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Ideologies and Discourses in the Standards for Language Teachers

in South America : a corpus-based analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper 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 discoursal configurations at stake in the processes. 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. Three policy documents were analyzed in order to identify keywords. Each of these keywords was analyzed in their context of use in order to disclose whether their signification was closer to the progressive discourses favored by current governments or whether it remained tied to Neoliberal concepts. Results show that, while at the level of overall rhetoric there is an attempt to re-signify keywords, at the level of process there are still some pervasive Neoliberal influences that may jeopardize the indigenization processes for these policies.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how policy transfer cycles in three countries in South America have been impacted by Neoliberal discoursal practices.

If the 1990's were the age of Neoliberal educational reforms in South America, the first decade of the twenty-first century is that 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. In Uruguay and Ecuador the first "progressive" parties won elections in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Chile, on the other hand, had had a socialist president for at least three terms, following the ousting of dictator Augusto Pinochet.

In all three countries, traditionally conservative parties had responded to and operated within a Neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism could be defined as an exacerbation of capitalist ideologies (Holborow, 2013). However, definitions of

Neoliberalism are neither ubiquitous nor 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, and an 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 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 structure and organize 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 Souto Otero (2011), who points out that "... parties are motivated by winning elections more than by an enduring commitment to particular policies or constituencies (Jackman, 1975)" (p. 312).

The ascent to power of progressive governments is characterized by a turn towards 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) for 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 centre of such rhetorical shift is education. In this sense, we see that these rhetorical changes are akin to those identified in the UK 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 us "While general ideological features can be identified for both parties, these ideologies are neither consistent nor static. Rather, they present a field for political struggle, for continuous shaping and reshaping" (op. cit: 294).

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). We will turn to an analysis of this particular area in the following section. I will then describe the teaching of English in South America and present a heuristic for the analysis of the policy transfer processes. Finally, I will discuss the research method and discuss the results.

TEACHING ENGLISH IN SOUTH AMERICA

The teaching of English in South America in the 1990's was funded by international lending agencies with a vested interest in the dissemination of English and its related industries.

English played a crucial role in promoting the expansion of Neoliberal ideas as well as in spreading globalizing influences. Holbrow (2012: 22) citing the work of Fairclough

(2002) 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 (Fairclough 2002)."

To this avail, specific loans helped implement new curricula that replicated foreign models, materials, consultants and 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: 55-6) put it "…the only question on reform agendas appear 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."

Hence, curricula, methods and materials promote English as an indispensible commodity and education as a key tradable good enacted through that language.

Likewise, underlying the mandate for the teaching of English was a *colonial celebratory* position described by Pennycook (2010: 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 in question, 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 into a positional good (Marginson, 2006) that would allow those with solid knowledge of the language of "international business and global academic life" (Marginson, 2006: 901) to have better opportunities. The economic efficiency of these moves is highlighted by Holbrow (2012) remark that, only in the UK, between 2005 and 2010 the export of ELT textbooks grew from 17% to 26%.

However, the reforms of the 1980's and 1990's failed to yield the expected results (Thrupp and Hursh, 2006), because they had been inspired by what Phillips and Ochs (2004) call "Quick-fix" or "Phoney" decisions. The policies were written and publicized as

a way of keeping voters happy but they were either underfunded, ran as pilot programs, or never got implemented.

A more relevant factor in their failure was the systematic overlook of the teachers involved in the reforms. In this respect, Vaillant (2007) argues that the main reason for the failure of educational reforms in South America in the 1990's was the lack of awareness of teachers regarding their role 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 circumnstances.

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 into place, the region experienced a new policy-making phenomenon that, in keeping with the progressive rhetoric, dwelt on regionalization as a policy transfer scenario and that is the focus of this paper.

Policy transfer has been defined in various ways. In this particular case, the reasons for the policy transfer lie 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. These would include the expansion of free English language teaching 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 lies the belief that regional efforts would be able to counteract the negative effects of previous neoliberal attempts as "regionalization corrupts, or at least substantially modifies, the version of globalization theory advocated for by neoliberals in that it constitutes a context for the emergence of new regulatory controls within particular regions" (Olssen, 2006: 261).

