

2 Ideologies and Discourses in the Standards for Language Teachers in South America: A Corpus-Based Analysis

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Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of a recent policy transfer process among three South American countries. It frames the discussion within the confines of regionalization as a response to globalizing neoliberal influences and attempts to understand those discursal configurations at stake in the process. It also attempts to highlight how, despite the intentions of the actors involved, both the content and the means of transfer have remained unchanged from previous decades.

If the 1990s was the decade of neoliberal educational reforms in South America, the first decade of the 21st century can be characterized as the time of ‘progressive’ educational reforms. The profound economic and social crises originating in Argentina in 2001 brought with them a deep dissatisfaction with the status quo allowing left-wing parties to rise to power for the first time in the history of some of these nations (for example, Ecuador and Uruguay).

In Uruguay, Ecuador and Chile, traditionally conservative parties had operated within a neoliberal ideology, which can be defined as an exacerbation of capitalist ideologies (Holborow, 2012a). However, definitions of neoliberalism are not easy, as its realms of influence are varied. To Bourdieu (2005), what was originally a theory of economic practice aggressively transcended its field and became a mirage of pure and perfect markets, a discourse with its own logic, its own chain of limitations and whose main purpose was the methodical eradication of collectives.

Common features of neoliberalism often cited in the literature are the move to privatization and marketization with open borders, the abolition of any kinds of control that can affect the free flow and generation of capital, with its emphasis on the individual. In short, neoliberalism can be

understood as the key ideology in the promotion of globalization, ‘a system of beliefs and values, an ethos and a moral view of the world, in short an *economic common sense*’ (Bourdieu, 2005: 10, emphasis in the original).

This ideology ‘structures the character of globalizing process that have already taken place’ (Olssen, 2006: 263) and advocates for a form of governance where the role of the state is played down in favor of autonomous regional and global agencies via imposed policies that shape and control new forms of governance akin to those implemented in any place where those agencies operate. However, as Olssen *et al.* (2004: 13) rightly indicate, ‘it is [these] imposed policies of neoliberal governability, rather than globalization as such, that is the key affecting (and undermining) nation-states today’.

‘Progressive’ is a narrowing of discourse used by Marxists and socialists in South America intended to play down what can be perceived as radical orientations. By narrowing their discourse, these parties seem to be following the ‘median voter argument’ as described by Jackman (cited in Souto-Otero, 2011), who points out that ‘parties are motivated by winning elections more than by an enduring commitment to particular policies or constituencies’.

The ascent to power of progressive governments was characterized by a turn toward a more relevant role of state-created or sponsored policies. In education, heavily unionized teaching and student collectives – which traditionally formed the resistance to dictatorships and other institutional disruptions – turned to the government to eliminate prior neoliberal policies, thus helping crystalize century-old aspirations.

The shift in the rhetoric of the progressive governments substituted the existing neoliberal discourse of ‘individual accomplishments’ (Souto-Otero, 2011: 307) in favor of a rhetoric of public good, democratic equality of opportunities and state-supported (or at the very least, state-sponsored) growth. The true equalizer at the center of such a rhetorical shift is education. In this sense, the rhetorical changes are akin to those identified in the United Kingdom by Souto-Otero (2011: 307) who explains that ‘social democratic parties accord greater importance to education than do conservative parties’. However, this author also warns readers about the volatile nature of these ideologies that can present inconsistencies and shifts stemming from the political struggles they face and which force them to processes of continual adaptation and reshaping.

In order to better understand how the re-elaboration of the policy discourse by progressive governments operates, I should briefly clarify my understanding of *discourse* and *ideology*.

Block *et al.* (2012: 9–10) distinguish between the real world (as expressed through discourse) and ideology (as a one-sided representation of reality, articulated from a particular social class, influenced by real-world events and coexisting with language but distinct from it) and argue

that ‘ideology constitutes a representational mechanism, articulated on behalf of specific social interests, which precisely blurs the distinction between the two’.

To these authors, ideologies play an important analytical role as they make explicit views of the world that are linked to social practices also known as discourse. If, as some have claimed (e.g. Block *et al.*, 2012), neoliberal ideology is information or knowledge based, and the transformations it promotes are the consequence of a discourse that inculcates the ideology through the English language as a priority of certain governments, corporations or aid agencies, then it seems worth looking at how discourse (the material) and ideology (the representational) are enacted within a policy transfer process that aims to alter the material and representational conditions savagely imposed on countries by neoliberal agendas.

From among the various policy initiatives spearheaded by these progressive governments, that of reforming teacher education is noteworthy. Within this reform, one particular area stands out: that of the education of English language teaching (ELT). This chapter turns to an analysis of this particular area. It starts by describing the teaching of English in South America and presents a heuristic for the analysis of the policy transfer processes. The chapter then discusses the research method used to analyze the policy transfer process and presents and discusses the results of the analysis.

Literature Review

The teaching of English in South America

The teaching of English in South America in the 1990s was funded by international lending agencies with a vested interest in the dissemination of the English language and its related industries. English was seen as playing a crucial role in promoting the expansion of neoliberal ideas as well as in spreading globalizing influences. Holborow (2012b) makes the point that ‘Globalization is “enacted and inculcated” through both the global language of English and the global “order of discourse” expounded by corporations, governments and international agencies’.

