. For example, English First (EF) is one of the leading ELT companies in the World, with over 50 years in the market, and a leader in placing Inner Circle English speakers in teaching settings in the Expanding Circle. One of the requirements to teach at an EF affiliated program is to hold a TEFL certificate, which they can

provide, and to be a passport holder from the United States, England, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa (EF, “How it works”, 2020). EF is also the creator of the English Proficiency Index (EPI), a worldwide ranking of countries based on the English proficiency of their citizens, that has a vast influence in the reproduction of the low proficiency as deficit discourse.

Both documents explored in this study utilized the EF EPI rankings, in which Latin American countries consistently placed among the weakest English proficiency levels in the world, as a way to prove the “problem” of low English proficiency in the region. Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) expressed concern in their report stating that “Latin America as a region performs below the world average in the EF English First English Proficiency Index in all age groups. In contrast, Europe and Asia almost always perform above the world average, and always perform better than Latin America” (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 11). They also argued that “there is simply no international study in which a country in Latin America achieves the highest level of proficiency in any one of these examinations” (p. 11).

Similarly, Hernández-Fernández & Rojas, (2018) highlighted the result of the 2017 EF EPI to frame the “challenge” of low English proficiency in the region. Although they problematized the validity of this ranking, they also claimed that “if we accept their results at face value, we will find out that English proficiency in Latin America is generally low, even though there are considerable variations within the region” (p. 25). Moreover, they classified the state of English proficiency as “a conundrum that demands a critical examination” as when comparing the EF EPI results to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) there is clear evidence that the “panorama is less rosy.”

The ranking of Latin American countries in the EF EPI and similar examinations tends to be interpreted by stakeholders and citizens as a failure of the education system. Although the spread of English and the symbolic power it has garnered cannot be denied, it can be problematized and questioned if it is framed under critical lenses. This attribution of power to English without questioning the political and economic reasons behind these efforts, could be considered a form of covert linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). Most of these discourses are maintained and reproduced by Inner Circle industry leaders with a lot of economic and political capital at stake with the portrayal of low English proficiency as a deficit in the region. Phillipson (1992) particularly criticizes the involvement of entities such as EF, the British Council, the US embassy, and Pearson, and accuses them of using language learning as a form of modern imperialism to maintain the political and economic power of the West. Interestingly, a vast majority of the English improvement projects in Latin American are currently being led by these institutions, as can be seen in the sponsors and publishers of the two reports analyzed in this section.

Hernández-Fernández and Rojas (2018) attribute the lack of English proficiency to the region's political history. In their own words, "Latin American countries have been extremely nationalist due to their colonial history that led to strong independence movements. Hence for many governments to include English in their curriculum has led to political criticisms and demographic challenges" (p. 19). By problematizing the decision of Latin American governments due to "extreme nationalism" without discussing the reasons behind the push for English learning in the region, the authors appear to be taking a political stance. Throughout their report, they addressed the spread of English and the need to learn it as neutral matter and did not engage in any critical conversations regarding the sociopolitical nature of the field. In one

section of their report, they argue that there could be two ways to look at ESL in the region: a) as cultural capital only accessible to those with economic power, b) as a means of access for less privileged members of society. By acknowledging these two different perspectives, their chosen positionality becomes clearer as they decided to look at English teaching as a possibility of change rather than recognizing the complicated political implications of English education in a region with a complex sociohistorical background with colonization.

Another way in which Hernández-Fernández and Rojas (2018) reproduce the discourse of low English proficiency as deficit is by describing English as “a key tool for survival” since “Latin American countries have to interact in a globalised world, where there is more interdependence and where the only way to survive is to interact with others (Hernández-Fernández & Rojas, 2018, p. 19). In this statement, they are associating international communication exclusively with English, ignoring the existence of other languages that play important roles in international communication. Also, when the authors talk about interacting with others, they appear to only be referring to English speakers, as there are over twenty-three countries that use Spanish and could easily collaborate with each other without any language barriers. Furthermore, Spanish has become a popular additional language around the globe, having thousands of speakers in Inner Circle countries such as the United States and Canada.

Although Hernández-Fernández and Rojas (2018) thoroughly discuss the benefits of bilingualism, they center their discussion solely on English as a *need* framing the lack of English proficiency in the region as a problem or deficit. They present English as the only option in foreign language teaching across the region, ignoring the possibility of selecting other languages that circulate in the local context and could be prioritized for bilingual education. For example, in Venezuela, there are over thirty indigenous languages that have been historically overlooked

by the education system, and a significant number of Chinese, Syrian, and Italian immigrant populations who must assimilate into Spanish speaking without any official school language support. Furthermore, given the regional proximity with Brazil, Portuguese could be a feasible foreign language option, however, these languages are not considered due to the propagation of the discourse of English as a necessity rather than an option.

### ***English as a Need for Economic Progress***

One of the main ways in which the *need* for English is justified is through the discourse of English as a necessity for economic progress. In both reports, English is portrayed as an investment and an infallible way towards economic advancement. Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) argue that “English proficiency is increasingly necessary for business and international communication and, in that regard, linked with prospects for economic competitiveness and growth in the global economy” (p. 3). The authors use an example of the market growth in Colombia to claim there is a higher need for mastery of English language. They argue that given the growth in tourism and financial industries, there is a “requirement of human talent with mastery of the English language” (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 10).

There are two important ideologically constructed beliefs in these excerpts: first, that international business communication only happens in English, and second that the responsibility of effective communication falls on local communities. This claim presents an idealized view of English as the only language used for international business communication by stating that it is a necessity in this field. Although English does hold an important place in the business world, it is not the only language utilized for international collaboration. There are other languages such as Chinese and Japanese which hold equal or higher importance than English in international communication depending on the region. As discussed before, the depiction of English as *the*

lingua franca of business around the world has been challenged and labeled as an ideologically constructed myth (e.g., Matsuda, 2012). Similarly, placing the responsibility of intercultural communication solely on the local communities is not only unfair but inadequately supported. One of the basic principles of communication is for both parts to hold equal responsibility for the effectiveness of the interaction. Hence, requesting local individuals to learn the language of the investors who come to their country breaks this principle as both parties should make an effort to ensure efficient collaboration.

Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) mostly rely on studies that address the economic advantages of speaking English as marketable skill to obtain better positions and higher salaries to advance their argument. They cite Delgado Hellester (2013), to exemplify the economic benefits of speaking English in Latin America as “English speakers in Mexico earn 28% more on average than non-English speakers” (p. 10). To further strengthen their claim, they also cite articles from India, Canada, and the United States that address the economic benefits of English bilingualism. In India, “the return to fluent English is as large as the return to completing secondary school and half as large as the return to completing a Bachelor’s degree” (Azam, et al., 2011, in Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 10), in Quebec, “the earnings of bilingual men who frequently use English at work are 20.9% higher than those who only speak one language” (Christofides & Swidinsky, 2008, in Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 10), and in the United States “immigrants born in non-English speaking countries and who are fluent in English earn about 14% more than those lacking English proficiency (Chiswick & Miller, 2001 in Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 10). By placing a focus on the monetary benefits of English bilingualism, the authors attempt to give more credibility to the claim that learning English will bring economic benefits to the region. However, it is worth noting that some of the selected studies could be misleading as they focus

on India, Canada, and the United States, which are countries where English has an official role, and it is spoken by large portions of the population.

Hernández-Fernández and Rojas (2018) also reproduce the discourse of English as driver of economic progress, but they mostly focus on presenting English bilingualism as a possible solution to inequality in the region, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

ESL has the potential to contribute to the downward trend of socioeconomic inequality in Latin America if governments ensure high quality ELT reaches every corner in their countries. Since Latin America has shown a consistent reduction in income inequality (Lustig, 2015), then ELT can contribute to continuing this trend. In fact, if we look at a sample of Latin American countries for which recent information is available, Gini Index coefficients, a common measure of income inequality, have declined in the last decade (see Table 3). Although there is still a long road to reaching perfect equality (Gini coefficient=0), ESL can contribute to moving away from perfect inequality (Gini coefficient=100). (p. 17)

In this extract, the authors attribute an almost canonical power to English, as they refer to “high quality ELT” as an isolated driver of economic progress in the region. This claim suggests that solely by having proficiency in a second language, particularly English, marginalized populations will gain access to economic opportunities they had been denied previously. By omitting the complex realities of Latin America and the sociohistorical reasons behind inequality, the authors depict inequity through undermining lenses and contribute to the iconic representation of English as a powerful entity in itself. Furthermore, they cite Lustig (2015) who used data from the World Bank to allege a steady decline in inequality trends in most countries of Latin America from 2008 to 2011, including Venezuela. This claim is also problematic as it

disregards the economic challenges of many Latin American countries. In the case of Venezuela, for example, there has been an unprecedented economic crisis for the past 23 years that has increased the poverty levels to unforeseen levels and has destabilized neighboring countries such as Colombia, Peru, and Brazil.

This discourse is so pervasive that it is utilized by governments in the region to justify their investment in English Teaching programs, as reported by Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017):

Latin American governments recognize the business community's need for an English-proficient workforce. The objectives of national English strategies in three countries provide good illustrations of the view that English is important to national productivity, integration into the global economy, and overall international competitiveness. In Colombia the national strategy Colombia Bilingüe seeks to improve students' English abilities to permit them to have greater mobility and access to better job opportunities (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.). Chile's National English Strategy seeks to strengthen English proficiency in order to "accelerate the integration of Chile into a global world and therefore improve our competitiveness" (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia, Ministerio de Educación, & Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo, 2014). Peru's plan to implement a national English program considers English proficiency as a way to attract foreign investment, which would then help to increase productivity and competitiveness (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b). Integration into and success in the global economy appears to be a clear strategic motivation behind governments' efforts to increase English proficiency. (p. 11)

As seen in this excerpt, establishing bilingual English programs is a strategic political move in the region as stakeholders see it as an economic investment. By linking English learning to



“national productivity, integration into the global economy, and overall international competitiveness” they shift the discussion from the educational benefits of bilingualism to economic gains of the state. English is then framed as a political tool, a source of symbolic capital, and an instrument to attain power.

As seen in this section, the discourse of low English proficiency as a deficit directly intertwines with the claim that English language learning in Latin American is an economic necessity and the key to the development of the region. By normalizing these discourses and not engaging in alternative ones, ideologies that attribute power to specific language varieties are enforced and the educational needs of the population are reframed as economic gains of the state.

### *The Need of Foreign Assistance for Improvement*

Another pervasive discourse that circulates in this region is the belief that foreign assistance is needed to improve the weaknesses of the Latin American language education system. Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) particularly relied on this discourse to frame their recommendations for improvements and future steps. These authors are critical of the lack of standards to measure proficiency and the teacher education infrastructure in the region and present international collaboration as a possible solution to these issues.

A major argument is centered around *adequate* certifications; in Cronquist and Fiszbein own words “although there are many options throughout the region to pursue a degree in English teaching, few are high quality. While many countries have instituted national systems of accreditation to ensure quality, many non-accredited programs continue to enroll and train future teachers” (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 45). The report appears to equate “high quality” with certain characteristics that are mostly linked to Western-centric methods. When the authors talk about non-accredited programs, the central issue does not appear to be local policy regulations,

but the lack of comparability of these regulations with internationally accredited options. In another section of the report, the authors state that “the ideal way to assess proficiency levels (in the overall population or among school age children and youth) would be to consistently apply nationally representative, internationally comparable tests” (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 11). This claim reveals that the measure to determine “high quality” is based on a comparison with international English assessments. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, most of these internationally recognized assessments are Inner Circle-centric and are led by stakeholders in the business of language testing, certification, and study abroad opportunities.

While Cronquist and Fiszbein criticize programs that do not have internationally comparable standards, they praise initiatives that involve professional development in the Inner Circle or heavily rely on Inner Circle ELT companies. An example can be seen in the excerpt below:

Unlike the traditional educational system, English language learners at the language academies can choose a program tailored to their learning pace, proficiency level, language goals and schedule. In order to offer this flexibility, language academies often seek English language curricula and learning resources from private providers in the region, such as Pearson, McGraw Hill, Cambridge English, and Oxford. These private providers use innovation, technology, and their expertise in educational materials or pedagogical tools to provide adaptable learning options to language academies.

(Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017, p. 19)

Besides favorably viewing the methods used by private language institutes, the Cronquist and Fiszbein also positively assessed the professional development approaches of Panama, Colombia, and Chile. Those countries invest millions of dollars sending teachers on professional development opportunities to the United States and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the report

authors encouraged the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and/or standardized tests such as TOEFL or IELTS for assessing language proficiency. These tests are designed and managed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the British Council, and EDP Education Limited, which are some of the most prominent Inner Circle companies in the English learning industry. Although Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) recommend adaptation of policies and practices to the local context, they propose already made tools as an initial *solution*. In their own words:

In reality, as long as the necessary political will is demonstrated, countries can easily adopt already established and well-respected standardized international assessments to evaluate teacher proficiency. From there, a country can examine the priorities of its English language learning policy framework to determine the necessity and value in creating its own standard teacher assessment. (p. 39)

As seen in this excerpt, they continued to emphasize the prestige of international assessments and utilized them as a measuring tool to determine high quality. Furthermore, they openly addressed this as a political decision of the nations and introduced the possibility of these measures being enough to determine proficiency standards. In the last section of their report, they provided specific recommendations for improvement, and emphasized the need of international collaboration stating that “rather than focusing exclusively on training their own teachers, Latin American countries can utilize the skills of native English speakers directly. Indeed, native English speakers can provide a quick response to the lack of proficient English teachers in Latin America” (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017, p. 66).

Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) suggested three ways in which native speakers could assist in the improvement of language teaching: 1. Collaborating with foreign English teachers virtually;

2. Using foreign training institutions rather than domestic options; 3. Inviting international volunteers and exchange students to support local teachers in the classroom. They emphasized the benefits of the last option claiming that it is a low-cost solution in which “volunteers benefit from the international experience at little to no cost to the schooling system” and it “gives students access to native speakers to improve their own proficiency” (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p. 66).

With this suggestion, the report reproduces native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005), as it presents native speakers as idealized language users who could fill the proficiency gap with their *nativeness*. These recommendations also position local teachers as incapable of meeting their student needs and *needing* foreign assistance and validation. Although the approach of relying on established ELT mechanisms appears to be the “easiest” solution, the authors do not address the economic drivers behind these options. If all Latin American countries were to require standardized testing, teacher training, and teaching volunteers through these Inner Circle institutions, the revenue of Inner Circle companies such as the British Council, EF, and ETS would significantly increase. This would also further reinforce the symbolic power that institutions, such as the British Council, hold over ELT in the Expanding Circle.

As seen in this part of the analysis, the three discourses that I critically unpack are interconnected and present a clear view of how English is positioned, and how power is circulated in the Latin American region. Governments and education agencies attribute power to English learning and make language policy decisions in the region based on the ideology of English as a necessity for advancement. My analysis also demonstrates that the influence of foreign agencies such as Pearson and the British Council in the region is strong and shaped by the economic and political motives of the English teaching movement in Latin America. The

power of these discourses will be further explored in the rest of this chapter as I demonstrate how they are also evident in the Venezuelan national curriculum and the teacher education program where the data collection for my research took place. The power of language ideologies in the region will also be examined in chapter 5, where I discuss how two English teachers in Venezuela act as ideology brokers (Paffey, 2012), who reproduce and enforce the ideologies that drive the discourses discussed in this section.

### **ELT in Venezuela**

English has been the historically chosen foreign language to be taught in Venezuela. In 1987 an Official Bulletin from the Ministry Education justified the inclusion of English in the mandated teaching curriculum for high school claiming that English “has become a universal language” (Official Bulletin, 1987, 17) and that this inclusion aimed “to offer students another language that allows them to communicate with people from different countries. To provide students with an instrument that allows them to have a direct access to scientific, technological and humanistic knowledge” (p.17). As seen in this example, the discourse of English as a necessity for progress was already circulating in this region since the 1980s.

Since then, English teaching has been compulsory by law at multiple levels of education. According to the Organic Law of Education (2009), foreign languages are part of the required courses and students have the option of choosing one of the multiple languages, which are French, English, or one of the thirty-one indigenous languages of the region. However, English is the most commonly taught language as the other options are limited to specific contexts; for example, indigenous languages were not formally adopted in the nation-wide curricula until 2007, and they are offered only in regions with large indigenous populations. Still looking at the macro level, but narrowing the scope from regional to national discourses, in this section, I

describe the legal framework that shapes ELT in Venezuela and analyze the ideological discourses that are reproduced in language policies in the country. To do so, I studied the two most recent national curriculum publications – The Bolivarian Curriculums of 2007, and 2017. I selected these two as they were the most updated language policies in the country.

*English as a Need for International Collaboration and a Way to Resist*

In the 2007 curriculum there was a major shift for ELT as English classes were put under the umbrella of “Language, Communication, and Culture,” a learning area that encompassed *Castellano* (Spanish) and foreign languages. They created this learning area aiming for

Students to value the social function of language as a mean of communication in different discursive genres, with emphasis on the mother tongue (*Castellano* and indigenous), through learning experiences that allow students to express critical, reflective, and liberating thoughts regarding the study of sociocultural conditions, with the goal of strengthening and shaping social conscience as a base for local, national, and universal knowledge (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2007, p. 15)

At first glance, this curricular update attempted to advance a nationalist educational approach which challenged the ideology of English as a necessity. The focus was on local languages, and indigenous languages were included in the system for first time in history, which was a significant shift from the traditional practices. However, the *perfil del egresado* (alumni profile), which outlines the characteristics of the type of alumni they aim to create, states that high school graduates under this program will “respect linguistic and cultural diversity,” and be able to “Use an indigenous and/or foreign language in oral and written form with the goal of communicating with the rest of the world and access scientific and humanistic universal knowledge” (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2007, p. 14). The second statement is a reproduction of the English as *the* world

language discourse, which still attributes symbolic power to English as it is described as *the* way to access technology and scientific knowledge.