In 2009, Uruguay developed a nation-wide project to determine the minimum standards that aspiring teachers of foreign languages should attain at the end of their Bachelor's in Foreign Language Education. The project borrowed the framework (though

not the content) of available standards developed in the USA. 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. Lastly, in 2013, the Chilean Ministry of Education commissioned the development of standards to universities via a bid for tender.

This policy transfer process is not different from those promoted by previous Neoliberal government, in that it is assumed that international standards will promote quality. As Room (2000: 103) points out "Social policies are, to an increasing extent, shaped by international standards and regulations ... However, what is unclear is how far the pressures of globalisation and the processes of international standard-setting leave any scope for policy choice, whether at international, national or sub-national level."

A FRAMEWORK FOR 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."

The definitions are the frame that I will use to analyze the development of Standards for Language Teachers in Uruguay, Chile and Ecuador between 2010 and 2013. Traditionally, the process has been described as comprising a series of chronological steps that track interest in a particular policy to the evaluation of its implementation, although other routes are possible. Beech (2006:2) describes the process thus

"… educational transfer was construed as responding to the following pattern:

(1) a local problem was identified; (2) solutions were sought in foreign educational systems; and (3) a 'tested' institution or educational practice (that

had worked or was believed to have worked) was adapted to the new content and then implemented."

Alternatively, cross-national policy borrowing can be a way of legitimizing related local policies, 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). Both these conceptions are characteristic of the policy transfer processes described in this paper.

However, policy transfer is not just a discrete area of research but a tool for policy analysis of different globalization phenomena (Benson and Jordan, 2011). The sustained interest in this particular area of comparative education has rendered it a diverse and contested field (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2012).

For example, these authors in assessing the "state of the art" in the literature on policy transfer from a political science perspective, grapple with epistemological and methodological criticisms to their positioning and conclude that just framing the discussion within these parameters does nothing more than limit the scope of policy transfer and analysis. They 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.

In this sense, they seem to coincide with earlier conceptualization, such as Beech's (1993: 10) who 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, I will use tools of discourse analysis not frequently found in the literature (e.g. concordance tools) as a way of contextualizing the data in order to interpret it.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER STANDARDS IN URUGUAY, ECUADOR and CHILE

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.

While comprehensive, this heuristic is limited in that it focuses more on agents than agency (McCann and 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 that between policy transfer and the dominant modes of governance (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2012). McCann and Ward (2012: 328) see policy making 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 analysis, the framework is adequate in so far as we recognize that "a heuristic does not reify a 'reality'; rather it offers a way of approaching a subject that can provide a basis for empirical investigation" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2012: 343).

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. The 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 thus creating a community of practice, and fostering a sense of belonging to the new structure. Prior to that moment, each campus had operates independently and in isolation from one another and the new law mandated

collaboration and communication. This project was seen as an initial attempt to build such community. 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 formerly non existing) and that the transfer was a voluntary one borrowing form experiences in countries such as the USA.

The process was a voluntary one, with faculty in the 32 campuses 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 actual standards. Faculty worked over one month drafting the standards for five distinct domains of professional expertise: English Language Proficiency; Culture; Instruction; Assessment; and Professionalism, The document was sent as a survey to all the faculty and students in the department as well as to over 50 international authorities on teacher education and assessment. Once responses were obtained (a return of 84%) comments and suggestions were discussed and the original document edited to reflect those changes. The final product was a publication (Diaz Maggioli and Kuhlman, 2010) presenting both the process and the product of the standards. In that document, their externalizing potential is sustained on 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 being enacted 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 curriculum that was perceived as fragmented and lacking cohesion.