To this avail, specific loans helped implement new curricula that replicated foreign models, materials, modes of consulting and policy implementation frameworks. The view espoused by these reforms was that education was the main provider of human capital and thus, it lay at the center of economic growth. As Saltman (2009: 55–56) put it ‘the only question on reform agendas appears to be how to best enforce knowledge and curriculum conducive to national economic interest and the expansion of a corporately managed model of globalization as perceived from the perspective of business’.

Likewise, underlying the mandate for the teaching of English was a *colonial celebratory* position described by Pennycook (2001: 56) as ‘a position that trumpets the benefits of English over other languages, suggesting that English is superior to other languages in terms of both its intrinsic (the nature of the language) and extrinsic (the functions of the language) qualities’. In the three countries under analysis, Uruguay, Ecuador and Chile, provisions for the learning of indigenous languages in the state education sector started only after progressive governments took office.

A second underlying motive for the reforms was the commodification of English as a positional good (Marginson, 2006: 901) that would allow those with solid knowledge of the language of ‘international business and global academic life’ to have better opportunities. The economic efficiency of these moves is highlighted by Holborow’s (2012a) remark that, only in the United Kingdom, between 2005 and 2010 the export of ELT textbooks grew from 17% to 26%.

However, the reforms of the 1990s failed to yield the expected results (Thrupp & Hursh, 2006), because they had been inspired by what Phillips and Ochs (2004) call quick fix decisions. The policies were written and publicized as a way of keeping voters happy but they were either underfunded, ran as pilot programs or were never implemented.

A more relevant factor in their failure was the systematic overlooking of the teachers involved in the reforms. Vaillant (2007) argues that the main reason for the failure of educational reforms in South America in the 1990s was the lack of awareness of teachers regarding their role in the innovation due to insufficient preparation, lack of training to face the new challenges posed by evolving social change and the persistence of inadequate routines unsuitable to their circumstances.

In light of this, the progressive governments targeted teacher education as one of the means to resolve the conundrum of low results in language learning via study abroad programs, standardized language training for teachers and other similar activities. While these palliative measures were put in place, the region experienced a new policymaking phenomenon that, in keeping with the prevailing progressive rhetoric, dwelt on regionalization as a scenario.

In this particular case, instead of the usual imposition of policy, what occurred was policy transfer as the result of policy borrowing. The reasons for the policy transfer lay in the actors’ intention, as explicitly stated in the preamble to all three documents analyzed, to do away with globalizing influences in favor of more socially just practices centered around regional issues. These would include the expansion of free ELT to all levels of the educational system, and the sustained training of teachers so that the results would be comparable to those achieved by students in private sector schools. At the core of this particular policy transfer movement was the

belief that regional efforts would be able to counteract the negative effects of previous neoliberal attempts.

In 2009, Uruguay developed a nationwide project to determine the minimum standards that aspiring teachers of foreign languages should attain at the end of their bachelor's (BA) in foreign language education. The project borrowed the framework (though not the content) of available standards developed in the United States. This was followed in 2012 by the publication of a similar policy document by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, which borrowed heavily from the Uruguayan standards. Lastly, in 2013, the Chilean Ministry of Education commissioned the development of standards to universities via a bid for tender (see Abrahams & Silva Ríos, this volume, for further information on the Chilean context). This policy transfer process was not different from those promoted by previous neoliberal processes, in that governments yield to the pressure of international standards, which are assumed to promote quality provisions (Room, 2000).

Reconsidering policy transfer

Policy transfer has been central to comparative education for over two centuries and it has been the focus of much debate both in terms of its scope and definition. Phillips and Ochs (2004: 774) define it as 'the conscious adoption in one context of policy observed in another'. Beech (2006: 2) concurs that 'Overall, the concept of "educational transfer" can be defined as a movement of educational ideas, institutions or practices across international borders'.

These definitions are the frame used to analyze the development of standards for language teachers in Uruguay, Chile and Ecuador between 2010 and 2013. Traditionally, the process of policy transfer had been described as comprising a series of chronological steps that track interest in a particular policy to the evaluation of its implementation. An alternative to this tradition is the concept of cross-national policy borrowing, a process that operates best when there is a similarity in both the ideological structures and the conditions the policy is expected to affect (Halpin & Troyna, 1995).

Policy transfer is not just a discrete area of research but a tool for policy analysis (Benson & Jordan, 2011). The sustained interest in this particular area of comparative education has rendered it a diverse and contested field (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012). For example, these authors call for sustained research into the act of policy transfer, the persons and institutions who have vested interests in a particular policy involved at the different stages of the cycle, as well as the motives and effects of the application of a certain policy to a new context. Paramount in their discussion is the issue of contextualization to the local reality. As Beech

(2006: 10) explains ‘What we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories. Thus, I want to replace the modernist theoretical project of abstract parsimony with a more post-modernist one of localised complexity’. To this avail, discourse analysis tools not frequently found in the policy literature will be used as a way of contextualizing and interpreting the data.