Although the Language, Communication, and Culture learning area was described from a sociocultural perspective, the content was still mostly focused on structural language use. All the Castellano units included at least one goal regarding orthographic and grammatical Spanish rules, textual analysis, and structural writing approaches. The goals for English were minimally described in the curriculum as it was not a priority. They were found at the end of the area program for each grade under the “language as a communicative instrument to interact with technology, informatics, and the world component,” a section that was repeated throughout all programs (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2007). The goals set for English were comprised of a set of grammatical structures per school year and a list of topics to cover, as can be seen in the following example from the instructions for 7<sup>th</sup> grade:

- Grammatical structures and simple expressions in English or another language related to: family, the days of the week, the alphabet, months of the year, the time, colors, requesting permission, asking for help, commands, suggestions, prohibitions, greetings, good byes, location, identifying and describing people, animals, things, and places.
- Present verb, past progressive, simple present and past in English or another language (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2007, p. 26)

When this curriculum was first rolled out, the expectation was for Spanish teachers to teach both subjects, as English was only a small addition to the program. However, this measure was very unpopular among the teaching community and the general population, so it was reverted after a school year. English teachers had limited guidance in terms of content until 2013, when

the Bicentenario textbook collection was rolled out in an attempt to function as an alternative to the curriculum. The Bicentenario textbook collection is a government-led project that developed locally sourced textbooks to ensure that the books used in class aligned well with the national curriculum. The English textbooks were created by a selected group of local teacher educators in collaboration with the British Council.

The English series is called “My [school year] Victory,” and it is comprised of 5 textbooks, one for each grade of secondary school. The original idea was to distribute these books for free to the entire teacher/student population in the country, but this goal had not been met by 2019, the year I began collecting data. There was only a limited number of textbooks available through the school library that teachers could borrow for short periods of time (participant interviews, 2019). The content of these textbooks was meant to serve as the English curriculum from 2013 to 2017. The books follow a nationalist approach, and the content is very specific for Venezuelan populations, for example, the content addresses Venezuelan touristic sites, local traditions, and achievements of the Bolivarian government. Dialogues use local names such a “Loaida, Juan, and Pedro,” and most of the international information included focuses on Latin America and not in the Inner Circle, as some other English textbooks (see figure 3).



Figure 3  
Samples from Bicentenario Textbook Collection

**E. VOCABULARY**

Now, let's learn about the different holidays we celebrate in our country.

<p>Secular holiday</p>  <p>Woman's day March 8<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>National holiday</p>  <p>April 19<sup>th</sup> 1810 Independence day.</p>	<p>Religious holiday</p>  <p>The Nativity scene / The Manger (Christmas) December 25<sup>th</sup></p>
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**F. READING AND REFLECTING**

Read the following passage about the classification of holidays.

**National holidays:** Nations and territories observe holidays based on events of significance to their history. For example, Venezuelans celebrate Independence Day, on July 5<sup>th</sup> with military parades.

**Secular holidays:** Several secular holidays are observed, such as Earth Day or Arbor Day, internationally, and across multi-country regions, often in conjunction with international organizations. But they are not strictly holidays as time off work is rarely given. E.g., World Physical Activity day is April 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Religious holidays:** Many holidays are linked to faith and religion, Christian holidays are defined as part of the liturgical year. The main ones are Easter and Christmas.

Name some other holidays in Venezuela, when and how we celebrate them.

**G. LET'S APPLY**

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate information.

- If you go to La Victoria, Aragua State on February 12<sup>th</sup>, you \_\_\_\_\_ (see) the parade.
- We will participate in La Paradura del Niño if you \_\_\_\_\_ in The Andes on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- If people want to \_\_\_\_\_ the beach for carnival, they will have to plan it in advance.

Unit One: I will... 27

**E. VOCABULARY**

 Dalia Contreras - Taekwondoist	 Andreina Pinto - Swimmer	 Fabiola Ramos - Table tennis player
 Daniela Larreal - Cyclist	 Alejandra Benítez - Fencer	 Leidy Brito - Archer
 Angel Aponte - Karateka	 Oscar Monterola - Paralympic runner	 Paralympic athletes

Unit Five: It...

**HOW LET'S PRACTICE**

Answer the following questions related to the text above.

- Where do problems of parents and children begin?
- Where must these problems be solved?
- Who can solve such problems?
- Is there any difference between children's control today and yesterday?
- What are the methods of punishment mentioned in the text?
- What kind of effects can physical punishment have?

**GRAMMAR EMPHASIS**

Read the following dialogue. Then practice it with a partner.


MOTHER: Good morning, Mr. Rondón. I have an appointment with you today.

COUNSELOR: Yes, Mrs. Mijares. We have to talk about your son's school performance. He has gotten bad grades during this term. He is neither studying nor doing his homework.

MOTHER: I don't know what to do. I have scolded and punished him but he hasn't changed his behavior. He is at the computer until late at night every day. He isn't getting enough sleep, either.

COUNSELOR: First of all, it is necessary to speak to him. Don't either scold or punish him. He needs help. Let me talk to him.

MOTHER: Thank you very much, Mr. Rondón. I am really worried about him.



Unit Three: Who?

**UNIT 2 Lesson 5 Joining...**

There's no place like home

**A. LET'S EXPLORE!**

Read the following paragraph.

Although the country is mostly monolingual Venezuelan Spanish (a dialect of Castilian), many languages are spoken in Venezuela. In addition to Spanish, the Constitution recognizes more than thirty indigenous languages, such as Wayuu, Warao, Pemón and many others for the official use of the Amerindian peoples, mostly with few speakers, less than 1% of the total population. Immigrants, in addition to Spanish, speak their own languages. Arabic is spoken by Lebanese and Syrian colonies on Isla de Margarita, Maracaibo, Punto Fijo, Puerto La Cruz, El Tigre, Maracay and Caracas. Portuguese is spoken not only by the Portuguese community in Santa Elena de Uairén but much of the population because of its proximity to Brazil. Italian is also spoken by many people in our country.

**B. ACTIVATING YOUR MIND**

According to the reading, are the following statements True (T) or False (F)? Correct the false ones. Support your ideas.

1. Venezuela is mostly bilingual.	
2. In addition to Spanish, the Constitution recognizes three indigenous languages.	
3. Arab people, in addition to Spanish, speak Italian.	
4. Less than 1% of the population speaks indigenous languages.	

Unit Two: ...but not any

This approach to content appears to be a form of resistance to the discourses that portray English as *the* language of the Inner Circle and advances the need to teach English from a Western-centric perspective. These textbooks address the specific needs of local learners and focus on the learning of English as a mean to tell the world about local culture. In the first edition of *My Fourth Victory*, the book created for 11<sup>th</sup> grade, the authors state that:

The goal is for students to see the English language as a mean to gain knowledge. We want to give them the message that speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in English enhances their communication level so they can stay up to date with what is happening globally and so they can discuss their local context with people from other countries, as this language opens the world's doors to us. (Serrano et. Al, 2013, p. 3)

Once more, despite the resistance at the core of the book content, the main goal reproduces the ideology of English as *the* world language. In this excerpt, English is positioned as a language spoken across the whole world, which is an ideologically constructed myth. Furthermore, there is the indexed belief that only through English speaking students will be able to gain access to knowledge and communication with the world beyond the Venezuelan borders.

In the second edition of this textbook, the authors slightly changed the language by modifying the last sentence to “We want to give them the message that speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in English enhances their communication level... **as knowledge of other languages** opens the world's doors to us” (Serrano et. Al, 2014, p. 3; my emphasis). This could also be interpreted as a form of resistance to the ideology of English being the key to “opening world's doors” to the Venezuelan population. Including other languages slightly shifts the power attributed to English and focuses the argument on the benefits of bi/multilingualism in general.

The 2017 Bolivarian curriculum was created after a nation-wide needs assessment called “Consulta de la Patria,” which aimed to reassess the entire education system based on the opinion of teachers, school administrators, and government officials from across the nation. In the 2017 curriculum, English was separated from Castellano, given an independent detailed section in the program, and the hours of required in-class time were increased in all levels of secondary school. Students are now required to attend 6 hours of weekly English classes from grades 7<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>, which is twice the amount they used to receive, and more hours than Castellano gets. In 12<sup>th</sup> year, the hours decrease to four per week as there is an added course, Earth Sciences, that requires the 2 hours taken from English.

The new curriculum offers an extensive rationale of the approach to foreign language teaching. The current title of this area of knowledge is “English and other Foreign Languages,” and it was designed with the purpose “of studying one or more foreign languages as an opportunity to develop cognitive and communication skills that allow the understanding of linguistic codes other than the mother tongue, with phonetic elements specific to each language” (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2017, p. 119). This rationale appears to be informed by standard language ideology as it refers to linguistic codes and phonetic elements as fixed characteristics of languages. This claim is further evidenced as another part of the document states one of the learning objectives is for students to “compare syntactic rules, analyze the differences of those rules and their reasons why they exist” (p. 120). Similarly, the content of the course includes significant focus on grammatical and orthographic rules of English as a fixed system, and heavily reinforces the use of the dictionary.

In a similar manner, the curriculum reproduces the discourse of English as *the* lingua franca of the world through claims such as:

Within the goal of sovereignty, the importance of the English language is highlighted as it is an additional medium of communication between Venezuela and the world to improve relations with other countries, to understand other cultures, and to make them understand us through our own voices. Such objectives become more relevant, because as young people achieve communication in the English language, they will be able to interact with people from all over the world, given that said language has expanded in its use in most nations, transcending the category of mother tongue to become an international language, as was the case during some historical periods with Greek, Latin, and French languages. On the other hand, the knowledge of the language and culture of other countries allows us to further value and appreciate what is ours and to be better prepared to face the changes that occur in the dynamics of international relations.

(Bolivarian Curriculum, 2017, p. 139)

This excerpt talks about “sovereignty,” “using our own voices,” and “appreciating what is ours,” but still maintains the discourse of English as *the* necessary language for international collaboration and communication. Furthermore, they indexically reproduce the discourse of English as a political instrument as they frame the choice of English as the preferred foreign language through the lenses of international relations and collaborations.

Nevertheless, the curriculum aligns with the Bicentenario textbook collection and there is evidence of explicit forms of resistance in it. For example, the rationale talks about “allowing communication using *our own voices* (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2017, p. 119; my emphasis), valuing and recognizing other cultures following the principles of “culture equality,” and the importance of understanding that “[students’] language is neither inferior nor superior to any other, it is just different” (p. 120). Similarly, the curriculum states that:

Each student's learning process will be built on their own relationship with the foreign language and personal application needs, since, for example, English, French, and Portuguese, are present in different aspects of life (media, technical texts, Internet, instructions for electrical appliances, medications, among others) (Bolivarian Curriculum, 2017, p. 120).

These examples represent a clear form of resistance to the discourses that promote linguistic assimilation to English speaking cultures as an essential part of language learning. This curriculum is designed for students to use the language as a communication tool based on their local needs rather than attempting to follow international models of teaching.

As discussed in this section, there are certain aspects of the Venezuelan context that replicate the findings in the broader context of the Latin American region. First, national policies contribute to the perpetuation of discourses that position English as *the* international language and an essential tool for international collaboration. Second, the national policies also align with typical standard language culture, placing high value on structural language aspects, describing language as a fixed system, and safeguarding the position of the standard language. Third, foreign entities such as the British Council are directly involved in material development and tend to be positioned as experts who supervise projects to ensure high quality.

A significant contrast discussed in this section is the explicit resistance found in the language textbooks and the current curriculum. The content of the Venezuelan English curriculum is centered on the local context, which contrasts typical discourses that promote replication of Inner Circle methodologies and instructional materials for "appropriate" English teaching. The curriculum also reproduces a linguistic equality discourse that positions all languages and cultures as equal and unique. This could be seen as resistance to circulating international

discourses regarding superior languages in association with countries' economic development, such as the discourses that distinguish between the "first" and "third" world.

### **English Teacher Education in Venezuela**

To be an English teacher in Venezuela one needs to get a Bachelor's (BA) in education and choose a specialization area. Unlike education in the US, a BA is enough to make a career in education post-graduation as teaching certificates do not exist in this country. Typical BA programs in Venezuela require 5 years, and programs have a set curriculum with mandatory courses everyone must take to graduate.

There are approximately twelve modern languages programs in Venezuela offered by public and private universities. Most of them focus on modern languages from a translation and interpretation perspective and only a few of them focus on language teaching. In the central region of the country, where this study was conducted, there are three major universities that offer the option of English education. Two of them offer an education degree with the option of a major in English teaching and the third one offers a modern languages degree with the option of specializing in education. To look at meso level ideologies in the region where the teaching participants were, I explored the curriculum of the biggest teacher education program in the region, which also happened to be the one Kamila attended. I specifically analyzed thirteen required courses for the English specialization. To maintain the anonymity of the institution, I will refer to it as Las Palmas University.

Founded on November 15, 1892, Las Palmas University is among the most prestigious universities in Venezuela. The school Education offers five-year BA degrees with specializations in Plastic Arts, Social Sciences, English, Computer Science, Commercial Education, Early Childhood Education, Physical Education, Language and Literature, Mathematics, Music, and

Counseling (Carreras de Pregrado en Cs. de la Educación, 2016). The English specialization is a five-year program (10 semesters) that requires “basic” education courses and specialization courses that are specific to the English major. The following chart presents the name of the courses I analyzed, the semester in which they are taken, and the number of total training hours they involve.

Table 9  
Summary of Analyzed Courses

Course	Semester	Total number of hours per semester
English Phonological Development I	3	36
English Language Practice I	3	180
Communicative English Grammar	4	54
English Phonological Development II	4	72
English Language Practice II	4	180
English Language Practice III	5	144
Applied Linguistics	6	54
English Morphosyntax	6	54
English Language Practice IV	6	180
Pedagogy of English Grammar	7	72
Reading and Production of English Texts	7	108
English as Foreign Language Didactics	8	108
English Phonetics and Phonology	8	72

### *Language as a Rule-Governed System*

A consistent theme across the learning goals and objectives of the 13 courses, was the focus on language as a rule-governed system. Most of the objectives focused on the importance of linguistic “accuracy”, “precision”, and “appropriate” use of English. For example, the terminal goal of the five English Language practice courses, where students invest over six hundred hours within the first three years of their career, states that after finishing the course students will be able to:

Acquire the communicative competence at a(n) [beginner, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced] level to effectively, coherently, and creatively use proper communicative functions of the sociolinguistic context...in the comprehension and production of oral and written discourse by applying lexical adaptation techniques, grammatical precision and appropriate levels of fluency. (English Practice course description, 2010)

As seen in this example, the specific goal of this set of courses is to produce language users who use grammar “precisely” and perform at “appropriate” levels of fluency. These are abstract concepts that function as an essential part of the structural language construct and the perception of language as a standardized rule-governed system. With this objective, they also equate effective and coherent use of language to grammatical precision and present a view of communicative functions as proper or improper.

The emphasis on structural language aspects as an essential part of language learning is further seen in the descriptions of the Communicative English Grammar, Applied Linguistics, and English Morphology courses. The terminal objective for Communicative English Grammar is to “use proper linguistic structures for the different communicative functions of English language in situational contexts by using written and oral communication with certain level of precision” (Communicative English Grammar course description, 2003, p. 2), which supports the importance of “precise” language use. In the Applied Linguistics course, which is an introduction to linguistics with a structural approach, students focus on grammatical and phonological language patterns of natural and synthetic languages, learn about sentence diagramming, morphological language aspects, and semantics with the goal of “introducing students to the scientific study and systematic use of English language” (Applied Linguistics



course description, 2003, p. 3). Finally, the terminal objective of the English Morphology course is to learn the “system of rules that guides the creation of the phrases that make up the sentence structure in the analysis of written English constructions” and offers a more overt view of the emphasis given to grammatical accuracy in this program, as can be seen in this excerpt below:

This course will provide students with the necessary grammatical competence to achieve an effective communication, which is mostly based on the use of conventions that must be known and understood by all speakers, listeners, readers, and writers. In other words, communication is more efficiently established through the use of grammatically acceptable and logically structured sentences... (English Morphology course description, 2003, p. 3).

This statement highlights three important principles that appear to inform the goals of this program: 1) the equation of grammatical accuracy with effective communication, 2) the link between communication conventions and structural language rules; 3) the relationship between “logical” language constructions and grammatical appropriateness.

In a similar manner, the program reinforces this view by also presenting pronunciation as a stable set of rules that must be accepted, internalized, and replicated, a claim that is regularly emphasized in seven of the required program courses. The objective of English Phonological Development I and II is for learners to “precisely produce vocalic and consonant English phonemes in connected speech by accepting the norms that govern phonetic and phonological aspects of this language” (English Phonological Development I course description, 2003, p. 2). The English Language practice courses have a set of “attitudinal goals” that call for learners to “value morphological, syntactic, and phonological patterns in English as essential to develop communicative competence in such language” (English Practice course description, 2010), and

the Communicative English Grammar course has one that calls for “learner sensibility on the importance of correct pronunciation” (Communicative English Grammar course description, 2003, p. 5). This posture on pronunciation favors linguistic assimilation as it presents the acceptance of sets of pronunciation rules from a language variety as a requirement for “proper” language use.