However, at the level of implementation, there was some resistance mainly from teacher educators who felt the standards were not representative of their own

orientation to teacher education (e.g. some teacher educators still advocated for a strong transmission model centered on methods and techniques), or those who felt they did not want to change the way they had been teaching their courses. This, despite the constant complaints of students and other faculty regarding overlaps and omissions in the curriculum, and the constant evidence of withdrawal of students from the program, nationwide, due to academic failure stemming mostly from outdated pedagogical practices. Last, but not least, one of the reasons for the failure of these particular standards to become indigenized was that, 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.

Ecuador

In parallel to what was happening in Uruguay, the Ecuadorian government had been involved in a nation-wide evaluation of the quality of ELT provisions in the public sector. Their impulse for the creation of standards stemmed from an internal dissatisfaction with the teaching of English, as well as by 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, 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 B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) by the end of secondary school. The government saw the externalizing potential of standards as a processual matter concerned mostly with accreditation: both teachers and students would be tested in order to ascertain the 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 group. However, in this instance, there was an urgency to have a draft of the standards finalized. In order to save time, the consultant decided to share three standard models with the audience

out of which and participants decided to adopt the Uruguayan model. Kuhlman (2012) explains that one deciding factor in this adoption was the existence of a particular domain concerned with teachers' English Language proficiency, not present in other models.

The Ministry sanctioned and published the standards in 2012 without submitting them to a consultation process. Concurrently, the developers of the standards engaged in drafting a new curriculum for teacher education aligned to the standards.

The implementation of standards was thus a swift process developed between 2012 - 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. Once the new curriculum is set in motion and opportunities for evaluation are provided, will their true impact be assessed.

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 BA in ELT programs. Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago, whose faculty developed the document adopted by the Ministry, won the bid for tender. In the process, they consulted international experts in the field of ELT and had their document validated by them. Additionally, they specifically consulted the Uruguayan standards document.

The impetus for the development of standards in Chile stemmed from a sustained interest by the Chilean government in positioning themselves as a first world country so as to better compete in the globalized arena where English is of paramount importance.

The situation with the quality of the provisions of ELT in the country is not unlike that of other countries in the region. Hence, the Ministry of Education, with the help of the British Council in Chile, has developed a series of seminars for Department Chairs from all those universities in the country that offer the BA in ELT.

During the seminar held in October 2013, the standards were presented, together with the announcement that, starting in 2014, all BA candidates would be tested before 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. Contrary to the situation in Uruguay and Ecuador, universities in Chile are autonomous and they can incorporate courses that represent the ethos of each institution, a key factor in terms of student recruitment.

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 2014 will be the first academic year when the changes take effect, and classes will 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 the impulses that guided the policy borrowing (local reality), their externalizing potential (how closely they would fit the reality of the

host community), how the decision to borrow the policy was made (based on a successful reality of implementation or from a theoretical "best practices" perspective), how the implementation was fostered and finally, in those cases where there is already evidence, how the policy became indigenized.

The following table summarizes the policy transfer process in the three countries described above:

Table 1: An analysis of the cross-national attraction of standards for language teachers in Uruguay, Ecuador and Chile.

STAGE	URUGUAY →	ECUADOR →	CHILE
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;	Guiding philosophy; 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: 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)

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to assess the extent to which policy transfer efforts at the regional level in three South American countries, have managed to undermine the pervasiveness of Neoliberal ideological elements at the level of the discourse used in policy making. The need for research stemmed from the author's involvement in the first borrowing cycle and his having noticed how as the original policy traveled, divergent meanings were attached to keywords. The fact that the researcher was also instrumental in one of the borrowing cycles may present an ethical challenge. However, in order to counteract existing biases, the methodology chosen resorted to a mixed methods perspective so that claims could be more objectively made about the existence, or lack thereof, of the purported Neoliberal influences.

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

Block, Grey and Holborow (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 (Block, Gray and Holborow, 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.

In this process I also address issues of power using a Foucaultian perspective. To Foucault (2002), 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, power—"a central given in discourse" (Holborow, 2012: 25)—is produced, contained, and reproduced through language. As this author explains "Discourses are about conformity to the dominant *episteme*, the body of ideas considered true at any one time, and about subjects consenting to the particular discourse regime" (Holborow, loc. cit.).