A tool to understand the policy transfer process

Phillips and Ochs (2004) present a heuristic for what they term cross-national attraction, or policy transfer that traces the development of a particular policy from the initial motivation to the decision for transfer, its implementation and indigenization (involving the official establishment of the new policy). While comprehensive, this heuristic is limited in that it focuses more on agents than agency (McCann & Ward, 2012), thus leaving out important considerations, such as the relationship between policy transfer and the broader policy cycles in operation, the relationship between policy transfer and policy outcomes and the relationship between policy transfer and the dominant modes of governance (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012). McCann and Ward (2012: 328) see policymaking as ‘a multiply scaled, relational and emergent social process... [where policy transfer] involves a complex and power-laden process rather than a straightforward A-to-B movement’. For the purposes of this analysis, the framework is adequate in so far as it recognizes that ‘a heuristic does not reify a “reality”’ (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012: 343). I will now turn to an analysis of the policy transfer processes using this framework.

Uruguay

In 2008, a new Education Act created a unified National Teacher Education System. Prior to this law, teacher education was delivered by state-funded and controlled, though independent, teacher education colleges, some of which had been created in the mid-1900s, whereas others constituted the remnants of a 1996 attempt by the Inter-American Development Bank to reform teacher education in the country.

The new law mandated a common national curriculum and a central administrative organization via academic departments in a National Teacher Education College. This college is not part of the National University, and it is the only official institution granting teaching degrees in the country. The college’s Modern Foreign Languages Department oversees provisions for future teachers of English, French, Italian and Portuguese as a foreign language. In 2009, the department chair, in consultation with the faculty council decided on the creation of standards as a way of bringing together faculty and students, and fostering a sense of belonging to the new structure. In this sense, it could be claimed that the

impulse for the development of the standards was a political imperative, a response to novel local configurations (i.e. the development of a unified curriculum, a new organizational structure operating at the national level and a call for quality provisions) and that the transfer of standards for teaching was a voluntary one borrowing from experiences in other countries.

The policy transfer process was a voluntary one, with faculty in the 32 campuses of the National Teacher Education College contributing paid office hours to analyzing different standards documents and working with a consultant with extensive experience in the development of standards who taught a 40-hour seminar during which it was decided to adopt a framework popular in the United States and to write the local document. Faculty worked over one month drafting the standards for five distinct domains of professional expertise: English Language Proficiency; Culture; Instruction; Assessment; and Professionalism. To obtain feedback, the document was sent as a survey to all the faculty and student teachers in the department as well as to over 50 international authorities on teacher education and assessment. Once responses were obtained (with a return rate of 84%), comments and suggestions were discussed and the original document was edited to reflect those changes. The final product was a publication (Díaz Maggioli & Kuhlman, 2010) presenting both the standards development process as well as the standards. In that document, the externalizing potential of the policy transfer process is sustained on the grounds of a guiding philosophy of equal opportunity of access to provisions, transparency at the level of assessment, as well as through the attainment of higher-quality education via a rewriting of the curriculum, which would present a more coherent organization than the one available at that time (Contreras, 2010).

From the process described above, it is clear that the decision to implement the standards was both realistic and practical, as all actors involved felt the need for a reconceptualization of the teacher preparation curriculum, which was perceived as fragmented and lacking cohesion. However, at the level of implementation, the standards failed to become indigenized as there was widespread resistance mainly from teacher educators who felt that the standards were not representative of their own orientation, or those who felt that they did not want to change the way that they had been teaching their courses. Additionally, since it was decided that the standards were a tool for community building, and in keeping with the collaborative, bottom-up intentions of their creators, standards were not enforced via a law. They were seen as a draft to be implemented over five years, at the end of which they would be revised and adapted to new configurations. Surprisingly, though, the Uruguayan standards would initiate a chain of policy transfer cycles in Ecuador and Chile. First, the case of Ecuador will be considered.

Ecuador

In parallel to what was happening in Uruguay, the Ecuadorian government had been involved in a nationwide evaluation of the quality of ELT provisions in the public sector (for further details on this process, see the chapter by Kuhlman & Serrano, this volume). Their impulse for the creation of standards stemmed from an internal dissatisfaction with the teaching of English, as well as from the results of the compulsory standardized tests given to all English teachers in the public sector that showed seriously low levels of proficiency in the language (Ministry of Education, Ecuador, 2012).

Hence, it was decided, from a theoretical perspective, to develop standards for in-service teachers of English that would guarantee quality delivery of instruction and help students in the public sector achieve proficiency in English at the B1 (High-Intermediate) level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001) by the end of secondary school. The government saw the externalizing potential of standards as being concerned mostly with accreditation: both teachers and students would be tested in order to ascertain their attainment of the goals.

Representatives from all universities offering BA programs in ELT were convened and the same consultant who facilitated the Uruguayan process led the work. However, in this instance, there was an urgency to have a draft of the standards finalized in a short period of time. In order to save time, the consultant decided to share three standard models with the audience out of which participants decided to adopt the Uruguayan model. Kuhlman and Knezevick (2014) explain that a deciding factor in this adoption was the existence of a particular domain targeting teachers' English language proficiency, not present in other models.