A way in which this program maintains the construct of English as a homogeneous rule-driven system is by giving students a limited notion of language variation by only exposing them to “American” and “British” Englishes. Rather than recognizing the wide variety of dialects of English, the pre-service teachers are exposed to American and British Englishes, which are presented as uniform standardized varieties of the language. In the English Language Practice courses there are two consistent goals that address language variation: one is to “identify and analyze new vocabulary and grammatical structures taking into account English linguistic variation: British and American,” and another is to “have a reflexive attitude towards the use and structure of linguistic variations of American and British English.” In this set of courses, students are exposed to vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures from both varieties and are assessed on the reproduction of these language structures. Likewise, in the second unit of English Phonological Development I, the learning goal is to “distinguish between the principal dialectal variations of English that appear in the pronunciation dictionary (British and American English)” which reinforces the myth of these two language varieties as uniform.

The English Phonetics and Phonology course, which students take in the 8<sup>th</sup> semester of the program, is the first one to introduce the notion of English as an international language and to discuss varieties that go beyond British and American. The first unit introduces English varieties in the world and uses British, Australian, Indian, and African American Englishes as examples of

international language varieties. One of the attitudinal goals of this unit is to “respect and value English varieties as a manifestation of cultural diversity and identity;” however, after this unit, most of the course content focuses on the two standard varieties previously discussed. Another goal in this unit is to “establish the linguistic characteristics of English as an international language,” which continues to look at linguistic variation through the lenses of language as a rule-governed system with a set of norms that need to be identified, accepted, and reproduced. Furthermore, there is no evidence of the study of language varieties beyond American and British English based on the course reading list, which is mostly conformed of articles from the 80s and 90s that discuss “clear speech,” the teaching of American pronunciation, and tips to achieve pronunciation accuracy with Spanish speakers.

As discussed here, the pre-service teachers in this program are socialized into a view of language as a rule-governed system, given that all required courses reproduce this discourse. These practices could be interpreted as a method of reproducing and enforcing standard language ideology, because fixed norms that should be followed are a central claim of this belief. These findings are consistent with the circulating macro level ideologies from the national curriculum, which also enforce the norms of standard language. The teachers who embrace these ideologies could potentially become ideologies brokers in the field and continue to perpetuate standard language ideology in and through their teaching practices.

### ***A Deficit Approach to Language Teaching***

Consistent with the mechanical approach discussed in the previous section, the program appears to be guided by contrastive analysis (Lado, 1957). This is an approach to SLA that follows structural linguistic notions and attempts to predict learner errors by comparing L1 and L2 constructions under the premise of positive and negative (interference) transference between

languages. All the explored courses have learning goals and objectives that mainly focus on “the problems” of Spanish-speaking English learners. They also overtly talk about the negative effects of interference in language learning unless students “accept” the rules and conventions of English language. Although contrastive analysis has made positive contributions to the field of ELT, it has been heavily criticized by its limited level of precision, as it is virtually impossible to accurately predict student errors solely based on the comparison of the structural language aspects of the L1 and the target language. Furthermore, given its behaviorist and structuralist influence, its use in language teaching has been problematized by those who believe in language and language use as a social endeavor.

This perspective is especially emphasized in the Phonetics and Phonology courses as most of their goals are centered around this idea. The first unit of English Phonological Development I, starts with a proposed activity of “establishing the similarities and differences between consonant sounds in English and Spanish” which then evolves to another assignment in which students are expected to “select the English consonant sounds that create problems to Hispanic speakers and justify the reasons for it” (English Phonological Development I course description, 2003, p. 7). Likewise, the general goal of unit 3 in this course is for students to be able to “produce the most problematic vowel and consonant English sounds for Venezuelan language learners while being sensitive of the negative effects that may be caused by the substitution of a target language sound for one from the mother tongue” (English Phonological Development I course description, 2003, p. 7). This pattern continues across the course with repeated goals about identifying, producing, and/or predicting “pronunciation problems” of Venezuelan English learners based on the “studied rules of the language.”

English Phonological Development II continues with this pattern as the general objective of unit 1 states that students will be able to “precisely produce the most problematic consonant groups of English for Venezuelan English learners while being sensitive to the negative effects of inappropriate production of such sounds” (English Phonological Development II course description, 2003, p. 7). The other five units of this course mostly focus on the goal of students “precisely producing” rhythm, accentuation, and intonation patterns by “accepting the phonetic and phonological norms of English language.”

This principle also guides some objectives in all other analyzed courses except from English as Foreign Language Didactics. For example, the terminal objective of Pedagogy of English Grammar is for students to “systematically apply linguistic and pedagogical criteria for planning and executing specific interaction strategies centered on the solution of grammatical problems presented by Spanish speakers in the English language learning process” (Pedagogy of English Grammar course description, 2003, p. 3). In unit III of this same course, the “problems” of Spanish speakers are also mentioned, as part of the content focuses on “fossilization, typical errors of Spanish speakers and the contrasting aspects of English and Spanish.” Similarly, in the Applied Linguistics course most objectives also focus on “the detection and solution of practical problems that occur in the process of teaching and learning of English as a foreign language” or “analyzing the difficulties faced by Spanish speakers with phonological patterns of English.” The English practice courses take a slight switch on this discourse as they discuss the problems of Spanish speakers but also present the idea of positive interference from L1 structures into the target language. However, they still take an error analysis perspective and there is a repeated goal regarding students being “conscious of errors as a proper element of foreign language learning and the importance learners to recognize and monitoring them.”

Continuing this trend, the Reading and Production of English Texts, a course required in the 7<sup>th</sup> semester with a focus on English composition, takes a structural approach to English composition and describes academic writing as a rule-driven system that may be problematic for language learners. In unit 4, there is an attitudinal goal that aims towards “accepting the characteristics and organization of the academic paragraph in English that are different from the ones used in the Spanish paragraph” (Vasquez, 2003, p. 7). Then, unit 6 objectives are all focused on the “problems that can be encountered/found in English sentence construction” and there is another attitudinal goal about “accepting the characteristics of English sentences in an academic setting with the purpose of avoiding problems with their construction” (Vasquez, 2003, p. 9).

Besides embedding this perspective on the course learning goals and objectives, the rationale to include the Communicative English Grammar, Applied Linguistics, English Morphology, and English Phonetics and Phonology courses in the program provides a clearer view of this contrastive analysis approach as illustrated in table 6.

Table 10  
Course Rationale Summary

Communicative English Grammar	Applied Linguistics	English Morphology	English Phonetics and Phonology
This course will focus on the most important grammatical structures of the English language and will provide sufficient practice and exercises on <b>the most problematic grammatical areas for Spanish speakers.</b>	An introduction to linguistics course provides <b>the necessary base for the detection and solution of specific problems faced in the process of teaching and learning of English as a foreign language</b>	The study of English morphosyntax is indispensable in a teacher education program as it will not only provide them with the necessary tools to produce sentences that follow the conventions that rule English grammar, but it will also allow them to judge the grammaticality of sentences, which at the same time <b>will allow them to predict and solve the</b>	The goal [of this course] is to provide the future graduate with a learning experience related to the techniques, strategies, and resources for the teaching of English pronunciation so <b>they are able to diagnose errors in this area and design activities to solve the different types of problems with segmental and suprasegmental</b>

		<p><b>possible morphosyntactic problems that arise in English teaching working with Hispanic populations.</b></p>	<p><b>aspects of English that the learners present at different levels and different education modes.</b> This course is designed under a communicative approach, which will allow the student to have a meaningful learning process that will provide the necessary base to device strategies and activities to teach the phonologic English system and <b>solve the different pronunciation problems that the learners face.</b></p>
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The excerpts included in the chart are taken from the “Rationale and Importance” section of the curriculum. This is a section before the content description where the curriculum authors describe the need of the course for the teacher education program and describe how this content helps shape their proposed alumni profile. The bolded sections demonstrate the deficiency-based trend of positioning “problem” prediction as an essential part of language teaching. By doing this, these pre-service teachers are exposed to the idea that they need to prepare to solve problems and to look at their students’ language acquisition from the perspective of their predicted deficits rather than their assets.

As demonstrated in this section, this teacher education program follows a learner deficit approach and frames the learning process from a position of weakness rather than strengths (Gorski, 2011). The word choice of these objectives and course descriptions is particularly troublesome as “problem” has a negative connotation in Spanish. This is a word that indexes negativity in contrast to less negatively charged alternative words such as *dificultades*

(challenges) or *inconvenientes* (inconveniences). The curriculum writers appear to have consciously decided to use the term problem, which appears over 30 times across the entire curriculum. Besides the negative connotation of the word problem, there are more blatant ways in which students are prepared to approach language use and language teaching from a deficit perspective; for example, there are goals that are created to fix “serious negative effects” of replacing L2 sounds with those of the L1. The idea of negative L1 transfer has been criticized and contested as it can be reframed as sophisticated modes in which bilingual individuals negotiate their rich linguistic repertoires (Grosjean, 2010). These deficient ideologies put an unnecessary negative burden on language learners as those ideologies conceptualize differences as deficiencies instead of just being variations (Gorski, 2011).

Although it is common for teacher education programs to present students with seminal structural theories that have been used to study language acquisition, this program appears to ignore the theories that focus on language as a sociocultural endeavor and break away from structuralism. As shown in my analyses above, there are a limited mentions of language variation and this concept is presented as a dichotomy between British and American Englishes as fixed linguistic systems. Furthermore, the curriculum continues using the term “fossilization,” which is criticized by non-traditional English teaching paradigms. These paradigms attribute changes in linguistic features of the additional language to the natural process of language nativization – a process that occurs as languages relocate to new sociolinguistic and sociocultural environments (Kachru, 1986, 2006; Matsuda, 2012).

The reproduced discourses in this section match the ones found in the macro level analysis. Just as low English proficiency is seen as a deficit in the education system in the region, this program curriculum positions Spanish-speaking individuals as inherently deficient in the context



of English language learning. By doing this, they are indexing a level of superiority of English over Spanish, which directly contrasts the asset-based approach taken by the national curriculum. Furthermore, the role of English teachers is framed through the lenses of problems that need to be solved, which may predispose them to look at their students from a deficit perspective in other areas as well.

## Chapter 5

### Teacher Identities, Pedagogical Practices, And Language Ideology

To focus on micro (individual) level of ideology reproduction, I explored how two English teachers at a public school in San Diego, Venezuela constructed and (re)negotiated their professional and linguistic identities in relation to the circulating ideologies identified in the previous chapter. The data consisted of two semi-structured interviews with each participant, linguistic autobiographies, samples of student work, and 10 hours of observations conducted in the classroom each of participant. In this chapter, I present two single-case case studies (Merriam, 2009), with the goal of answering the following research question:

- How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers?

#### Case 1: Milo

As previously mentioned, Milo was a novice English instructor with 2 years of experience by the time of the data collection. He is originally from the Andes region of Venezuela and had multiple professions before becoming an English teacher. He had been a restaurant waiter, a hotel accountant, and a baker before taking his first teaching position at a high school. By the time of the data collection, he was the English instructor for all sections of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in a public high school in San Diego, Venezuela. In this section, I discuss the most common themes and trends that emerged from my analysis of the data on Milo.

#### *A Negotiable Professional Identity*

Negotiable identities are those which can be contested by groups and individuals (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). Milo appeared to see his professional identity as negotiable, as in some of his narratives he claimed a teacher identity while in others he self-identified as an accountant

instead. Milo's narratives suggest that he was able to move between his available identities to accommodate his needs. An example of this identity work can be seen in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 1

At the beginning of the school year, we had two workshops about the new curriculum. But, as I have mentioned before, this is a bit difficult for me because I am starting, because I'm new, so I don't understand education related things... pedagogy things... I don't understand it very well because I am just starting to learn about it. But, well, despite that, I have tried to complete my planning, and well, for now, I'm having difficulties with it, as I have mentioned to other teachers and the coordinator, [name], who is in charge of checking what we do and our planning. I have received help and support from other teachers. They have given me a hand on this, but as I told you, I am a bit divorced from the words and the technical vocabulary used in the field of education. So, if you talk to me about the cost analysis or administration fields: accounting adjustments, commercial billing, and things like that from the field of accounting, I do know that because I have 10 years of experience and that is what my degree is about.

(Interview 2)

Milo assumed his novice position, but he appears to reject his teacher identity and instead claimed a professional identity as an accountant to justify his lack of knowledge. Throughout our interactions, Milo regularly talked about teaching as a job that he started by chance but began to enjoy as time went by, and he rarely referred to himself as a teacher. Another example of Milo assuming another professional identity can be seen during interview 1, when he stated: "when I finished my career in administration, which is what I truly am, I started working mostly in commerce, in big supermarkets in the area of cost analysis, because I am a cost analyst."

Milo's choice to not claim his identity as a teacher appeared to be linked to the value he placed on academic training in a particular field. As seen in the previous examples he confidently claimed his identity as a cost analysis because he had a bachelor's degree and over ten years of experience in that field. In contrast, when discussing teaching-related matters he continually used hedging mechanism such as "in my opinion," "according to me," or "I think" in statements that talked about his beliefs about education or his teaching choices. A more explicit example can be seen in these statements made by Milo referring to his teaching improvements: "so I started gaining confidence and I realized that I was, relatively speaking and in quotations, let's say that I was doing a good job," "well, I personally see that I have improved a lot. I have seen that... well not THAT much (his emphasis), I still have a way to go, and logically experience makes you better." (Interview 1). By using this type of hedging, Milo demonstrated his limited confidence when discussing pedagogical issues. Furthermore, Milo frequently expressed his interest in receiving more pedagogical training with the goal of improving his performance. During data collection he was in the process of enrolling in a government-led program that trained English speakers to become teachers in the public education system.

In contrast to his hesitancy regarding his professional identity as a teacher, Milo was assertive to express and enact his linguistic identity as a way to build up credibility. He identified as a bilingual speaker of British English, and during all our interactions, he asserted that identity in multiple ways. Milo frequently used code-switching when interacting with me, attempted to prove his knowledge of grammatical English structures, and was the only participant who did the linguistic autobiography in English. During the interviews, whenever I asked questions about his classroom practices, he diverted to explaining grammatical structures to me or translate some of the words he was using. Below I offer an example from our conversation about assessment

practices. While showing me a sample test, instead of explaining his pedagogical choices, Milo responded:

#### Excerpt 2

This is a draft that I have from my previous school [reading the task] – write the correct form of these verbs when they accompany *he, she, it*. This is what we have been talking about, the present simple. When the verb should or should not have an "s" or an "es". For example, the verbs needs an "s" and watch since it ends with ch, it needs an "es". Listen needs an "s", love needs an "s", have doesn't need an "s" but instead it changes to has. When you work with these 3 personal pronouns you make the change from have to has, well you already know this, so it would be *he has y she has*. So, I explain that to them: that push, since it ends with "s" it needs "es", that since *is* a verb that ends in "s", it needs "es", since buy ends in "y" it needs an "s" but if it had a consonant before... (hesitant pause)... Yes, if it were like study, study, studies, it needs an "s" but it's "ies". I explain all those things to the kids, see? Does and does. That's another verb that changes to does and does. (Interview 2)

Although Milo explicitly acknowledged that I should know these grammatical features, he felt the need to assert his linguistic knowledge of English and explain the rules to me rather than talking about why he chose this type of assessment. In another instance, I asked him about the adjectives he would use to describe native speakers of English. Milo did not understand the question immediately, so he chose to explain the grammatical feature to me by saying "adjectives, they qualify the noun" which he followed with the example "He's an excellent teacher." His use of structural language aspects to assert his credibility as a teacher could be

connected to his ideological alignment, given his belief that to be a good a teacher one must be a user of “proper” English, as I will discuss in the rest of the chapter.

Milo also relied on the innate credibility he attached to Inner Circle English users to construct his linguistic identity. During the interviews he frequently asserted his identity as a bilingual user of British English, equated his linguistic abilities to those of native speakers, and used himself as a reference for good English use, an example of which can be seen in excerpt 3:

#### Excerpt 3

Well, it depends on how they use sentences. It depends on how they express themselves, because is not like... is like I explain to the kids (the students). I explain the kids in class that when we ask questions, for example, if you are going to ask *what's your name*, for example, saying it that dry [it's a problem]. *Hey, my friend what's your name*, it is about the way in which you say things. Or *hey, what's your name, oh, hi fella, my name is Milo Perez (real name replaced by pseudonym)*. It all depends on how you express yourself and that is also valuable. So, if I see that a female teacher says things in a dry manner and does things in a dry manner, it shouldn't be like that. Depending on the expression they should also include body language and corporal expression in the way they speak. That is when I evaluate the person to determine if they are teaching appropriately, if their teaching practice is good. That is how I assess them. Depending on how they speak English but also on their mastery of corporal expression and the way in which they say things. (Interview 1)

There is an evident turn in Milo's narratives as he switched positions between his professional and linguistic identities. When speaking from his position as a teacher, he was insecure and avoided making strong claims regarding pedagogical aspects. In contrast, in this

narrative, he assumed a confident stance and comfortably talked about the traits of *good* English speakers and his ability to assess others' language performance. Excerpt 2 also demonstrates Milo's value of linguistic abilities over pedagogical knowledge. By stating that he assessed his coworkers to determine if they were "teaching appropriately" by evaluating their linguistic skills, Milo equated linguistic abilities to "good" teaching practices. Furthermore, he used subjective traits to make this assessment as, for him, speaking in a "dry manner" determined lack on English skills *and* "appropriate" teaching abilities.