In order to assess this reality, I undertook a corpus study of the policy documents in order to identify whether the discourse had shifted from a rhetoric of marketization, to a rhetoric of social justice.

In order to do so, I used Williams's notion of "keywords." Williams (1986) traced how certain words strayed away 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 (2012: 35), "these were the ideologically sensitive words whose associations and connotations were not settled and whose meanings were under negotiation."

Since the object of analysis is discourse, I focused on the material representation of the transfer process: policy documents. I created a corpus for each country and analyzed it using a concordances and word frequency tool (Cobb, 2012). The frequency tool yielded the keywords most often used in each document, while the concordances tool provided their contexts of use. I then looked for the most common words used in all three policy documents and analyzed the presence of Neoliberal meanings. In this way, I added validity to my data using a mixed-methods perspective (Johnson and

Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007). In particular I used a partially mixed, concurrent, equal status design (Leech and 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.

One important limitation of this study resides in the fact that it left out other relevant considerations, such as stakeholders' perspectives, the particularities of 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 the material representations could provide a starting point for further analyses once the standards have been 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, cited in Codd, 1988: 246).

RESULTS

The corpus-based analysis yielded a total of five high-frequency content words common to all three policy documents (after eliminating function words such as prepositions, articles, etc.). The most frequent content words appeared between 38 and 40 times, with the less frequent words appearing in a frequency in the single-digits. Hence, a decision was made to focus on those keywords that had an occurrence of 20 or more times in the text in the belief that the more frequently a word appears, the more relevant it is 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. The table below shows the most frequent words for each country (these are indicated by their rank number) and the shaded words represent those keywords that all three documents had in common in terms of frequency. 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. Hence, the relevance of the analysis at the level of concordances that will be explained later in this paper.

Table 2 – Top ten content words appearing most frequently in the policy documents surveyed (with words common to all three documents shaded in grey).

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

Source: Original.

The next step included analysis seeking an understanding of how these words operate at the level of signification, what they stand for and how they are used to account for the processes and practices they intend to reify. In order to accomplish this, the concordances tool was used to analyze the immediate contexts in which keywords occur. These were also organized in terms of frequency for ease of reference, as well as to code the different meanings and disclose how discourse is structured around ideological emphases.

The analysis used a Critical Pedagogy (CP) (Pennycook, 2010; Crooks, 2013) lens as the theoretical framing of the three documents made extensive reference to work in this area. The three preambles express that Critical Pedagogy (CP)—as 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: 14, emphasis in original) 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."

In keeping with this view, keyword contexts were openly coded into themes according to their signification. The themes summarize 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 (1995:9) 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."

The following table summarizes the contexts of use of each of the five keywords:

Table 2 – Themes disclosed in the analysis of the five most frequent keywords.

Keyword	Uruguay	Ecuador	Chile
Teachers	☐ As subject of prescription (must…) ☐ As facilitator ☐ As constructor ☐ As a professional/ member of a profession.	☐ As collaborator ☐ As a knowing subject ☐ As agent (promote, demonstrate) ☐ As competent	☐ As a knower ☐ As competent ☐ As a community member ☐ As effective
Language	☐ Vehicle for the teaching of content. ☐ Object of mastery (proficiency). ☐ Mediational tool for teaching. ☐ Object of use in the classroom. ☐ Semiotic system for communication. ☐ Not static, with varieties and variation according to the context of use. ☐ Acknowledgement of students' L1.	☐ Focus of disciplines (e.g. Language Acquisition). ☐ Acknowledgement of students' L1. ☐ Subject of methods. ☐ Broken down into skills. ☐ Object of mastery (proficiency). ☐ Vehicle for the teaching of content. ☐ System of systems (syntax, phonology, lexis). ☐ Not static, with varieties and variation according to the context of use.	☐ Broken down into skills. ☐ Object of mastery (proficiency). ☐ Object of use in the classroom. ☐ Object of understanding, leading to use. ☐ Broken down in chunks. ☐ Object of teaching and learning.
Learning	☐ Individual and collective. ☐ Differentiation. ☐ Part of a process (teaching, learning and assessment). ☐ Special needs. ☐ Property of students. ☐ Styles. ☐ Requires mediation through support tools. ☐ Leads to overall academic development.	☐ Leads to academic progress. ☐ Centered on "English." ☐ Styles. ☐ Leads to reading and writing. ☐ Is a consequence of teaching. ☐ Organized through objectives and targets. ☐ Influenced by the physical environment (need for safety).	☐ Leads to achievement. ☐ Occurs in communities. ☐ Results from experience. ☐ Influenced by the physical environment. ☐ Is a process. ☐ Can be enhanced through strategies. ☐ Is based on scientific theories. ☐ Organized through objectives.