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education sanctioned and published the standards in 2012 without a consultation process. Concurrently, the developers of the standards engaged in drafting a new curriculum for teacher education aligned to the standards as discussed by Kuhlman and Serrano in this volume. Thus, the implementation of standards in Ecuador involved a swift process that went from 2012 to 2013. In terms of the indigenization of the standards, and given the approval of the original document by the authorities, it can be claimed that they are at the onset of the process. The third and final cycle of policy transfer saw the Chilean Ministry of Education requiring the writing of standards for initial teacher education. The following section describes the Chilean process.

Chile

The development of standards in Chile is a relatively new addition to the transfer process under analysis. In 2013, the Ministry of Education placed a bid for tender for the development of standards among universities offering a BA in ELT programs. Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago,

whose faculty developed the standards document adopted by the ministry (Ministry of Education, Chile, 2013), won the bid for tender. In the process, they consulted international experts in the field of ELT and had their document validated by them.

The impetus for the development of standards in Chile stemmed from a sustained interest by the government in positioning themselves as a First World country so as to better compete in the globalized arena. The situation with the quality of the provisions of ELT in the country is not unlike that of other countries in the region (see Abrahams & Silva Ríos, this volume). Hence, the Ministry of Education, with the help of the British Council in Chile, developed a series of seminars for department chairs from all the universities in the country that offer the BA in ELT.

During a seminar held in October 2013, the standards were presented, together with an announcement that, starting in 2014, all BA candidates would be tested after graduation in order to accredit compliance with the standards both at the level of English proficiency and ELT pedagogy. Department chairs were then involved in plotting out those courses that would lead students to the successful attainment of qualified teacher status, and they also discussed the existing gap between the requirements of the standards, their existing curricula and the demands of their institutions in terms of curriculum contents.

The Chilean process of standards development rests on a theoretical decision based on the belief that goals such as increased quality in the provisions and the implementation of new processes of assessment and certification would enhance a guiding philosophy of equal access to quality instruction. In terms of implementation, the Chilean case presents a clearly tiered process of policy transfer starting with the drafting of the standards, followed by their alignment with the exit examination and a reconfiguration of the individual curricula of the various universities in the country. It is, however, too early to assess how the standards will be indigenized in the Chilean case, as 2015 was the first academic year when the changes took effect, and classes did not start until mid-March.

The aforementioned analysis of the transfer process is based on the framework developed by Phillips and Ochs (2004) and it was used instead of other frameworks as it lent itself to the analysis of the official discourse of processes that have yet to be fully implemented. Because of this, in order to provide a cohesive comparison of the documents, other factors such as the involvement of stakeholders or the opinions of external experts were purposefully left out. Instead, the documents and their development were analyzed in terms of how the policy borrowing cycle was developed, how the three standards documents were externalized to faculty and students in the universities, how the decision to borrow the policy was made and implemented and, finally, how the policy became indigenized. Table 2.1 summarizes the policy transfer process in the three countries described above.

Table 2.1 An analysis of the cross-national borrowing of standards for language teachers in Uruguay, Ecuador and Chile

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Uruguay</i>	<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>Chile</i>
Impulses	Political and other imperatives. Novel configurations.	Internal dissatisfaction. Negative external evaluation.	Internal dissatisfaction. Economic change/competition.
Externalizing potential	Guiding philosophy (equality of opportunity). Goals: Increased access; enabling structures (new curriculum).	Process (accreditation); guiding philosophy. Goals: Increased quality.	Guiding philosophy (equality of opportunity). Goals (increased quality). Processes: Assessment and certification.
Decision	Realistic/practical	Theoretical	Theoretical
Implementation	Slow, resisted, not mandated, delayed decision and non-decision.	Quickly adopted as a template for curriculum development. New curriculum and assessment built in parallel to the development of the standards.	Tiered washback: First the standards, then alignment of exit examination to standards, alignment of individual curricula to standards.
Internalization/indigenization	No impact on existing system. Neither evaluated nor internalized.	High impact in that standards have changed curriculum and assessment.	Beginning to be internalized. At the process of evaluation.

Source: Original, adapted from Phillips and Ochs (2004).

Having discussed how the policy transfer process was enacted in the three cases discussed above, the chapter now turns to a consideration of the content of these documents and the reality they reify through their discourse. In order to disclose these meanings, the following sections present the methodology used to access the keywords in each document, as well as an analysis of how the different standards in the documents became signified in their particular contexts of application.

Method

The present research employed a mixed methods perspective (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2007) as a way of counteracting the potential bias stemming from the researcher’s involvement with the first

policy borrowing cycle between the United States and Uruguay, and as a way of pursuing answers to the initial research question as to whether neoliberal influences still permeate the discursive practices of educational reform in the countries discussed. In particular, this analysis used a partially mixed, concurrent, equal status design (Leech & Onwegbuzie, 2009) by affording all policy documents the same worth, seeking the same kind of data and subjecting them to the same quantitative (frequency count) and qualitative (concordances) analysis, as will be further explained below.