As seen so far, Milo perceived his professional identity as negotiable. Depending on the situation he assumed his identity as a teacher, as an accountant, or as an Inner Circle English user to strategically build up his credibility. He also relied on his claimed linguistic identity as a bilingual user of British English to assert his authority. Some of the beliefs that shaped Milo's professional identity can be connected to his ideological alignment, which will be further described in the following section.

### ***Ideologies that Shape Identities***

Language ideologies refer to ideas about language use and language users (Gal, 2006), which may impact teaching practices and the ways in which instructors construct their professional identities. Standard language ideology (SLI) refers to the socially constructed idea of the existence of a uniformly consistent variety of a language that is/should be shared by all its users (Lippi-Green, 1997). As discussed in the findings of the previous chapter, Venezuela is a standard language culture and SLI is normalized through discourse and perpetuated through the education curriculum and teacher education. In this section, I demonstrate that Milo reproduced and enacted standard language ideology through the semiotic processes of iconization, erasure, and fractal recursivity (Gal & Irvine, 1995), and delve into how this ideology also influences his

professional identity. In my analysis, I make the distinction between “reproduce” and “enact” to distinguish when the ideology is present in Milo’s identity-in-discourse and when the ideology influences his identity-in-practice (Varghese et. al 2005).

***Reproducing (Native)Standard Language Ideology.***

One of the ways in which Milo reproduced Standard Language Ideology was through the replication of ideas associated with native standard language ideology (Train, 2007). Native standard language ideology refers to the “quality” of the standard varieties of English used by native speakers and the proper/prestigious nature of these varieties over others. This ideology is different than native-speakerism, which iconically represents native speaker English teachers as model users of the language and Western centric methodologies as the ideal English language teaching methodology (Holliday, 2005). At first glance, Milo’s statements could be interpreted as a reproduction of native-speakerism but as I explain in this section, his beliefs appeared to be more in line with native standard language ideology. The excerpts in this section come from Milo’s first interview, in which I delved into his beliefs about language use and language teaching.

Excerpt 4

I think that regardless of nativeness, a person who is native, from any English-speaking country, or a person who is not native could teach this subject. I don’t have any criticism about that. If they are from this country they can’t teach? No. Should a gringo be in charge of teaching the class? No... (pause) Well, if an English, a gringo, or an American can teach this class, it would be good because they would have the experience of how English is used on the streets. Because it is not the same to go to an academy and learn English than speaking English on the streets. I tell my students that. That I have many



words, I have bad words, bad language but I also have the polite way. So, I can speak very politely but also how you speak on the streets. A ‘gringo’, an American, or an English man can also teach that, which is not proper, but it is how you communicate on the street.... So, a non-native will always want to teach what he learned in the academy and in school, which is the right thing to do, but the advantage for students, the advantage that native, Americans and English people, have or can provide if they came to teach here is that they can teach the polite way, which is good and what is supposed to be in schools, but also how you speak on the streets. It would be good to have both so you can have experience in both, that’s what I think. (Interview 1)

Gal and Irvine (1995) define iconization as a semiotic process in which linguistic forms are associated with iconic representations of the features (activities, characteristics, values) of a social group. When the connection between the social image and the linguistic features is made, these characteristics are depicted as inherently part of such social group. Excerpt 1 illustrates Milo’s iconization of the native speaker figure as the only speaker with authority over colloquial English. Milo first asserted that nativeness should not influence teaching effectiveness, breaking away from the typical iconization of the native speaker figure as the ideal English teacher; however, he idealized colloquial use of English. By identifying this trait as the only tangible advantage native speakers have regarding teaching, it appears that Milo’s belief was not rooted in the innate abilities of the native speaker, but rather on the quality of the language they could expose students to. Furthermore, Milo spoke about himself as an equal to the native speakers because of his access to both *street* and *polite* English. This suggests that Milo believed language quality is not an innate feature but rather the product of exposure to specific varieties of a language.

Another feature from the excerpt that demonstrates Milo's reproduction of standard language ideology is his distinction between "polite" and "street" English and the assertions he made regarding their role in school settings. When he talked about *polite* English, he was referring to the academic variety people learn (the standard), while *street* English is what people use colloquially. Although he suggested it would be good for students to master both, he labeled colloquial English as "not proper," while he referred to *polite* English as "good and what is supposed to be in schools." Milo's juxtaposition of "street" English as improper and "polite" English as proper is a typical reproduction of standard language ideology.

Milo's beliefs regarding native standard language users and their value for classroom teaching is further seen in the excerpt below:

#### Excerpt 5

For example, something I have to mention about that is that a non-native [teacher] should be confident, confident about what they are talking about and have ample, very ample experience in English, I think. They can't, for example, take an English course for a year here [Venezuela], I don't think they should teach because, as I have said before, they must have the experience of living in an English-speaking country or they won't say the words properly or correctly, they won't have the right accent, the pronunciation won't be accurate. That's what I think. Now, if the teacher has 5, 6, 10, 15, 20 years in England or America, the United States, and comes back to teach, excellent because I believe they already have enough experience and can truly master the language. (Interview 1)

In this case, Milo is, again, asserting that the only way to learn how to use "words properly or correctly" and have "the right accent" is to be exposed to native English from the Inner Circle. In his statements there are two iconic figures: a) the native standard language

speaker who has proper words, the right accent, and the command of *polite* and *street* English, all of which this teacher figure can pass onto students easily; and b) the non-native speaker who does not command colloquial English, cannot provide students with more than “polite” English, and can teach *only if* exposed to native speakers for at least 5 years.

By explicitly drawing on the iconized differences of users of natives and non-native varieties of English, Milo also utilized fractal recursivity to position users of non-native Englishes who have not lived in the Inner Circle as *the other*. Fractal recursivity (Gal & Irvine, 1995) involves the projection of an opposition to create differentiation between the members of a social group based on their linguistic features. This othering results in a parallel comparison of those who can or cannot provide learners with exposure to “real” English and positions those who cannot as less adequate to teach.

Milo’s beliefs in this regard were not limited to teaching, he also echoed these expectations onto students:

#### Excerpt 6

Another thing would be that if we are in a Spanish-speaking country, the kids, the students, should have the opportunity to at least spend 15 days or a month, I don’t know, however long is necessary, in an English-Speaking country. United States, England, Australia, any country in which they speak English and have the opportunity to have a real experience, so they truly learn about the sounds, the language as it is in an English-speaking country. Because if we are in our country, in Venezuela, we will logically only listen to Spanish. However, if you go to an English-speaking country United States, England, just by being there, since you get off the plane, since you get on the plane, you will solely listen to English, which is what we are speaking. (Interview 1)

Milo's use of phrases such as "a real experience," "truly learn about the sounds," and "the language as it is in an English-speaking country" once more reflect his beliefs regarding the authority he assigns to the users of native standard varieties over others. In this statement he also idealized exposure to native varieties of English as an innate channel for language learning. This indexes two important beliefs: a) that exposure to native varieties of English assures acquisition of the "proper" language, b) it is not possible for students to acquire the "proper" language while being in a Spanish-speaking country.

The ideologies Milo was reproducing in his narratives rely on the semiotic process of erasure for maintenance. Erasure is the ideological process through which certain people, activities, or sociolinguistic phenomena are made invisible because they do not follow the imagined homogeneous rules of the standard (Gal & Irvine, 1995). Milo only acknowledged the Inner Circle when referring to English-speaking countries, which symbolizes the erasure of Outer and Expanding Circle Englishes. In excerpt 4, he referred to "a 'gringo', an American, or an English man" multiple times as his only examples of native speakers, in excerpt 5, he talked about teachers spending "5, 6, 10, 15, 20 years in England or America, the United States", and in excerpt 6 he used "United States, England, Australia" as examples of the places where students should go to learn "proper" English. Furthermore, by choosing not to acknowledge and value the abilities of local English teachers who have not lived in the Inner Circle, Milo reproduced the erasure of a large population of qualified local NNESTs, who are effective English teachers regardless of their travel history.

Similarly, Milo's statements regarding the need to be in the Inner Circle to "truly" master English reproduce the discourse of English communication only occurring in the Inner Circle. This discourse erases communication exchanges that happen among English users in the

Expanding Circle. Milo also replicated this discourse in narratives not related to teaching; for example:

Excerpt 7

In 2008, I had the opportunity to work at Pipo International hotel in Maracaibo and I was working there for a year and half as a receptionist and evening auditor. Since this is a 5-star hotel, there are a lot of foreigners there. This was the only time I was able to use English. I was able continue using English then, but since 2009 on, when I finished my degree in Business Administration, which is what I am, and I started working mostly in businesses – big supermarkets, the area of costs, I'm a cost analyst. Since I started that, handling only accountant issues, this and that, I didn't use English anymore because I didn't have any other opportunities, I just couldn't do it anymore.

This narrative exemplifies Milo's erasure of Venezuelan English speakers and English communication in the Expanding Circle. In this statement, he connected his English use to foreigners and asserted that this was "the only time" he was able to use English and that he "didn't have any other opportunities" to practice the language. A similar statement was seen in excerpt 6, when Milo claimed that "in Venezuela, we will logically only listen to Spanish" emphasizing that he does not believe it is possible to get English exposure or practice in the country. Milo's rationalization of this claim through the use of the word "logically," is typical in the reproduction of ideologies that are framed as common sense. Although Venezuela is indeed a predominantly Spanish-speaking country, there is a large multilingual community that includes speakers of Chinese, Italian, indigenous languages, and users of English as an additional language, who are erased by this type of claim.

The native standard language ideology appears to have a significant influence on Milo's beliefs regarding language ownership, which influenced the construction of his identity-in-discourse. Milo used the discourse of English speakers from the Inner Circle as more qualified to teach English to align himself with that identity and reject the possibly imposed identity of *non-native*. Although he did not identify as a native speaker, he did position himself as an equal when discussing the use of *polite* versus *street* English. He also positioned himself as innately prepared to teach English due to his exposure to Inner Circle English, as discussed in the previous section.

Excerpt 7 also demonstrated that Milo relied on the semiotic resources of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure to reproduce native standard language ideology. He reproduced an iconized depiction of users of native Englishes, while positioning educators with lack of Inner Circle exposure as *the other* who Milo believed should be denied access to the teaching community. He also used erasure by disregarding English users from the Outer/Expanding Circle, qualified NNESTs who have not lived in the Inner Circle, English interaction in places where the language does not hold an official role, and the existence of Venezuelan English speakers.

### ***Enacting Standard Language Ideology.***

According to Paffey (2012), the three pillars of a language, as presented by enforcers of standard language ideology, are the dictionary, grammar, and orthography. Throughout his narratives and teaching practices, Milo demonstrated that these three pillars were at the center of his pedagogical choices.

The Venezuelan English curriculum is flexible, so teachers have the freedom to choose and develop class content as they see fit. Milo's classes were predominantly focused on translation activities themed around topics he selected based on their relevance to the students and the

policy requirements. During the time of the data collection, the class worked on two units: one focused on climate, and another about sexually transmitted diseases. The class activities included translation of texts and the creation of mind maps that discussed the concepts from the unit. Milo used translation activities in five out of the six classes I observed, and he had specific rules for these activities: students were expected to use a Spanish-English dictionary, cellphones and translation devices were forbidden, and the groups had to handwrite the assignment during class time. During interview 2, Milo and I discussed his teaching decisions after the observation period. Milo explained his views regarding the importance of the dictionary:

Excerpt 8

Well, this semester I started that way to improve the use of the dictionary in them because I have noticed that here and in the other school in Colonia Tovar, that students don't know how to use the dictionary neither in Spanish let alone in English. They don't know English/Spanish or Spanish/English because they don't know how the words are organized. They don't know that if they are going to look for a word that starts with A, they don't know they don't have to start from the beginning. For example, if you are looking for the word apple, so you don't have to start from the beginning, we look for the P and then go down according to the alphabet we decide how to use the dictionary.... So I do it mostly because of that, for the use of the dictionary, the use of the dictionary in translations so the kids can learn how to search in the dictionary both in Spanish and English.

This excerpt exemplifies Milo's concern over a perceived deficiency in students' learning regarding the use of the dictionary. The dictionary appeared to have such an important role in his view of education that he designed his class around translation to address this perceived learning

gap. Milo attempted to portray this issue as commonsense matter and further explained his choice to enforce the use of the dictionary over other translation methods in excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

Oh well, I don't like them using their cellphones because the mind gets lazy from not searching in the dictionary. Because it is easier for them to find it in translator and then they don't really get interested in searching what is the meaning of the word per se or, as I said before, how to search... how to make them learn how to use the dictionary. So in the translator many times, if they don't know how to use interrogation signs, exclamation signs, if they don't know how to properly write words, the translator will translate incorrect words. While in the dictionary words should or will be perfectly formed, so it is not like using the dictionary. The translator, if they [students] don't know how to write the sentence or part of the sentence, it will not translate [accurately]. That's why, for me, it is not appropriate to use the translator.

By making parallel comparisons between “lazy minds” and “easy work” in relation to the use of the dictionary, Milo was indexically attributing the iconic characteristics of smart/agile, and a hard worker to people who use the dictionary, while positioning those who do not as *the other*. Furthermore, he attributed symbolic power to the dictionary as a learning tool based on ideologically constructed claims such as students losing interest in learning if the words are easily found, or students *only* getting accurate translations from the dictionary. Although incorrect spelling can indeed lead to inaccurate translation in electronic devices, the same can happen using a dictionary, as selecting the contextually appropriate word is still necessary. In fact, during the observation period, students frequently requested Milo's help clarifying the meaning of certain words because they could not select the correct option for the translation just by looking them up in the dictionary. In these cases, Milo clarified the word to the entire class



and provided a sample sentence so that the students could understand the meaning of the word. Nevertheless, he insisted on policing the use of cellphones and reminded students about the prohibition of electronic tools to help with the translation tasks.

Grammar was another feature at the center of Milo's teaching practices. Besides the translation element, all the course content and activities had a grammatical component attached. Milo believed that grammar was "primordial not only in English but in any language" (interview 1) as it served as the base for learners to build sentences and start using the language. When asked to describe his class content for the term, he listed grammatical features such as personal pronouns, the present and past tenses, the grammatical rules of using 3<sup>rd</sup> person, and the vocabulary he chose in connection to the nationally mandated project "Manos a la siembra," which required them to cover topics related to agriculture. Milo did not mention communicative competences and appeared to believe that at that point, students only needed to focus on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary before focusing on other forms of English communication, which he planned to address in the second term of the school year.

Milo's focus on grammatical correctness was enacted through his assessment practices, which were informed by standard language ideology. He used three types of in-class activities during the observation period - translation of texts, mind maps, and written tests - and all of them were assessed through the lenses of grammatical and orthographic accuracy. Excerpt 9 illustrates Milo's assessment technique:

Excerpt 9

After every test, workshop, or assignment they ask me why they got x grade. So, I have it [an explanation] ready to say if it was because of orthography, a misspelled word, some inaccurately translated words or in other cases it depends on the assignment they submit,

it depends on how they submit the assignment. Because, for example, an assignment such as this one, which they did not color, they did not make it visually appealing... look, they have one's handwriting and then another, bad handwriting, and on top of everything they don't have the word accents right. I won't give them the same grade as I gave the others [referring to a more visually pleasing sample student work]. They could have done the same. I mean, they did the full translation, but it is not the same as this one because this one has drawings, a single handwriting style, pretty handwriting, good orthography. So, if the orthography is wrong, I take away 2 points. Bad translation? I take away certain number of points, and so on depending on how I see the quality of the assignment or test.