English	☐ Means of communication. ☐ Has varieties. ☐ Allows participation. ☐ Learned through content. ☐ Active use. ☐ A form of literacy. ☐ Requires mastery (proficiency)	☐ Requires mastery (proficiency). ☐ Broken down into four discrete skills. ☐ Tied to standards (evidence of mastery). ☐ Used in academic settings. ☐ Important for learning content.	☐ Active use. ☐ Important for learning content. ☐ Grammar, phonology and intonation. ☐ Necessary for global society. ☐ Broken down into four discrete skills. ☐ Provides an identity for teachers and students.
Teaching	☐ Can be coded into models. ☐ Regulated by the State. ☐ Process independent from learning. ☐ Active use of technologies. ☐ Has a theoretical basis. ☐ Can be planned, designed and created. ☐ Occurs through oracy or literacy learning. ☐ Makes use of resources, activities and techniques. ☐ Is a process.	☐ Field of practice. ☐ Part of the same process as learning. ☐ Profession to be enhanced. ☐ Based on standards. ☐ Collaborative endeavor (colleagues). ☐ Two strategies: teaching and re-teaching.	☐ Promotes a methodology (ELT pedagogy). ☐ Centers around strategies. ☐ Requires planning. ☐ Requires practice.

Source: Original

DISCUSSION

Pennycook (2010) 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 conceptualize classrooms as they relate to social, cultural, political and ideological concerns.

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, that has traditionally positioned itself "out of earshot of mainstream educational debates." (Holborow, 2012: 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, 2010: 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).

For the purposes of our current analysis, and in keeping with the emancipatory intentions delineated in the preambles to the three policy documents, we will examine the contexts of use of the five keywords according to these three conceptions of school and society.

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, 1997:237).

    a. *Teachers*

References to teachers see them occupying different roles. The most frequent attribution is based on a deficit view of the 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 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 loc. cit: 402) or a positional good in that, given the diversity of the student-teacher body, not all will be able to reach the expected levels. As Lauder (2007:443) puts it, "A defining characteristic of a positional good is that it is scarce in a socially imposed sense (Hirsch 1977) and that accordingly allocation proceeds through the 'auction of a restricted set of objects to the highest bidder (pp. 28—29)…it is only those that have the time and resources that can then move to the next step on the credential ladder."

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.

b. *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 an 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, we see here 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, 2010: 50).

c. *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 by which teachers make adaptations to their scientific knowledge so that it becomes and 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 (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave and Wenger, 1991), mediated by their teachers, themselves and their peers (Walqui and 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 of a

unidirectionality characteristic of assembly-line production systems. One of the consequences of such 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.

d. *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.

e. *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 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 key words, we see how there is an attempt to stray away from Neoliberal concepts and premises by cloaking the

keywords in more critical terms. However, in laying out the new discourse, Neoliberal concepts and premises resurface as strongholds of an ideology showing a resilience that other ideologies do not seem to possess. In this sense, Block, Grey and Holborow (2012: 6) remind us 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 the progressive governments spouse has veered to the left—compared to previous governments—the macroeconomic conditions are still ruled by Neoliberal practices about market, government role and 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 beginning to shift their discourses and practices towards those intended. After all, as Ball (1993: 12-13) reminds us,

> " 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 paper 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.

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