Since the object of analysis was discourse, the analysis focused on the material representation of the transfer process: policy documents. To this end, a corpus for analysis was created by inputting the complete text of the standards documents of Uruguay, Ecuador and Chile into a concordances and word frequency tool (Cobb, 2012). Once the texts were input into the system, its frequency tool was used to yield the keywords most often used in each document. These were identified as 'keywords' (Williams, 1983). Williams traced how certain words strayed from their usual semantic field to describe wider areas of thought and experience, making evident key areas of contestation between ideology and discourse. According to Holborow (2012a: 35), 'these were the ideologically sensitive words whose associations and connotations were not settled and whose meanings were under negotiation'.

To this avail, the concordances tool provided the contexts of use of the keywords identified through the frequency tool, thus allowing an analysis of how they were signified in the documents and allowing the researcher to spot the presence of neoliberal meanings.

The corpus first yielded quantitative data (highest frequency content words), which were thematized according to how they were used in the documents (for example, looking at the keyword *language*, once the frequency was identified, the contexts of use allowed for the disclosure of how this keyword was understood). This thematization allowed for a qualitative analysis (was language understood as an object, as a system of systems, as a tool?) in light of the theoretical constructs that will be discussed in depth in this chapter. Lastly, qualitative data were subjected to the same process. Qualitative analysis was performed on qualitative data by thematizing it, and quantitative analysis provided the tools to quantify how themes were presented in each of the documents at the level of discourse. In all instances, the question guiding the research project was kept in sight: Is there evidence of neoliberal influences in the discourse practices of progressive educational reforms in teacher education?

In the process of data collection and analysis, issues of power were addressed by using a Foucaultian perspective with data being contextualized to their ideological contexts. According to Foucault (2001), power resides in knowledge. It is not localized in a particular setting (e.g. an organization or

a government) but rather distributed among the network of social relations. In this sense, it stood to reason that the contexts of use of particular keywords would yield insights into their underpinning ideological positioning. In short, the corpus helped identify whether the discourse had shifted from a rhetoric of marketization to a rhetoric of social justice.

The analysis used a critical pedagogy (CP; Crookes, 2013; Pennycook, 2001) lens as the theoretical framing of the three documents made extensive reference to work in this area. The preambles to the three documents express that CP – as both discourse and ideology – would help counteract the neoliberal hegemony. As discourse *is* practice, it stands to reason that the occurrence of keywords within a CP discourse context is indicative of a shift in ideology. As Ball (1993) explains:

We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. **We are** the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and follows. We do not ‘know’ what we say, we ‘are’ what we say and do. In these terms, we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies. (Ball, 1993: 14; emphasis in original)

In keeping with this view, keyword contexts were openly coded into themes according to their signification (i.e. how they attributed specific meanings to a term which can be polysemic). The themes summarized the meaning attributed to the keywords and their use within the policy texts. These meanings are taken to be indicative of ideological trends, as they are representative of intentions. As Auerbach (1995) suggests:

Pedagogical choices about curriculum development, content, materials, classroom processes, and language use, although appearing to be informed by apolitical professional considerations, are, in fact, inherently ideological in nature, with significant implications for learners’ socioeconomic roles. (Auerbach, 1995: 9)

Results

The corpus-based analysis yielded a total of five high-frequency content words common to all three policy documents. The most frequent content words appeared between 38 and 40 times, with the less frequent words appearing with frequencies in the single digits. Hence, a decision was made to focus on those keywords that occurred 20 or more times in the text in the belief that the more frequently a word appeared, the more relevant it was to the discourse in question.

The next step was to look for those words that consistently appeared in all three documents. Given the policy transfer scenario, finding out which keywords all three contexts prioritized was important. These words are

teachers, language, learning, English and teaching. Table 2.2 shows the most frequent words for each country (these are indicated by their rank number) and the shaded words represent the five keywords that all three documents reified as the most frequent. It should be noted, however, that gathering frequency information was not enough in this case, as the most frequent words are really polysemic and can thus be used in a multitude of contexts. In order to shed light on their actual meaning within the documents, the keywords were then analyzed using the concordances tool, as explained below.

Table 2.2 Top 10 content words appearing most frequently in the policy documents surveyed

Uruguay		Ecuador		Chile	
Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word
9.	TEACHERS	4.	LANGUAGE	7.	ENGLISH
14.	STUDENTS	6.	ENGLISH	10.	TEACHING
15.	LANGUAGE	9.	STUDENTS	11.	LANGUAGE
18.	LEARNING	10.	LEARNING	12.	LEARNING
20.	TEACHING	13.	STANDARDS	14.	SKILLS
27.	ASSESSMENT	14.	USE	15.	WRITTEN
29.	STANDARD	15.	TEACHERS	16.	ORAL
33.	KNOWLEDGE	18.	STUDENTS	20.	STRATEGIES
34.	LANGUAGES	19.	UNDERSTAND	21.	TEACHER
35.	USE	21.	INSTRUCTION	23.	COMMUNICATE

Note: Words common to all three documents are shaded in grey.