(Interview 2)

As seen in this statement, Milo mostly focused on structural and aesthetic aspects to assess students' projects. He paid attention to orthographic errors, misspelled words, translation accuracy, and the visual presentation of assignments. Milo's value of aesthetic qualities can be linked to Venezuelan tradition. In the Venezuelan schooling system, students are expected, as early as in primary school years, to follow specific aesthetic rules for assignment submission such as adding colored margins to the pages of notebooks, underlining text using specific colors, and only submitting clean readable content. The value he placed on these aesthetic expectations over content was made clear when he compared assignments and explained that although the less appealing one had a full translation, it was not as good and the one with illustrations, good handwriting, etc. Images of the discussed assignments are below:

Figure 4  
Assignment Sample 1

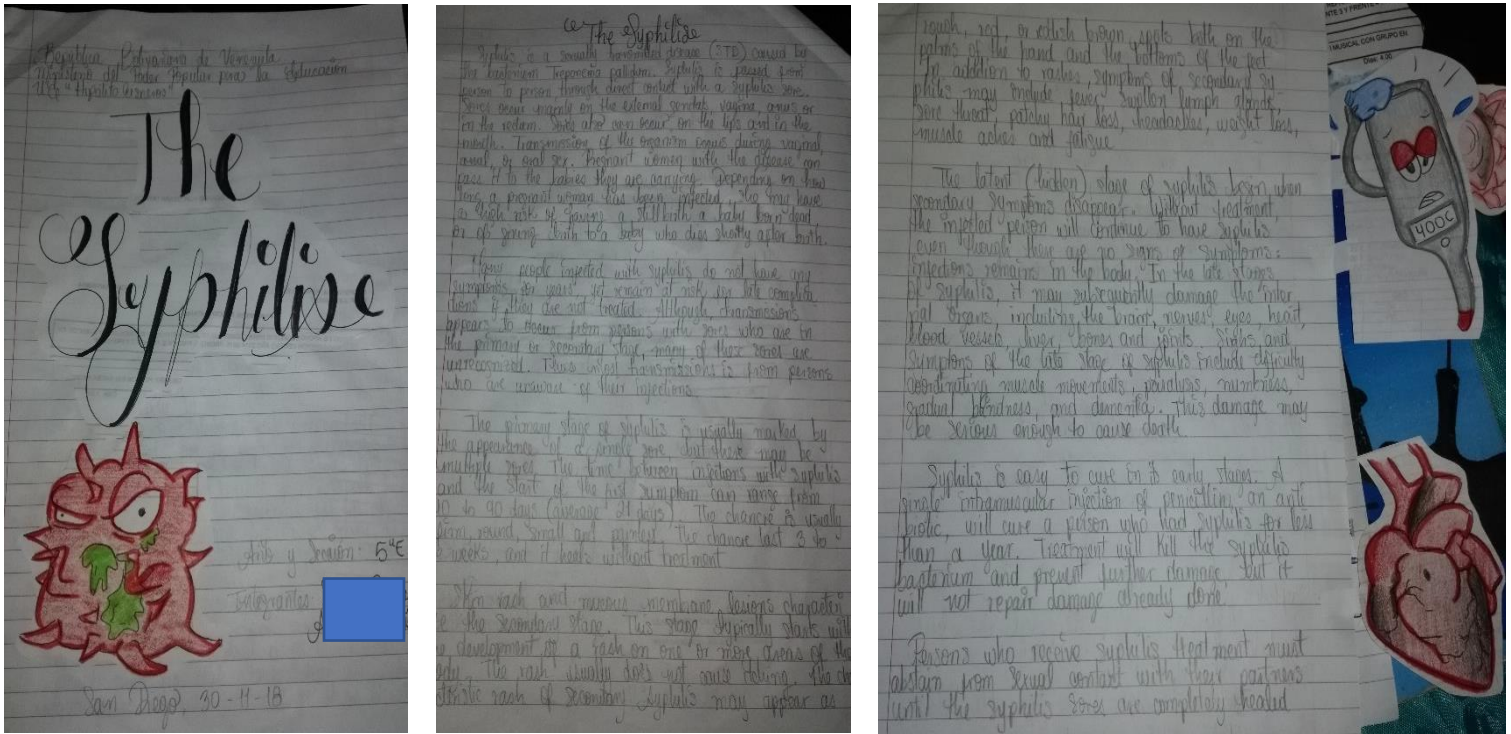


Figure 5  
Assignment Sample 2

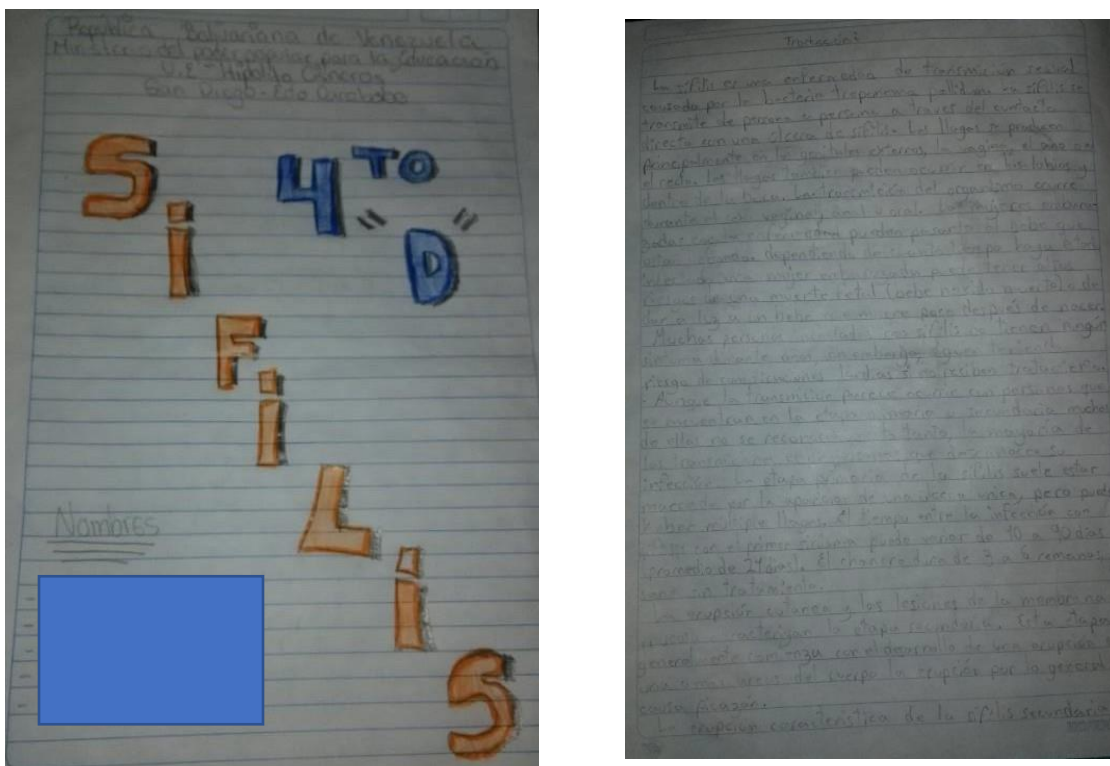
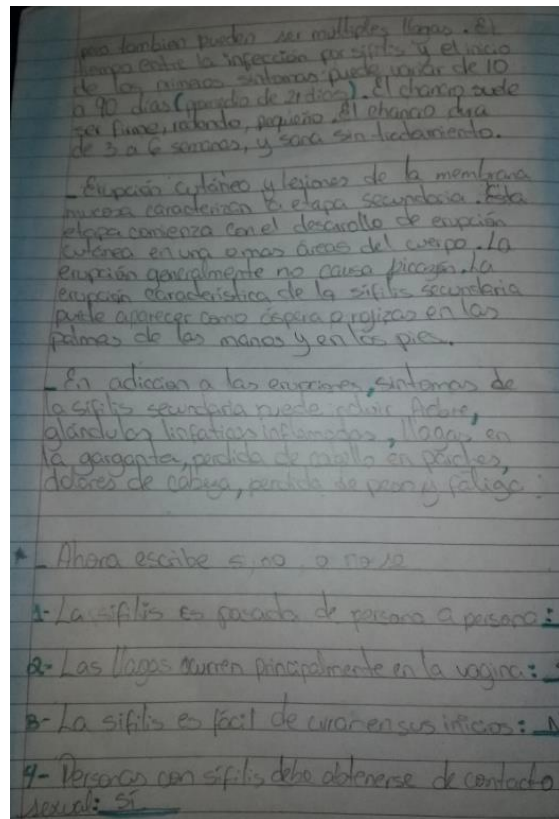
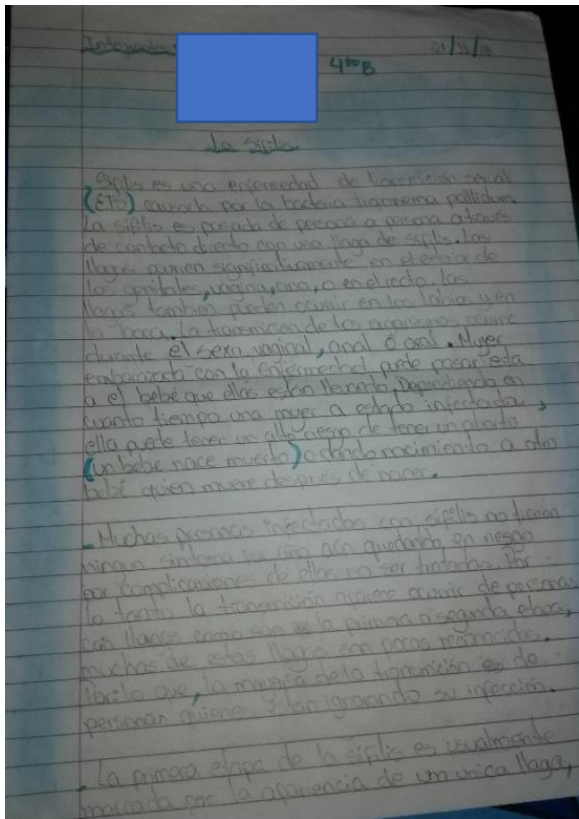


Figure 6  
Assignment sample 3



The first assignment is the ideal model Milo was referring to in excerpt 9. As seen in the image, these students placed emphasis on making the translation visually appealing by including hand-drawn images and using cursive handwriting. The other two assignments were used to exemplify less appealing/lower grade submissions because they did not compare to the first one in terms of design. The issue with assignment 2 was “bad” handwriting and assignment 3 was criticized for not being *as* visually appealing and missing accents in several words. Interestingly, example 1 has a spelling issue in the title that was not sanctioned as the aesthetic components of the translation made up for this mistake. In contrast, the other two assignments received sanctions for aesthetic and orthographic issues.

Although the discussion of standard language ideology has solely been addressed from the linguistic perspective so far, the rules of the standard may include aesthetic aspects as well. In this case, Milo's definition of standardized appropriate language includes aesthetic aspects such as *good* handwriting, assignment cleanliness, and visually appealing designs. Although not related to syntactic language features, these characteristics shape the expectations of language use in this context in combination with the more structural aspects discussed before.

Orthography was another crucial assessment aspect for Milo. In discussing his approach to language assessment, he stated:

Excerpt 10

In every assignment or workshop, I tell them: well kids I am going to evaluate you on orthography. Because we are translating from Spanish to English, I also evaluate their orthography in our language, Castellano (Spanish). I also... not only in Spanish, also in English, [I assess] capital letters, when we start [a sentence] we use capital letters, capital letters in proper nouns which also need to have capital letters, punctuation, accents, paragraphs, all of those things. All the things that we do in Castellano, I take it to English. Punctuation marks... question marks, I demand students that when they make sentences [such as] *where were you yesterday* they don't just do that. If they don't add a question mark it is not really a question, it is not truly built as a question. So, we need to pay attention to that to teach them how to use question marks. (Interview 2)

This narrative reveals a link between Milo's experience with Spanish and his English teaching practice. SLI appeared to inform his beliefs and practices using both languages, which also shaped his classroom decisions. Milo's use of the word *Castellano* demonstrates his language purism, . Rather than using the word *Español*, Milo chose to consistently use

Castellano throughout our conversations to demonstrate his value for “proper” language. The use of these two words is a known standard language controversy addressed by the Real Academia Española (RAE) (Royal Academy of Spanish). Some people claim that the correct word to use is Castellano because the language stems from Castilian Spanish, which was the standardized regional variety imposed on Spain and all its colonies. In Venezuela, the school subject equivalent to language and arts is called Castellano because of this. However, the word *Español* is more commonly used in colloquial settings. Although RAE officially settled the controversy by saying that both options are *appropriate*, there are still many language conservatives who believe the *proper* choice is Castellano. Milo appears to be in this group, as he always used this word to refer to the language and talked about his use of “proper” Castellano through good orthography.

In excerpt 10, Milo made a direct connection between the students’ L1 and the target language to emphasize structural language aspects, present this need as commonsense, and stress the urgency of addressing this perceived learning gap. In the last sentence of the excerpt, his use of the word “we” is referring to teachers as a collective who, in his opinion, must enforce orthography in school settings. This can be more explicitly seen in his response after I asked him why it was so important for him to assess orthography.

#### Excerpt 11

Firstly, because basically [the class] is being taken in the field of education and all of us teachers should teach that, that is part of our job too. Second, if they [students] want to be professionals in the future, they need to consider that orthography rules are an important part they need to master for any career or anything they decide to do with their lives.

(Interview 2)

As he did with grammar and the dictionary, Milo presented orthography as a necessary skill for students and linked it to professional success, attributing an almost canonical power to it. He not only seemed to place more value on structural aspects of language, a typical feature of standard language ideology, but he strongly believed that it was a teacher's duty to maintain standard language in school settings. These beliefs directly informed Milo's teaching practices and were evident even in the first excerpt, when he made the assertion that teaching "polite" English in schools was "the right thing to do."

As seen in this section, standard language ideology directly intersected Milo's identity-in-practice construction. He associated his position as a teacher to an identity as an ideology broker (Paffey, 2012) whose duty was to reproduce, enforce, and maintain standard language in Spanish and English. His narratives demonstrate his reproduction of this ideology under the commonsense premise. They also show the direct connections made between professionalism and grammatical accuracy, the use of the dictionary, and "proper" orthography. Based on these narratives, it appears that Milo's students receive significant market sanctions if they do not conform to the rules of the standard language, which in this academic setting, go beyond structural language aspects.

### **Case 2: Kamila**

As mentioned in chapter 3, Kamila was an experienced English instructor with over fifteen years of experience. She had a BA in English Education from a prestigious public university from the central region of Venezuela and had been working at Los Campos school (pseudonym) for ten years by the time of the data collection. She taught the English classes for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In this section, I discuss the most common themes and trends yielded from my analysis of the data from Kamila.

### *A Prescribed Teacher Identity*

As a pre-service teacher, Kamila assumed a prescriptive imagined teacher identity that negatively shaped her career and teaching experiences. Kamila attended a teacher education program that was designed following ideological constructs that appeared to promote prescriptive teacher identities and idealized teaching contexts. This program did not expose Kamila to the plethora of teaching methods available to her, or the diverse contexts and student groups she might find in the field. The program only focused on monolingual English-only methods and enforced the belief that ideal English teachers follow “English-only” in their teaching (see chapter 4). This led Kamila to claim an imaged teacher identity as an ideology broker for monolingualism, which she held onto for the rest of her career.

Kamila had a clear set of imagined expectations of what her teaching career should look like, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 1

Well, my expectation was that, for example, I would grow more, that I would learn more English, but I have practically forgotten it. Of course, since we are not in a native speaking country, I don't listen to English everyday as I should. If I had, for example, gone to work there (referring to the Inner Circle) to teach Spanish, maybe I would have improved, because I am in a country where I can hear English y maybe... Because you know that you first learn by listening before writing. Because a child speaks and they can tell you mom, dad... they don't know how to write mom or dad but they can pronounce it perfectly because they have heard it. So my expectation was to perhaps get better, learn more, I don't know, have other experiences. But basically, I have gotten worse. My oral skills have depleted so much because here it is only Spanish, only Spanish everywhere.



Nobody speaks English so you are like, you say something in English and they say *ah,? what? I don't understand! Repeat that!* (high pitch screaming voice). So, you feel like bah what's the point of speaking English if you are going to have to repeat yourself constantly. So sometimes it is like I don't know... I really thought it would be something richer, that I would have more experience regarding English, that I would learn more English, that I would improve my English, but... (Interview 1)

This quote exemplifies two important beliefs Kamila held: a) she needed to be in an English-only context to maintain her English skills, b) her teaching context should have provided her with such opportunities. As seen at the beginning of the excerpt, she explicitly presented her lack of exposure to English as the main issue since she was “not listening to English everyday as [she] should” and presented this as common-sense problem by making a comparison to child language acquisition and highlighting the fact that Venezuela is not an English-speaking country. This belief could be connected to Kamila's previous education as the teacher education program she attended used a monolingual approach, enforced standard language ideology, and viewed Venezuelan language learners from a deficit perspective, as discussed in the previous chapter.

These expectations set Kamila up for a difficult career and negatively shaped her experience. Across all data sources, Kamila regularly compared her university experience to her teaching at public schools, and openly expressed how she was “shocked” because she was not prepared for what she encountered. In her own words:

Excerpt 2

Oh my God, well, let me tell you, for me this was a very drastic change. Obviously, because I did my teaching practicum at *SC*, where children have a high level of English. Some of them have lived there (referring to Inner Circle) or their parents have, someone

in their house always speaks English. So, when I enter the Ministry of Education, I start in Las Aguitas (laugh)... they used to call me *la verduga* (the executioner). Because out of 30, if 1 student passed the class, that was a lot. Of course, because I had the idea that they should already know the colors, they should have known everything, and when I came with the verb to be, they didn't. So, I had to lower the level almost to 0, it was like teaching preschool. (Interview 1)

In this passage, Kamila was talking about her transition from her teaching practicum in her last semester of college to her first official teaching position at a rural school. During her teaching practicum, she taught six classes at SC, a private school with a robust EFL program, and had a positive experience as the context aligned well with the imagined identity she had claimed as a pre-service teacher. In this school setting she was able to use an English-only approach, which was positively received by students and other stakeholders. In contrast, she had to renegotiate her professional identity and become someone she was not prepared to be when she was assigned to a rural school in the public school system. As being nicknamed the “executioner” indicated, Kamila was negatively perceived by others in her teaching environment. She explained that the first time they had a teacher meeting in that school, they called her “a witch” because all students had failed, so she was required to lower her standards and adapt to the new expectations “because they didn't know anything” (Linguistic autobiography). Overall, for Kamila, this transition was “horrible” and “traumatizing,” and negatively impacted her career forever. Kamila's struggle is further seen in excerpt 3:

#### Excerpt 3

There was an abysmal difference regarding students' knowledge. The kids there, I think they were in second year [eighth grade] and they had an *uffff* super hyper mega advanced

English level. They are kids who study English since primary school, and they had the same teacher since preschool. In contrast, the ones here start studying English in seventh grade. In primary school they may teach them a thing or two, but it is not formal, it is not mandatory. So, they come to seventh grade practically with a preschool level and that was a shock for me! Because I came from a certain level, I supposedly came here to teach English classes, something hyper mega! So, when I found that reality because that is the reality, I said *oh my God!* And I truly have been all these years almost at -6. I had to start with numbers, colors, geometric shapes. I said, this cannot be their level at seventh grade. Honestly, at university they never told me this, so it was difficult. Very very difficult.