The next step in the analysis included seeking an understanding of how the five keywords operated at the level of signification, involving what they stood for and how they were used to account for the processes and practices they appeared to reify. In order to accomplish this, the concordances tool was used to analyze the immediate contexts in which keywords occurred. These were also organized in terms of frequency for ease of reference, as well as coded according to the different meanings attributed to them so as to aid the disclosure of how discourse is structured around ideological emphases. Table 2.3 summarizes the contexts of use of each of the five keywords.

As can be seen from Table 2.3, the polysemic nature of the keywords can be disclosed by probing into how they are used in context. Returning to the example of the word *language*, it can be stated that while in the case of Uruguay it is seen as a means, tool or vehicle (thus in keeping with a more progressive attribution of meaning), in the cases of Ecuador and Chile, the word becomes objectified retaining the neoliberal conceptualization as something that can be broken down, analyzed and conveyed, and not as a tool that students can use to empower themselves. This and other

Table 2.3 Themes disclosed in the analysis of the five most frequent keywords

Keyword	Uruguay	Ecuador	Chile
Teachers	• As prescribed subjects ('Candidates must...').	• As collaborator.	• As a knower.
	• As facilitator.	• As a knowing subject.	• As competent.
	• As constructor.	• As agent (promote, demonstrate).	• As a community member.
	• As a professional/member of a profession	• As competent.	• As effective.
	• Vehicle for the teaching of content.	• Focus of disciplines (e.g. language acquisition).	• Broken down into skills.
Language	• Object of mastery (proficiency).	• Acknowledgement of students' L1.	• Object of mastery (proficiency).
	• Mediatlional tool for teaching.	• Subject of methods.	• Object of use in the classroom.
	• Object of use in the classroom.	• Broken down into skills.	• Object of understanding, leading to use.
		• Object of mastery (proficiency).	• Broken down in chunks.
		• Vehicle for the teaching of content.	• Object of teaching and learning.
Learning		• System of systems (syntax, phonology, lexis).	
		• Not static, with varieties and variation according to the context of use.	
	• Individual and collective.	• Leads to academic progress.	• Leads to achievement.
	• Differentiation.	• Centered on 'English'.	• Occurs in communities.
	• Part of a process (teaching, learning and assessment).	• Styles.	• Results from experience.
	• Special needs.	• Leads to reading and writing.	• Influenced by the physical environment.
	• Property of students.	• Is a consequence of teaching.	• Is a process.

<i>Keyword</i>	<i>Uruguay</i>	<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>Chile</i>
Learning	• Styles.	• Organized through objectives and targets.	• Can be enhanced through strategies.
	• Requires mediation through support tools.	• Influenced by the physical environment (need for safety).	• Is based on scientific theories.
	• Leads to overall academic development.		• Organized through objectives.
	• Means of communication.	• Requires mastery (proficiency).	• Active use.
	• Has varieties. • Allows participation.	• Broken down into four discrete skills. • Tied to standards (evidence of mastery).	• Important for learning content. • Grammar, phonology and intonation.
	• Learned through content.	• Used in academic settings.	• Necessary for global society.
	• Active use.	• Important for learning content.	• Broken down into four discrete skills.
	• A form of literacy.		• Provides an identity for teachers and students.
	• Requires mastery (proficiency)		
	• Can be coded into models.	• Field of practice.	• Promotes a methodology (ELT pedagogy).
Teaching	• Regulated by the state.	• Part of the same process as learning.	• Centers around strategies.
	• Process independent from learning.	• Profession to be enhanced.	• Requires planning.
	• Active use of technologies.	• Based on standards.	• Requires practice.
	• Has a theoretical basis.	• Collaborative endeavor (colleagues).	
	• Can be planned, designed and created.	• Two strategies: Teaching and re-teaching.	
	• Occurs through oracy or literacy learning.		
	• Makes use of resources, activities and techniques.		
	• Is a process.		

examples in Table 2.3 show how, in reality, the pervasive influence of neoliberal meanings still permeates the discourse, making it difficult to reconceptualize the task of teacher education, as will be shown in the following section. However, before moving on, the limitations of this study need to be clarified so as to help readers contextualize their understanding of the discussion of the results and the implications that can be deemed from such discussion.

One important limitation of this study resides in the fact that it left out other relevant considerations, such as stakeholders' perspectives, the particularities of policy borrowing in each country, as well as the impact resulting from implementation. Given that two of the borrowing cycles were very recent, it was felt that focusing on their material representations (i.e. the discourse used to code the documents) could provide a starting point for further analyses once the standards had become indigenized. In this sense, I attempted to deconstruct the official discourse treating the documents as cultural and ideological artifacts that do not have 'a single authoritative meaning' (Codd, 1988: 244) with the intention of locating points of contradiction within the text in the belief that 'the text is no longer restricted to a single, harmonious and authoritative reading. Instead, it becomes *plural*, open to re-reading, no longer an object for passive consumption but an object of work by the reader to produce meaning' (Belsey, 1980: 104, as cited in Codd, 1988: 246).

Discussion and Implications

Pennycook (2001) suggests that there are three alternative conceptions of school and society, each with its own understanding of knowledge and curriculum, the social role of schools and the social relations in school. These three conceptions provide alternative view of classrooms as they relate to social, cultural, political and ideological concerns. For the purposes of the current analysis, and in keeping with the emancipatory intentions delineated in the preambles to the three policy documents, I will examine the contexts of use of the five keywords according to these three conceptions of school and society.