(Interview 2)

This excerpt further demonstrates Kamila's idealized expectation of her teaching context and the difficulties she encountered in adapting to the reality. Kamila's ideal teaching self involved teaching in a specific way and at a certain proficiency level. Likewise, she had also developed an ideal self for her students. When Kamila was unable to construct those ideal selves for herself and her students in the classroom, she blamed her teacher education program for not preparing her for what she would encounter after graduation.

The teacher education program did not seem to present her with the possibility of finding novice students beyond primary school. Kamila appeared to believe that only children could be beginners in terms of English proficiency, as inferred by her claim that students "come to 7<sup>th</sup> grade practically with a preschool level" and her frequent comparison secondary school students' level to that of preschoolers. In excerpt 3, she labeled her own level at "-6" implying that she had not been able to reach the level of expectation she had originally set for herself. As she herself acknowledged in her narrative, students in public schools do not have English instruction until

seventh grade, so there should be no expectation of them having background knowledge of English. However, Kamila believed that students would inherently have background knowledge and that English teaching was a one-size-fits-all situation in which a full immersion approach was essential.

Besides the difficulties she faced due to her own expectations and standards, the contextual constraints further contributed to the identity crisis that Kamila experienced. Kamila did not have proper support to succeed in her teaching context, as the schools where she worked did not offer her any type of mentoring or professional development opportunities. At Los Campos school, they did not even have an English program coordinator, so English teachers did not have any guidance from a mentor or an administrator. Additionally, the school was in a dire state due to the country's socioeconomic crisis. Kamila and her students did not have access to textbooks, photocopies, or any type of educational resources. She could not request students to bring their own materials or even ask them to have notebooks for the class because she knew they could not afford it. They had to use recycled paper for class activities and some of the classrooms did not have electricity or a full set of student desks. Yet, she was expected to adapt to this situation without mentoring while working for a monthly salary of less than five dollars.

Kamila had such a negative experience during her fifteen years of teaching that she developed an overall apathy for the profession and openly expressed it.

#### Excerpt 4

Educational policies have worsened and that has deteriorated everything. Everything gets worse and sometimes you think well, if they learn they learn and if they don't, whatever. That's not my problem, I do my part coming here. Sometimes I feel like that but well, you tryyyy (her emphasis) as much as possible for them to at least learn. (Interview 1)

Kamila's teacher burnout was so severe that she felt demotivated and almost completely disconnected from the profession. In fact, she even talked about the possibility of quitting and switching careers to "selling things or doing something else. Something that has nothing to do with education" (Interview 1). Her negative experience was so intense that Kamila decided not to pursue the possibility of leaving the country to find better opportunities because her experience was solely on English teaching, and she could not imagine herself teaching anymore or adapting to a different teaching setting.

As seen in this section, Kamila's professional identity formation was directly impacted by the circulating language ideologies enforced by her teacher education program. Kamila assumed and attempted to maintain a prescriptive teacher identity that limited her view of language teaching to a single methodology. When she was not able to adopt an English-only approach in her teaching context, she felt lost, inadequate, and this generated an identity crisis that perdured throughout her career and resulted in teacher burnout.

### *Ideologies that Shape Experiences*

Some of Kamila's experiences can be associated with the circulating language ideologies that she (un)consciously internalized and reproduced. Based on her narratives, Kamila appeared to have been influenced by monolingualism and the maximum exposure fallacy.

#### *Monolingualism.*

Monolingualism is an ideologically constructed discourse that has widely permeated language education. Monolingual acquisition models from the Inner Circle tend to be treated as the ideal language acquisition model. In the context of English teaching, there is a pervasive belief that English should be taught using an English-only monolingual approach excluding other languages from the classroom as way to optimize the learning process (Canagarajah & Said,

2011). Phillipson (1992) refers to it as the monolingual fallacy and classifies it as one of the tools used for maintenance of linguistic imperialism. As seen in the previous chapter, the monolingual fallacy is among the strongest circulating ideologies in the Latin American context, and it appears to have had an influence on Kamila's identity construction and the overall relationship with her career.

Kamila's exposure to monolingualism can be traced back to her teacher education program. Across her narratives, Kamila often talked about her own language education and how "traumatic" it was for her to adapt to the English-only approach used in her program. Below is her narration of her experience:

Excerpt 5

When I did the first semesters, you know that the first ones it is all normal for everyone, but when you are in the third, you choose your major. They told me that I didn't need to speak English, that I would learn that in the university, which is completely false (laughs) because you start classes everything was in English and I was like *what, hello!* I didn't understand absolutely anything, so I had to start an English course. I did the [name] program and between that and the university is when things started getting better. There were some oral classes where you had to do interviews, presentations, so imagine that. For me that was a huge shock but I said *if everyone else can do it, so do I*. Of course, I had classmates who had lived in Canada, some had lived in the United States, so they had more [knowledge]... They should be honest and tell you *you need to at least have a base or something because te vamos a acribillar, aqui te vamos a hacer picadillo (we will pelt you, we will chop you in small pieces) (laughs)*. But well, yes, I think that was the most traumatic for me, that when I started all the classes and everything was in English. Of

course, I had classmates who did understand but I was like, I don't know if you remember Charlie Brown? Like Charlie Browns teacher, I didn't understand absolutely anything (laughs), I wanted to die! I said *Oh my God, what am I doing here?* (Linguistic autobiography)

As seen in this narrative, Kamila had a sense of injustice regarding the program expecting her to function in an English-only setting as a beginner. Kamila's language choices in this narrative demonstrate how difficult it was for her to adapt to this methodology. She used the metaphor of being pelted and chopped into small pieces, talked about wanting to die and feeling like Charlie Brown, which are quite descriptive expressions of how unsupported and challenged she felt. Furthermore, in her linguistic autobiography, Kamila used the word "traumatic" thirteen times to describe her language learning journey. She narrated that she had to make an immense effort taking extra English classes on the weekends and using all her free time to study so that she could keep up with her program's expectations. This experience was so "traumatic" for her that it made her "never want to study again."

Another important pattern that emerged from Kamila's narratives was her belief that having a job in the public-school system damaged her career and "depleted" her English level. This, due to her not being able to maintain the English-only dynamic in these settings. An example can be seen in excerpt 6.

#### Excerpt 6

...I had to, let's not say lower the level, super mega lower the level. I had to start from zero with colors, numbers, and that was a huge trauma, and that is perhaps what depleted my pronunciation, my things, because I didn't have that way to practice. Maybe if I had been assigned to a different place where students had another level, maybe I would have

kept that balance. Because that was really like a *caída en picada, caída libre sin paracaídas* (falling without a parachute)... This was a job that to me it felt like *rebajarme* from the level that I had. It damaged me regarding my pronunciation and my career, in the sense that I didn't improve. Like I said, it is not like I got better but I actually got worse (laughs). (Linguistic autobiography)

Kamila had internalized the monolingual fallacy so profoundly that she felt that teaching beginner level classes where she could not use an English-only approach was hurtful for her career and somehow degrading. Through the use of the metaphor of falling without a parachute, she indicated that her teaching context was the reason for the downfall of her language abilities, which “damaged” her teaching career. Besides that, her use of the word *rebajarme* intensifies her experience as, in Spanish, this word is used to refer to stooping to some inferior level in terms of social status and prestige.

Kamila's attitude is not surprising as language ideologies are grounded in social positions (Paffey, 2012). Kamila had earned a place in a prestigious community of English-only users at her university, which was a form of symbolic capital. In this linguistic market, Kamila had earned a prestigious social standing that could only be maintained through her fluency in English. When that symbolic power was threatened, she appeared to distance herself from her teaching context emotionally and perceived that context as the reason for the loss of her capital.

Kamila explained that her former program placed a strong emphasis on oral communication, enforced the use of “American pronunciation,” and stressed the need of English-only environments to support language learning, all of which can be considered markers of prestige. Besides this, Kamila explained that in the program “they were super hyper mega exigent. It was total exigency. Something like you could not make mistakes because if you did, you were done”



(Linguistic autobiography). She perceived this level of demand positively, as she associated it with hard work and prestige. She justified her claim by saying:

Excerpt 7

They had to be that demanding because if they weren't anybody could enter that major. Anybody could graduate from that major. So, I am honestly thankful that they had been so exigent because that makes you truly make an effort... I'm thankful because they served as a filter. It was something like 60 people started in the major and only 30 get to finish. 30 may even be much. (Linguistic autobiography)

Kamila indexed value into gate keeping practices as a marker of prestige for the program and believed that this was an effective way to foster hard work among learners. Kamila tried to replicate these practices in her own teaching context by imposing high standards on her students; for example, in the rural school where 29 out of her 30 students failed the class due to the high expectations she set up for them (see excerpt 2). Similarly, in the second interview, Kamila talked about not using exams for her classes because when she used them, over 60% of the class frequently failed and administrators forced her to repeat the tests.

Kamila's professional identity centered on being an English speaker above all. For her, the most important aspect of the profession was the ability to fluently communicate in English and she was convinced that the only way to do this through her teaching practice was by using an English-only approach. Although she had a negative experience as a beginner learner studying under this approach, Kamila insisted on replicating this methodology and used it in her own teaching context in order to maintain the prestige she attributed to high exigency levels. Rather than negotiating this identity, Kamila attempted to resist to the school expectations and impose

her teaching methods, which resulted in more feelings of frustration and the rejection of her teaching context.

*The Maximum Exposure Fallacy.*

Another common theme that emerged from Kamila's narratives was the reproduction of the maximum exposure and the subtractive fallacy discourse. The maximum exposure and the subtractive fallacy refer to the belief that more exposure to English intrinsically results in better acquisition and that the use of other languages in the classroom are subtractive of the language acquisition process (Phillipson, 1992). One of the ways in which Kamila reproduced this discourse was through her belief that she was at a disadvantage as a language learner because she had never traveled to an English-speaking country or had family members who spoke English. In interview 1, while discussing her difficulties adapting to the English-only environment at the university, she explained: "I have never traveled or had the opportunity to be in another country or practice like that... What I have learned has been due to my own experience in college and because some friends who have lived in Canada or the United States helped me."

In her linguistic autobiography, she further described her feelings regarding her lack of experience in English speaking countries. While discussing how she fell behind in her BA track due to failing English Language Practice, she stated:

Excerpt 8

I am not sure if you met [name 1], I think she taught there once. Well, I started with her. The first time we started in languages [the program], which was in the third semester, I was with her. Of course, she passed the class because she lived in Canada for a while and she had some knowledge. And that was traumatic for me. I also started with [name 2], he also taught at the university. We were that cohort. Of course, they move on because

[name 2] was incredibly smart. I don't know, I think he lived in London, he studied there.

That man is a walking book, I admire him. And that was a little traumatic for me because

I said: *wow they passed and I had to stay, this can't be happening*. But well, I continued.

This narrative illustrates Kamila's frustration for not being able to keep up with her program's expectations. This frustration appears to be centered around her being left behind due to her lack of experience in living abroad. On the other hand, Kamila believed that her friends had an advantage because they had lived in Inner Circle countries. Kamila did not describe the proficiency level of these classmates or the amount of time they spent in the Inner Circle; however, she implied that their experience of living abroad guaranteed their academic success in the program.

Kamila also believed that continuous exposure to English was the only way to achieve and maintain a *good* pronunciation. When talking about her perception of her own pronunciation in English, she stated:

#### Excerpt 9

I always had a difficult time with pronunciation. It is not the same to be in a place where... sure, there we spoke English [referring to the university], but it is not like living in a country where speaking English is mandatory, where you must listen to it. So, pronunciation was perhaps the most important part because in a language, the first thing you learn is pronunciation. A child can pronounce dad, mom, grandpa, but they don't know how to write it. So, maybe because I was so... nobody at home, no neighbors, nobody [spoke English]. I mean, nobody spoke English in the place where I was, so the only place was the university and my English course, the teachers and stuff. So, the most difficult part for me was pronunciation. Because of that, because although we went to

labs [to practice] that is not the same. I think that you have to, I don't know, they can pay something for you so you can go somewhere else to listen, listen, listen, and then come back here to strengthen your knowledge. Because pronunciation is truly necessary. Maybe that is something the university is missing, that opportunity for students who are in the program to go for at least 6 months to a place where they can listen to only English, English, English, English, so they improve their pronunciation. Because the grammatical aspect is good. You can learn that here because they are excellent in that aspect.

(linguistic autobiography)

This passage demonstrates Kamila's naturalization and reproduction of the maximum exposure fallacy discourse. By using the example of how babies acquire language, Kamila framed the maximum exposure fallacy through the lenses of commonsense. This example is indexical of the notion that adults should learn English as babies do, which requires frequent exposure to the language. She appeared to believe that to acquire appropriate English pronunciation skills, a person had to be exposed to native varieties or varieties spoken in places where English has an official role. Although she did not mention the Inner or Outer circle, she said that her exposure to English through local experiences were never enough to acquire the level of fluency she had imagined. Furthermore, she explicitly addressed the need for learners to go live in an English-speaking country to achieve their pronunciation goals.

Given the value she placed on fluent oral production, Kamila developed a sense of insecurity regarding her English-speaking skills. I gave her the opportunity to do the interviews in English or Spanish and she decided to use Spanish because she believed I would not be able to understand her English. An example of her assessment of her English proficiency level can be seen in excerpt 10.

## Excerpt 10

(sigh) oh well, it has deteriorated a lot because I haven't practiced. I would really like to, I don't know, travel, go somewhere where I can hear only English and regain the knowledge I had acquired, because you don't forget that. Right now, I am like in stand by (laughs) I am like in shock. Because I have gotten a lot worse. I don't consider myself to be bilingual per se. Because I am missing stuff, I am missing pronunciation. I do understand it [English] and I can write it and I can understand it in writing, but in terms of pronunciation I am missing a lot. I am missing fluency. I can form words, but I think I would look as if I were a gaga (someone who stutters) trying to form a phrase (laughs). In terms of vocabulary, I would also need more vocabulary. Because that experience of living, of having daily contact in a place where they speak English, you acquire vocabulary that you wouldn't acquire here even if you wanted to. (Linguistic autobiography)

Kamila's reflections in excerpt 10 shows that she held on to the prescriptive teacher identity she had claimed at the beginning of her career. She had a dichotomous way of thinking where she either had all or nothing. As she acknowledged in this narrative, she was able to understand and produce English in writing but because of her decreased fluency, she lost confidence in her oral abilities. She was looking at herself from a deficit perspective and focused mostly on her weaknesses. Rather than attempting to find alternatives to practice her English skills, Kamila was overwhelmed with the belief that she was agentless in her own language learning process. There were three other English teachers in the school whom she could have practiced with, but she insisted that the only way to improve her English was to be removed from this context and be in an English-only setting abroad.

The ideologies reproduced by Kamila can be directly tied to the ones identified at macro and meso levels in Venezuela. She was reproducing the discourse of foreign assistance as a necessity for improving English proficiency, which was a strong theme in the Pearson/British Council reports. She also reproduced the discourse of English-only communication being exclusive to places where English has an official role, as identified in the national education curriculum. Finally, Kamila appeared to have assumed the identity of an ideology broker for the reproduction and maintenance of the ideologies she was socialized into in her teacher education program. Kamila connected most of her beliefs about language use and language teaching with her experience as a college student and attempted to reproduce those practices without success in her teaching context. Even though she eventually adapted to the context, she was practically forced into this by school administrators. In her narratives, she regularly discussed her adaptation as a deficit. Adapting to the needs of her students conflicted with the professional identity she desired to construct for her, and this may be one of the reasons why she experienced teacher burnout.

### ***Linguistic Differentiation as a Form of Marginalization***

Kamila constructed a deficit-oriented identity for her students, which in turn influenced her own professional identity and teaching practices. One way in which she constructed the identities of her students was through the use of linguistic differentiation. Linguistic differentiation refers to the idea of presupposing a boundary or opposition within languages in a larger sociolinguistic field (Irvine & Gal, 2009). This is an ideologically constructed process in which the members of said sociolinguistic context frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people. Beyond simply contrasting language characteristics, linguistic differentiation is at the center of the social understandings one attaches to the characteristics of the individuals who use languages.