A *standard view* of classrooms sees knowledge as neutral and schools as providing the same opportunities for everyone within an educational (not social) space. This conception is highly naïve and presents reality as an innocuous endeavor, where there are neither differences nor struggles. Surprising as though it may seem, this is the standpoint of much of the field of ELT, which has traditionally positioned itself 'out of earshot of mainstream educational debates' (Holborow, 2012b: 7). In terms of language teaching, the object of study – language – is seen as neutral and under the command of its users.

A second conception views knowledge and curriculum as reflecting dominant interests. In this *reproductive standpoint*, schools serve to perpetuate the status quo as the classroom reflects external roles, considered 'normal'. These first two conceptions are characteristic of neoliberal discourse, which at the ideological level sees education as providing the human capital that the market demands. In this conception, language is seen as an 'inert and transparent entity' (Crookes, 2013: 87). As such, it can be broken down into component parts and transmitted via patterns independent of the context of use.

There is a third standpoint that lies at the core of all work in CP and which sees knowledge as political and contested, schools as sites of social struggle and classrooms as sites of cultural struggle. This *resistance standpoint* advocates for 'a considerably expanded notion of the political which embraces issues such as the societal context in which learning takes place, roles and relationships in the classroom and outside, kinds of learning tasks, and the content of the language that is learned' (Benson, 1997: 32, cited in Pennycook, 2001: 116). This also implies a renewed vision of language as 'something with a social history, or even more, something not necessarily entirely under one's control...language as a tool, or indeed a weapon, sometimes used for social change' (Crookes, 2013: 87).

Underlying this analysis is the belief that 'policies produced by and for the state are obvious instances in which language serves a political purpose, constructing particular meanings and signs that work to mask social conflict and foster commitment to the notion of a universal public interest. In this way, policy documents produce real social effects through the production and maintenance of consent' (Codd, 1988: 237). I will now turn to a discussion of how each of the five keywords identified are reified in their context of use within each of the three documents. In providing this analysis, I will also be exploring how the neoliberal emphasis is still operating through an allegedly reconfigured and progressive discourse.

A discussion of the contexts of signification of the five keywords

Teachers

References to teachers see them occupying different roles. The most frequent attribution is based on a deficit view of teachers, who are perceived as 'knowing and showing' subjects. Much of the discourse demands equipping teachers with a knowledge base for teaching that they should be able to learn and demonstrate.

The qualification of the teachers' knowledge and demonstration involves issues of competence, proficiency, mastery and efficiency. All of these are meritocratic arguments in that they emphasize cognitive learning and sustained effort as determinants of quality. Also, this emphasis on

the knowing and doing positions teaching as a low-skill job (Souto-Otero, 2011) or a positional good in that, given the diversity of the student-teacher body, not all will be able to reach the expected levels. Less frequent, but also present, are mentions to other roles such as facilitator of students' learning, community member and collaborator.

Finally, the view of teachers advocated for in the standards fails to accommodate the CP discourse, by emphasizing a reproductive image of the teaching candidates. In reading the three documents, it becomes clear that what is expected of candidates is close proximity to the 'native speaker norm' in terms of knowledge and teaching skills. The high incidence of requirements for knowing and showing, as opposed to acting as part of a community render the intentions of the documents futile. However, it should be noted that the Uruguayan document presents fewer instances of the 'teacher as knower and shower' than those of Ecuador and Chile. In the Uruguayan document, teachers are seen as professionals who reflect in and on action, who share their product and knowledge with peers and who are active members of educational communities. This may be due to the fact that the Uruguayan borrowing process offered more space for actor participation than that of Ecuador and Chile.

Language

CP theories of language see it as a tool for emancipation and contestation rather than as a static 'system of systems' for expression. Hence, it advocates the teaching of different genres and registers that allow full participation in social activities.

In the standards under review, two competing perspectives can be discerned. Whereas in the Uruguayan reality, language is described as a social tool (a vehicle for teaching content; a semiotic system that enables communication; a mediational tool; or an organic system in constant flux), its depiction in the other documents struggles to strike a balance between former views of language and the aspired functional perspective. For example, the Chilean and Ecuadorian documents explicitly emphasize the mastery of phonology, syntax and lexis and present language as the enactment of the four macroskills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Little reference is made to the actual use of language to achieve communicative purposes and, while both documents acknowledge that languages present different varieties, they are still described as something that can be objectified and whose rules can be operationalized in traditional reproductive terms.

Again, here one can see elements of a neoliberal ideology at play, as this view of language is congruent with an 'understanding of society [as] consensual...with the focus on the individual and her or his linguistic behavior, rather than the complex workings of language amid conflictual social contexts' (Pennycook, 2001: 50).