Based on Kamila's narratives, part of her experience was shaped by the socioeconomical context of the schools where she worked and her preconceived perceptions of the students in these settings. An example can be seen in the narrative below:

Excerpt 11

Yes, when, to the glory of God, I managed the change here, when I moved here... the kids had another level, they were interested in English, they were interested in their grades. There, they [students] used to tell me *teacher, diez es nota y lo demás es lujo*<sup>1</sup>(10 is a good grade, everything beyond is a luxury), but not here. Here the kids were looking for their 18, their 19, their 20 [referring to grades]. They were interested in their grades. So I liked it because it was like in the university. Yes, I saw more of a balance, like in the university... In contrast, there the highest aspiration the kids had was to be a bus collector. And to be a bus collector, you don't need to study. The ones who studied was because parents forced them to. Because many of them deserted to go work as bus collectors because that produced them more money. Studying didn't produce money, but working as a bus collector gives you money. That was one of the big changes. The kids here were *hijos de papá y mamá*, so to speak and they were kids who did not need to work. Instead, they wanted a university career, so they were interested in their grades, and they did care about English. So, this was a very nice time for me, because I felt comfortable. I used to say *ahh, I am finally in a place where they want English!* (Laughs) Because there they didn't even want to see it. (Linguistic autobiography)

Iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure, (Gal & Irvine, 1995) are the semiotic processes used by Kamila to construct ideological representations and linguistic differences among her

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<sup>1</sup> This is a typical phrase used by Venezuelan teenagers to talk about getting the minimum approbatory grade in school, 10/20.

students. By doing this, she indexed character traits on them based on their linguistic abilities and socioeconomic background. Although in previous sections Kamila's frustrations could be linked to her idealistic expectations and the lack of support she encountered, this narrative is centered on her stereotypical perceptions of students in the different educational contexts she was part of.

Kamila imposed a deficit-based identity on her students by creating iconic representations of them based on their socioeconomic background. When she described her students and her relationship with them, she constructed stereotypical identities for them. For example, according to her, *all* students from the rural school: a) did not care about grades, b) did not have career aspirations beyond being a bus collector, c) did not like/want English. In contrast, she described the students from the urban school as: a) highly motivated to earn good grades, b) inspired to have college careers, and c) invested in learning English. By drawing on these iconic traits assigned to students due to their socioeconomic realities, Kamila perpetuated a discourse that justified the marginalization of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Although some of her students might have had these characteristics, it was unlikely that *all* of them were the same. The ones who were successful and did not fit her iconic representation were, according to Kamila, "the ones who studied was because parents forced them to." Regardless of their efforts or achievements, the students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were still assigned the deficit identity by Kamila.

Another iconic representation in excerpt 11 comes from Kamila's claim that students in Los Campos were "*hijos de papá y mamá.*" This is a phrase that refers to people who are privileged, sheltered, and have financial security, associated with having two family providers. Somewhat similar to the English phrase being born with a silver spoon, this statement implies that students



at Los Campos had the privilege of not worrying about money and could focus only on their studies because they had parents to take care of them. In contrast, the students in the rural area needed money and did not have the support of their parents, so they had to quit school and become bus collectors. Although Kamila's assumptions about students' backgrounds and choices might partially reflect the reality, her claim ignore the complexity and diversity associated with the socioeconomic realities of the students in both contexts.

By presenting these iconic representations of the students from both settings, Kamila was also relying on fractal recursivity and erasure to create this distinction. She deliberately created opposing iconic representations of the students and disregarded all students who did not fit these depictions. She might have done this to create a uniform profile of the populations of both schools and justify her negative perception of the rural school. The linguistic identities Kamila constructed for her students were to some extent based on the students' socioeconomic status and background.

#### Excerpt 12

... when I started in the Ministry of Education and went to that place, well that school, it was honestly horrible. I mean, they didn't know anything, and they were not interested in learning, not even Spanish or Math, let alone English. Because they live in a place where they don't even know how to speak Spanish. They don't care [about English] because they speak Spanish, you know what I mean? If they don't even have grammar, they don't know that before p and b you write m, they don't care about that, let alone in English. So they saw English like *ooooohhh* and it was honestly very difficult to try to get them interested, to get them to like it or to get them to at least learn the numbers, the colors.  
(linguistic autobiography)

In this story, Kamila indicated that students in the rural schools lived in “a place where they don’t even know how to speak Spanish,” which indexes that her previous iconic representations were partially based on the *quality* of the language spoken by the students. Her claim is specifically based on the fact that they “don’t know that before *p* and *b* you write *m*,” which is a Standard Spanish orthographic rule. Her assertion is indexical that only users of “proper” Standard Spanish can be considered speakers of the language. Furthermore, she perceived Standard Spanish use as a marker for language learning abilities, as she assumed that because students “don’t have [Spanish] grammar” they would not be able to or have interest in learning English.

In Venezuelan Spanishes, there are dialectal markers that represent prestige and are associated with social class. Individuals from upper and middle class and with a certain level of education tend to use normative varieties of Venezuelan Spanishes while the ones with less education and lower income may use vernacular variations. The features of non-standard Spanish in Venezuela vary by region but there are common traits such as deletion of syllable-final /r/ (i.e. [kantár] vs. [kantá] ‘to sing’), intervocalic /r/ (i.e. [pára] vs. [pá] ‘for’), and intervocalic /d/ (i.e. [kantádo] vs. [kantáo] ‘sung’), and the use of non-traditional grammatical and orthographic features. Díaz-Campos and Killam (2012) found that these features are associated with lower class/uneducated speech and are perceived as less prestigious/undesirable in contrast the normative varieties. Díaz-Campos et al. (2012) also found that it is more common for upper- and middle-class individuals, such as Kamila, to prefer the use of normative variants and negatively perceive variation.

People in the South Valencia might be more prone to use non-standard Spanish varieties, which could be the reason why Kamila claimed that her students lived in a place where they did

not even know how to speak Spanish. Due to the linguistic distinction made between standard and non-standard Venezuelan Spanishes and the characteristics attributed to the users of these varieties, Kamila created an imagined community division between her students. For her, students from the South had negative traits while the ones from the North had positive traits. Her perception of Spanish varieties as a superior/inferior dichotomy led to the creation of these iconic representations from a deficit perspective.

Kamila's value of grammar and orthography as features of Standard Spanish that are essential in education can be further seen in excerpt 13:

#### Excerpt 13

I studied with nuns and the one who taught Spanish was a nun. And you either learned the rules or you didn't pass the class. It was very demanding. I don't know how it was in other high schools, or for other people, but my experience with Spanish was difficult because she was very demanding. I have seen that others aren't [as demanding] because I have seen orthographic errors, even in my son, that I think wow! They don't even know the difference between *ahí, hay, and, ay* (*there, there is, ouch*), or that before b or p you write m, and they are in sixth grade. That to me that is a *error garrafal* (colossal error). And I have honestly seen many students who graduate with errors in Spanish. However, they know how to write some words in English because of advertisements but they don't even know how to write them in Spanish.... Well, my mom always talks about a teacher who smacked her head against the blackboard because she didn't know an orthographic rule, so she said *la letra con sangre entra* (*language enters with blood*). And she says that that's how she never again forgot that rule. It's a little extreme but it was like that. My mom said: I will never forget the name of that teacher, teacher [name] and I will never

forget that orthographic rule she was teaching me. She was called to the front of the class and when she didn't know the answer, the teacher grabbed by her head and smacked it against the board saying *la letra con sangre entra*. And my mom says she will never forget about that (laughs). I wish we could do that these days but no way (laughs) (linguistic autobiography)

This narrative demonstrates the high value Kamila placed on standard language features. When she raised the issue of students not knowing the difference between *ahí*, *hay*, and *ay*, she was relying on her values of Standard Spanish and reproducing standard language ideology. In oral communication, these three words are pronounced almost identically, so the communication would not be broken if the speaker did not know the orthographic rule to differentiate them. However, this was such an important issue for Kamila that she deemed it an *error garrafal*, a phrase that refers to an unacceptable type of error.

Kamila's interpretation of the harrowing story of her mother's experience in Spanish class is also revealing and demonstrates Kamila's deep internalization of standard language ideology. She found the physical abuse her mother suffered somewhat acceptable because it contributed to her learning process. The phrase *la letra con sangre entra* stems from colonial times when the Spanish colonizers forced the locals to adopt Spanish as *the* standard language. This phrase is so culturally relevant that Instituto Cervantes (n.d.), a branch from the Royal Academy of Spanish, defined it in their virtual *Refranero Multilingue*, a website where people can check the meaning of popular Spanish sayings. According to their definition, this phrase "denotes that work and study are necessary to learn something or to advance in something. Sometimes it is only associated with corporal punishment as a stimulus to learn." In the case of Kamila's narrative,

the facts of the story point to the phrase meaning corporal punishment; however, Kamila's interpretation appears to be more in line with hard work as a part of education.

Although I do not believe Kamila approved the violence perpetrated by her mother's teacher, her perception of the story demonstrates her belief that extreme demands lead to motivation and learning, as discussed in previous sections. Kamila also appeared to have been socialized into the identity of teacher as keeper of tradition which led her to believe that it was her job to be demanding to ensure the quality of her teaching, and she justified symbolic, and sometimes physical, violence as an innate part of education.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

This qualitative dissertation adopted the theoretical principles of poststructuralism, critical discourse analysis, and language ideologies to explore the intersection of circulating language ideologies and language teacher identities. This study aimed to answer two research questions: 1. What are macro, meso, and micro level circulating language ideologies that may shape English language teaching in Venezuela? 2. How do circulating language ideologies intersect with the professional identities of English teachers? In this chapter, I compare and contrast my findings from the textual analysis and the case studies that I presented in the previous chapters, and I interpret my findings in light of the existing literature. Then, I discuss the limitations of the study, as well as implications for policy makers and teacher educators, and future research directions.

### **Hegemonic Language Ideologies, Symbolic Power, and Symbolic Violence**

Based on the examination of textual artifacts in Chapter 4, I demonstrated how hegemonic language ideologies permeate the field of ELT in South America. My analysis shows that language teaching in the region reinforced discourses that position native speakers and Western institutions as experts while local teachers and educational entities are portrayed as less able/credible. Hernández-Fernández and Rojas's (2018) and Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) in their reports on language teaching in Latin America relied on the ideology of low English proficiency as a deficiency in the Latin American education system to advance their argument that English is a necessity for the economic advancement of the region. This discourse helps maintain the hegemonic position of English through the use of stigmatization, glorification, and

rationalization (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas argue that:

Maintenance of linguistic hierarchy typically involves a pattern of *stigmatization* of dominated languages (mere ‘dialects’, ‘vernaculars’, ‘patois’), *glorification* of the dominant language (its superior clarity, richer vocabulary) and *rationalization* of their relationship between the languages, always to the benefit of the dominant one (access to a superior culture and ‘progress’) (p. 500).

The two reports used stigmatization by portraying English language learners in the region as unsuccessful and ultimately positioning the educational system in Latin America as inferior. By comparing Latin America to other countries such as Canada and India, where English bilingualism has been achieved by a large portion of the population, they depict those countries as superior and good examples and argue for the need for Latin American nations to look up to those countries as ideal role-models. The use of glorification and rationalization is seen through their claim that English is the solution to economic inequality and an essential tool for the advancement of the region. They often highlight the power of English and the importance of access to it as they present the need to learn it as commonsense and necessity, which Pennycook (2001) labeled a *colonial celebratory* position. English is depicted as “superior to other languages in terms of both its intrinsic (the nature of the language) and extrinsic (the functions of the language) qualities” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 49) and presented as *the* only language that could bring advancement to the region.

The critical analysis I presented in Chapter 4 focused on two documents. One of the reports was published and disseminated by the British Council, and the other one was funded by Pearson Education and disseminated by an American Think Tank. The dissemination of discourses

through open-source publications could be interpreted as a way to use mass media to *manufacture consent* (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Herman and Chomsky (2002) argue that mass media plays a crucial role in disseminating ideas and beliefs that become an essential part of collective reality based on the economic gain of a few. It is important to note here that both of the documents I analyzed in this study were funded by Western stakeholders that economically benefit from the maintenance of the ideology of English as a necessity. Sending a sustained message that glorifies the value of English and promotes its role as an economic driver, these publications manufacture the consent of government and education stakeholders to comply with their intervention in the region.

Another discursive tool used to sustain the power structures that favor Inner Circle Englishes is the emphasis on the need of foreign support to improve English teaching in Latin America. Both of the examined reports highlight the need to implement international standardized testing to assess proficiency levels and propose collaborations with Inner Circle stakeholders to accompany English teachers through volunteer exchange programs, international trainings, and other similar efforts. This “*helping*” ideology “rationalizes the exploitative relationship between ‘helpers’ (British Council, Western Publishers, voluntary English-language teachers, aid donors, etc.) and the ‘helpees’ so that what the former are doing always seems to be of benefit to the latter” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2016, p. xviii). The reports are portraying international assistance as neutral without considering how these collaborations could impact local stakeholders. Bunce (2016) argues that volunteer English teaching tourism perpetuates the belief that anyone from the Inner Circle can teach English, which is harmful for local NNESTs. Similarly, in a study I conducted to explore Colombian teachers’ perceptions on the Colombia Bilingue project, English teachers from a rural school in Bogotá openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the foreigner



exchange program implemented in their school because it felt as an imposition (León, forthcoming).

The phenomenon of volunteer tourism in the context of education could be connected to the *White-Savior Industrial Complex* (Cole, 2012), which refers to White Westerners feeling rewarded for “saving” less fortunate individuals in developing countries while disregarding how their acts of “saving” can potentially create or maintain local systems of oppression (Aronson, 2017). The reports claim that volunteer teachers could be a “cheap” solution to the low proficiency levels among teachers in the region but do not critically assess the impact this may have on teachers. Positioning external helpers as *heroes* or *rescuers* might echo colonial discourses and local teachers may feel threatened by the imposition of foreigners as model English users in their classrooms (Bunce, 2016). Furthermore, this is not a long-term solution as the needs of local teachers are not addressed, which may result in a lack of consistency in the programs due to the short duration of these volunteer programs.

Symbolic power is the power of language through discourse (Bordeau, 1991). It differs from physical coercion, economic dominance, or colonial oppression as it instead refers to the construction of a social reality through the use of symbols that give meaning to the social world (Kramsch, 2021). In Latin America, English is presented as an agentive entity with the inherent power to solve economic problems and promote advancement. As previously stated, the two reports perceive English learning as a neutral matter ignoring the complex political nature of the spread of English and the symbolic power attributed to its use. English in this context is positioned as *the legitimate language* (Bordeau, 1991) of advancement and attributed a higher value in the linguistic market in Latin America. The authors of the reports are exercising institutional symbolic violence by playing a role in imposing these ideologies on behalf of the British Council and

Pearson as institutions that benefit from the maintenance of the hegemonic position of English. At the same time, Latin American governments that reproduce the discourse of English as an economic commodity, also use symbolic violence to impose their institutional views on language use on their constituents through the education and legal system.

Besides the symbolic power attributed to English and the institutional symbolic violence enforced by various entities in the region, the British Council's (BC) power goes beyond the symbolic. The BC is immersed in the decisions made across the region as they fund and supervise material development and curriculum implementation. In Colombia, there is a representative from the BC who visits schools to ensure "proper" implementation of the curriculum (León, forthcoming). In Venezuela, they serve as expert consultants in the creation of the Bicentenario textbook collection and decide what research projects to fund and which authors to invite to participate in projects, which ultimately influence decision-making at the governmental level. In the case of Venezuela, this regulation is particularly troublesome as the limited number of publications in the country come from edited volumes coordinated and funded by the BC.

Considering the unequal power dynamics described in this section, it is not surprising that the symbolic power of English is not challenged at any level in Venezuela. Discourses that position English as powerful and necessary were reproduced not only by the influential reports but also by the national language policies, the teacher education program curriculum analyzed in this dissertation research, and the teacher participants from the case studies. This belief then cuts through all the levels of discourse reproduction and directly impact language policies, and teaching practices.

### **Constructing Linguistic Differentiation**

The semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure (Gal & Irvine, 1995) are the main tool to maintain the language ideologies discussed in my findings. Across the three levels of discourse reproduction explored, there was evidence of the use of these semiotic processes to construct linguistic differentiation and establish the *laws* of the linguistic market in this context.

My analysis uncovered an iconized figure that represented *the* legitimate language user in this context. A core characteristic of this icon is the use of *proper* language, which is equated to a standardized or academic language variety. The characteristics of this *proper* language use included proper orthography, grammar, and oral fluency. This iconic representation was applied to English and Spanish use and was identified across all levels of discourse reproduction. At the regional level, this iconization was seen in the reports that spoke about the low proficiency of local teachers as they discussed language use based on standardized testing and in comparison to idealized Inner Circle language proficiency standards. By implying that the solution to the lack of English proficiency in the region could be solved with foreign intervention, these reports reinforced the iconization of an idealized legitimate language user from the Inner Circle. At the national level, this icon was represented in the national language learning objectives through their structuralist language approach, which reinforced the belief that structural language aspects such as grammatical accuracy and orthography are essential to be a legitimate language user. At the institutional level, this iconicity was more overt as the teacher education program curriculum openly described “ideal” teachers as individuals who must master the use of *proper* English to become role models for their future students. Finally, at the individual level, this icon was

described by Milo and Kamila when talking about language use and claiming that only users of Inner Circle Englishes could be considered legitimate English users.

The identification of this iconic figure and the discourses that maintained it confirm that language legitimacy is about prestige rather than nativeness or language uniformity. In the reports' discussion about foreign educational interventions, they only talked about Inner Circle English users completely ignoring Caribbean English users who are already in the region and could be possible collaborators. Much has been said about the misconception that Caribbean Englishes are somehow inferior, which leads to the discrimination of Caribbean English users (e.g. Mühleisen, 2002), which may be the reason why they are not even acknowledged in the reports. Another example could be seen in Milo's statements regarding NNESTs whom, according to him, did not have to be native to be respectable, but did need to speak Inner Circle Englishes. In Kamila's case, another clear example was her claim that students in the rural school did not speak Spanish because they did not follow orthographic rules of the standard language. Despite them being native Spanish speakers in the traditional sense (being born in a Spanish-speaking country), they received the market sanction of being denied access to the community of Spanish speakers due to their transgression of not following the established orthographic rules of Standard Spanish.