Learning

For many years, learning was seen as the logical product of teaching reified through the ‘teaching-learning process’ metaphor. This metaphor implies that there is one way of going about instruction, where teachers teach and students learn in a linear, sequential and neutral fashion. A CP perspective recognizes that teaching and learning are two epistemologically related, albeit different processes. Teaching is a process whereby teachers make adaptations to their scientific knowledge so that it becomes an object of learning. Learning, on the other hand, is an interactive process whereby learners put at play their everyday concepts and contrast them with scientific concepts. They do so through participation in instructional activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), mediated by their teachers, themselves and their peers (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). Defined in these terms, learning is a social and discursive activity open to negotiation and requiring interaction, and not a process of transmission.

There is discrepancy in the understanding of learning among the three documents. The Uruguayan standards present a social constructivist perspective of learning and position teachers and learners as active participants and negotiators in the process (acknowledging the individual and collective; calling for differentiation; requiring accommodation for special needs, etc.). In contrast, the Ecuadorian and Chilean documents present a utilitarian view (leading to achievement; based on scientific theories; organized through objectives; leading to pre-specified products, etc.). This view of learning is tied to neoliberal conceptions of knowledge as a commodity accessible to individuals through their own entrepreneurship. Likewise, while both documents tangentially (and politically) acknowledge a communal dimension, they make reference to the ‘teaching-learning process’ metaphor, thus imbuing learning with a unidirectionality characteristic of assembly-line production systems. One of the consequences of such a view is the objectification of learning and its commodification in terms of accountability through test scores. Not surprisingly, both countries advocate for national standardized tests as proof that learning has occurred.

English

All three documents call for the active use of different varieties of English and emphasize the need for mastery. However, the Uruguayan standards present it more as a mental tool than a commodity (it is a means of communication; a tool for mediation; a form of literacy, etc.). In contrast, the other two documents emphasize its utilitarian nature thus turning it into a commodity (syntactic description; needed for participation in a globalized society; a way to see the world differently, etc.). The Chilean example in particular, emphasizes individuality by using English as a provider of professional identity.

Teaching

Finally, teaching is described in the same way as learning, but in this case, all three countries see teaching as a commodity by referring to ways in which it can be coded (methods; strategies; planning; practice) and presenting it as unidirectional.

Conclusion

The analysis of five keywords, a product of the policy transfer process, shows that while progressive discourses seem to be in operation and the intentions have shifted from the need to satisfy market demands to that of empowering citizens, a neoliberal ideology underlies most of the discourse.

In analyzing the contexts of application of the five keywords, one can see how there is an attempt to stray away from neoliberal concepts and premises by cloaking the keywords in more critical terms (e.g. the frequent references to teaching to diversity as expressed in the three documents in contrast with a neoliberal ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach). However, in laying out the new discourse, neoliberal concepts and premises seem to resurface as strongholds of an ideology showing a resilience that other ideologies do not seem to possess. In this sense, Block *et al.* (2012: 6) remind readers of “‘actually existing neoliberalism”, its embeddedness in society, and its infinite capacity, even in crises, to reinvent and adapt’.

Other reasons for the pervasiveness of this ideology may lie in the inherent nature of the ELT field as promoter of neoliberal practices and discourses. For example, the field of language teacher education has been the object of marketization by international ELT organizations offering short, intensive ‘teacher preparation’ courses, a practice described by Gray and Block (2012: 115) as the ‘McDonaldisation’ of the field. In this sense, the discourse of teacher education is delivered as ‘progressive’ but through neoliberal tools. One example cited by the authors is that these courses have a reflective component, characteristic of CP. However, the methods of course delivery adhere to a monolithic set of contents and skills that can be replicated anywhere in the world regardless of context.

Lastly, it should be noted that while the discourse that the progressive governments espouse has veered to the left – compared to previous administrations – the macroeconomic conditions are still ruled by neoliberal practices about the market, the role of government and the purpose of education. Hence, it would be almost impossible to do away with the pervasive influence of this ideology, just by creating new policies.

But there is hope in that if more knowledge about discourses and ideology is created and disseminated, actors may begin to exercise a more powerful form of agency that may do away with these ideological

influences by raising awareness and begin to shift their discourses and practices toward those intended. After all, as Ball argues:

Policies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed. A response must still be put together, constructed in context, off-set against other expectations. (Ball, 1993: 12–13)

This chapter attempted to present an initial understanding of how discourse and ideology are shaping current policy transfer processes in three countries. However, its scope is limited in that it has only tackled the discourse level, while overlooking aspects of implementation and stakeholders' reactions and understandings, mostly because the indigenization processes are still in development. In this respect, the data may sow the seeds for a deeper understanding of how discourse and ideology contribute to the impact of transferred policies. Perhaps, if properly disseminated, it may contribute to the desired shift in discourse.

Questions for Reflection

- (1) Given the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideologies in current educational reforms, what would you suggest as a potential lever to help shift discursive practices in the region?
- (2) If standards are, necessarily, a neoliberal tool, how could the three countries whose situation was described in this chapter ascertain quality in the education of teachers without resorting to such a tool?
- (3) Even when contextualized to the local reality and born out of careful and purposeful negotiations among all parties involved, progressive tools for change fail to capture the underlying reality. Is this so? If it is, what options do progressive governments have to conscientize the key actors in a reform?

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