The second semiotic process that systematically emerged from my data analysis was fractal recursivity, which "is that aspect of ideological work that reiterates the comparison created by the axis of differentiation, altering the sets of objects that are compared, under contrast" (Gal & Irvine, 2019, p. 20). Once the iconic figure is created and certain characteristics or traits are associated with it, an oppositional figure is also built, and this comparison is systematically reapplied to different contexts and individuals through fractal recursivity. In the reports on

English teaching in Latin America, this was evident in the reproduction of the deficit perspective of non-bilingual members of the Latin American population. They were positioned as less educated and unprofessional due to their lack of English proficiency and compared to members of the foreign workforce in the Inner Circle, who supposedly had better economic opportunities due to their acquired English skills. The reports created the “(un)successful/(un)prepared” opposition between English and non-English users and attributed characteristics to these individuals that go beyond language use. At the institutional level, this was also evident in the teacher education’s learning objectives which were indexical of opposing icons of ideal/non-ideal teachers based on linguistic accuracy, the acceptance of the “rules” of English language, and the reproduction of “proper” English. Another example could be seen in Milo’s case study, when he created the opposition between credible/uncredible English users based on exposure to Inner Circle Englishes. Once he created this iconic opposition, he applied it on teachers when claiming that non-natives should not teach unless they have lived in the Inner Circle, and to students when he claimed they had to visit the Inner Circle to get exposure to “real” English. As seen in these three examples, the iconized representation of the legitimate language user previously discussed generates a set of oppositional representations that are reiteratively applied and reapplied in all levels of discourse reproduction to create the differentiation between language users.

The final semiotic process used to create and maintain linguistic differentiation on the basis of language ideologies is erasure. Erasure “is that aspect of ideological work through which some phenomena (linguistic forms, or types of persons, or activities) are rendered invisible” (Gal & Irvine, 2019, p. 20) because they do not fit the established iconic representation. Rather than actually eradicating the activities or groups of people who fall outside the characteristics of the

icon, erasure is about ignoring or explaining the phenomena that does not fit by maintaining that only the iconic representation and its oppositions are the reality. In my data analysis there were countless examples of erasure across all levels of discourse reproduction such as the invisibilization of multilingual Venezuelan individuals and efficient locally-trained English teachers. With the creation of the icon and its opposing representation, erasure is automatically generated; for example, when claiming that most individuals in Latin America are unprepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, the reports were erasing thousands of successful individuals who are thriving in the business world without the necessity to speak English. At the institutional level, the teacher education program was not only erasing English varieties outside the Inner Circle, but also erasing the act of effective communication without grammatical accuracy because it did not fit the iconic representation of ideal teachers they had created. Finally, at the individual level, Kamila and Milo both engaged in the erasure of Venezuelan English speakers when claiming they could only engage in English interactions with foreigners, among many other examples related to their students that I discussed in chapter 5.

As seen in this section, the semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure are at the center language ideology reproduction. These semiotic processes were used by institutions and individuals to create, reproduce, and enact ideologies such as SLI, monolingualism, and native standard language ideology. Linguistic differentiation led to severe market sanctions for language users who did not fit the iconized figure of the legitimate language user and had a direct impact on educational contexts. With my data analysis, I was able to identify these processes as well as trace where these discourses are being reproduced, which is an essential step to determine their impact on teaching policies, practices, and teachers' professional identities.

### **The Intersection of Ideology and Identity construction**

The findings of my study demonstrate the impact of language ideologies on the construction of language teacher identities. In Chapter 5, I presented two case studies of Venezuelan English teachers and analyzed how they reproduced and enacted circulating language ideologies such as standard language ideology (SLI) and monolingualism. Both teachers internalized, reproduced, maintained, and enacted the circulating language ideologies identified in their context and assumed the identity of ideology brokers by maintaining standard language ideology in school settings. Kamila and Milo discussed their sense of duty in maintaining normative language features such as grammatical accuracy, orthography, and the use of the dictionary. They also stated that these practices were modeled by their previous instructors, which made them internalize and accept them as commonsense practices and taken-for-granted features of language education.

My findings support those of other studies on language teacher identity (LTI) that demonstrate the influence of external factors such as policy, ideologies, and beliefs about language ownership on the construction of language teacher identities (Aneja, 2006; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Ilieva, 2010; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Park, 2012; Tsui, 2005; Varghese et al. 2005). Kamila and Milo's identity constructions and teaching practices were influenced by the hegemonic language ideologies that position native speakers as the only legitimate English users. Milo argued that only Inner Circle English users should be allowed to teach English and Kamila assumed the identity of an illegitimate English user because she had never visited the Inner Circle. They also believed that "proper" language could only be learned from Inner Circle English users in English-only settings. NNESTs play a role in their own marginalization by reproducing and maintaining these ideologies (Llurda, 2009). Since "identity is partly shaped by

recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25) the impact of perpetuating an image of NNESTs as illegitimate English users is not only harmful for teachers, as it was in the case of Kamila, but also for learners who are automatically assigned the identity of illegitimate English users themselves.

Kamila’s narratives about her students from the rural school are a clear example of the negative effects of an imposed identity as illegitimate language user. Kamila denied these students their identity as Spanish speakers due to their socioeconomic background and the non-prestigious variety of Spanish they used. This also resulted in Kamila attributing characteristics on the students that were beyond language use. She imposed a deficit identity on them that indexed traits such as: not having aspirations beyond being bus collectors, not caring about grades or school, and not being apt to learn other languages. These students received severe *market sanctions* (Bordeau, 1991) for not following the *laws* of the Venezuelan linguistic market, which favored the use of Standard Spanish. Kamila was also asserting individual symbolic violence on these students by denying them entrance to the Spanish-speaking community and positioning them as the other.

Another interesting finding that emerged from my study was the participants’ ability (or lack thereof) to negotiate their identities. Milo demonstrated his ability to negotiate his position from the variety of identities at his disposal; for example, when having difficulties navigating school expectations, he rejected his teacher identity and assumed one as an accountant instead. He also relied on his linguistic identity as a user of an Inner Circle English variety to build up the credibility he lacked due to his limited experience in education. In contrast, Kamila assumed a prescribed imagined teacher identity at the beginning of her career, which she was not able to negotiate in her teaching context. Kamila held on to this idealized teacher identity and suffered



an identity crisis due to her own expectations and the lack of support from her school. The emotional burden of identity negotiation has received attention in the LTI literature (Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016; Reis, 2014; Wolf & De Costa, 2017).

My findings in Kamila's case align with those of Lasky (2005) and Song (2016) as Kamila's negative emotions toward her professional self were, to a large extent, due to her beliefs about nativeness and her assumed identity as an illegitimate English user. Kamila's linguistic identity as a non-native led to feelings of deficiency, which made her suffer throughout her 15-year career and resulted in teacher burnout. In contrast, Milo's successful identity negotiations were similar to Wolf and De Costa's (2017) findings as he was able use his resources to strategically move between his identities to adapt to his teaching context with a positive attitude.

As discussed in this section, there is an intrinsic connection between the circulating language ideologies in this context and the identity constructions of my two focal participants. Kamila and Milo reproduced and enacted standard language ideology and constructed their identities in relationship to hegemonic ideologies that favor the use of prestigious English varieties. Milo claimed the identity of a legitimate English user given his experience living in England while Kamila did the opposite due her lack of exposure to Inner Circle Englishes. Based on the examination of the teacher education curriculum and Kamila's explicit connections between her beliefs and her college education, Kamila's insecurity could partly be due to how her teacher education program trained her. Given the exposure she had to deficit ideologies regarding Venezuelan English users, she could have developed this sense of insecurity and the belief that she would never be a good enough speaker unless she was exposed to Inner Circle Englishes. In contrast, Milo was never exposed to a formal education to learn English, so he had a more pragmatic stance based on his experience living abroad.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One of the limitations of this study was the power dynamics between the participants and me. The teacher participants were aware that I was an experienced English teacher working on my doctorate, which could have influenced their interactions with me. They both positioned me as an expert, and this might have influenced their responses during the interviews. They may have thought they needed to reproduce politically correct educational discourses in front of me or thought that some of the normative discourses they were reproducing would align with my personal beliefs on education. In the case of Kamila, she knew that I had attended her teacher education program, so some of her narratives might have been influenced by my positionality as an insider of this community.

Another limitation was the short amount of time I spent in Venezuela. My original plan was to be there for an entire semester to collect data longitudinally and observe the teachers for a more extensive period to observe their identities in practice. However, this was not possible due to funding constraints. I conducted the observations during the last six weeks of the first trimester of the school year, so the teachers had covered most of the course content by then. At this point, most of the work was focused on reviewing for final exams, which had a significant impact on the data I was able to collect regarding their classroom practices. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that classroom observations offer only a snapshot image of who these teachers are.

### **Implications**

The findings of my dissertation yield relevant implications for policy makers. As seen in this study, the language ideologies that inform language policies directly impact teacher identities and classroom practices. It is imperative for policy makers to understand teachers and students'

needs before making top-down decisions. In the case of Venezuela, it is important for policy makers to provide support for in-service teachers to aid them in the proper implementation of the designed policies given the disconnect between academic teacher preparation programs and national policies. D'Amico (2018) reports on efforts made by the Venezuelan Ministry of Education and the BC to provide training for in-service English teachers regarding the use of the Bicentenario Collection. However, given the political tensions between government and opposition, these trainings were rejected by a significant number of teachers in the field. It is important for educational stakeholders in the country to collaborate on effective ways to serve the in-service teacher population and ensure the successful implementation of new language policies.

My dissertation also offers implications for teacher educators given the necessity to understand how to better serve teachers during their pre-and-in-service years. My findings demonstrated the tensions faced by an in-service teacher who was not able to renegotiate her professional identity and expectations across her teaching trajectory. Kamila faced burnout because she was not prepared for the realities she would encounter in the field and did not receive any kind of support as she navigated her adaptation process. This could be avoided if teacher educators and school administrators work on mentorship programs that provide teachers with coping mechanisms that allow them to efficiently negotiate their identities and expectations about teaching throughout the different stages of the career. It is also important to continue to explore how in-service teachers renegotiate their professional identities depending on the teaching experience and how teacher educators can better prepare them for the constant reinvention and the emotional burden associated with the profession. It is vital for pre-service teachers to leave teacher education programs with a clear understanding of the affective demands

of the profession and the necessary tools to be able to navigate this process throughout their careers.

Finally, my dissertation has important theoretical implications given its innovative methodological approach. In the field of ELT, the topics of language policy, ideology, and teacher identity are usually explored as separate research strands. However, I took a holistic approach to these topics to further demonstrate their interconnectedness. In my study, I combined the methodological approaches used in the three strands and was able to trace where language ideologies are being reproduced, maintained, and enacted, and proved the impact they may have on teachers' professional identities. Through my comprehensive description of this linguistic market, I provided a unique snapshot of the ELT field in Latin America and an in-depth depiction of Venezuelan English teaching, shedding light on the complex realities faced by English teachers in this part of the Expanding Circle.

### **Future Directions**

#### ***Race, Ideology, and ELT in Venezuela***

Racial dynamics in Venezuela are heavily influenced by the country's colonial history. During colonial times, there were strictly outlined racial categories that separated *Peninsulares* (European-born Whites), Blancos Criollos (Venezuelan-born Whites who were descendant of Europeans), Mixed-race individuals, Afro-Venezuelans, and Indigenous persons. During colonial times, these racial division signified the distinction between those in power (Whites) and those who were considered lower class citizens who faced constant marginalization (people of color) (Aranguren, 1997). Those categories were abolished by the time of the independence from Spain, which resulted in the popular belief that there are no racial distinctions in the country in modern times. Chacon (2009) argues that this has generated the ideology of *mestizaje*, which refers to the

false belief that due to the racial mixture among the Venezuelan population there is a “racial democracy” that erases racial inequality and conceals social injustices.

Although issues of race and racism are not openly addressed in Venezuelan popular discourses as they are in the United States, researchers have demonstrated racist tendencies that have been normalized in popular culture. For instance, Montañez (1993) labelled the common tendency among Venezuelans to reject non-white physical attributes as *endoracismo*, and Ishibashi (2004) demonstrated the role of mass media in the reproduction of culturally developed negative racial biases against dark-skinned colored Venezuelans. More importantly, Quintero (2003) uncovered the role of educational textbooks in the reproduction of negative stereotypes of dark-skinned persons that contributed to popular biases and prejudices against Indigenous and *Afro-Venezuelan* populations.

In Venezuela, race tends to be linked with phenotypical features such as hair texture, skin color, and nose width, among other physical traits. In popular belief, these traits tend to be associated with negative characteristics also connected to social class. For example, Black tends to be a synonym of “ugly,” “poor,” and “unsophisticated,” while White signifies “beauty,” “class,” and “sophistication” (Chacon, 2009). These oppositional traits and connections are also evidenced in popular culture that shapes geographical location; for example, in Valencia it is a well-known fact that the North is associated with high class/White individuals and the South is associated with poverty/people of color. Considering this and Kamila’s positionality as a White educated woman living in the North of the city, the negative comments about her students from the rural school, whom she described as “coming from a place where they did not even speak Spanish” and having no professional aspiration because of this, could be connected to student’s racial identities. Although made invisible by Venezuelan public discourses, racial dynamics in

education contexts cannot be seen in isolation given the tight connections between issues of race and class (Chacon, 2009). Given the multiplicity of identity, it is quite a challenge to unpack the role of each identity category (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) in professional identity development. It was indeed beyond to scope of this dissertation research to offer a complete picture of the identity work that the participants in this study engaged in nor was it possible to fully understand their professional identities in relation to all other identities that they had including their racial/racialized identities. The link between race and professional identity is an important area of research, which I hope future studies will contribute to. There is a need for further research to understand how race as an intersectional identity category may influence the reproduction and enactment of certain language ideologies, professional identity development, teaching practices, and student-teacher interactions.

### *Contradicting Methodologies in the Venezuelan Education System*

My analysis of the most recent national language policies and the curriculum of a major teacher education program in Venezuela demonstrate a disconnect between proposed teaching methodologies from national policies and how teachers are being trained. The current national policy for English teaching takes an explicit stance against the hegemonic ideologies that follow Western methodologies by creating localized instructional materials and designing an educational program completely based on the needs of Venezuelan students. In contrast, the teacher education program curriculum heavily enforces Western practices such as communicative language learning (CLL) and monolingualism.

The changes to the national language policy in Venezuela can be interpreted as a form of resistance to the circulating language ideologies in the region that favor Western methodologies for English teaching. Based on my analysis of the current educational policy and the

Bicentenario textbook collection, Venezuelan language policies are using a mix of traditional language teaching approaches such as CLL with traces of critical pedagogy. The analyzed textbooks focused on local issues and took a critical stance to international relations while still promoting an education centered on communication. Nonetheless, as discussed in the previous chapter, the British Council directly collaborates with the government in the creation and production of these books and the textbooks reproduce the ideology of English as necessity.

My findings from the teacher education curriculum sheds light on the disconnect between teacher education and classroom practice expectations in Venezuela. The explored curriculum mostly focused on structural linguistic aspects such as phonetics, phonology, grammar, and syntax, and enforced a prescriptive approach to language teaching. As seen in the case study on Kamila, this approach was contradictory to the expectations in the field, which made her feel that her program did not prepare her for her teaching practice. Traditionally, Venezuelan language teacher education programs have favored a structural linguistics approach to language teaching and emphasized language skills over pedagogical knowledge (Chacón, 2001; D'Amico, 2015). This approach has resulted in a vast majority of teachers in the field implementing structural methodologies and having difficulties implementing the requirements from the national language policies (Beke, 2015).

Considering this, I adhere to Hernandez (2015) call for teacher education programs in Venezuela to make significant changes to truly serve the local teaching population. Teachers in the field do not know about national policies and expect to teach based on the content of their teacher education programs, which is problematic for the teachers, the schools, and the students (Beke, 2015). In the future, it is important to further explore this lack of alignment and propose ways in which teacher education programs can better prepare pre-service teachers for the

realities of the field and to meet the actual needs of the student populations they will serve. If Kamila, for example, had been better supported, it is highly possible that her experiences would have been more positive, and she could have had a more successful teaching experience.

An approach that deserves further exploration is to align teacher education curricula with critical paradigms such as Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL) and explore whether this could counteract harmful language ideologies and represent a form of empowerment for NNESTs in the Expanding Circle. In Latin America, scholarly interest has started to emerge exploring the possibilities of decolonizing English education as a way to better prepare pre-service teachers and break away from the language ideologies that perpetuate native-speakerism and other harmful language ideologies that permeate ELT in the region (e.g. Barbosa Lins de Almeida & Guimarães de Souza, 2017; Chacón & Alvarez, 2001; Menezes Jordão, 2016). In Venezuela, critical conversations about linguistic inclusion have only started to emerge, so it is important for future studies to further explore teacher perceptions on Critical Applied Linguistics and practical applications of non-traditional teaching methodologies.



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