

Representations of foreign English teachers in Colombian newspapers: A critical discourse analysis

Representaciones de los profesores extranjeros de inglés en la prensa colombiana: Un análisis crítico del discurso

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Recibido: 29-VII-2020 / Aceptado: 08-XI-2021

DOI: 10.4067/S0718-09342022000100006

Abstract

In an effort to increase the English proficiency level of their citizens and thus become more competitive in the global economy, many Latin American countries have resorted to the importation of foreign English teachers (FETs) to support local English teachers (LETs) in schools. The phenomenon has been widely documented by the Colombian press, which exerts a strong influence on people's opinions. This article reports the results of a case study which explored the representations of these FETs in three major Colombian newspapers published between 2010 and 2015 and the linguistic mechanisms employed to represent them this way. The study drew on critical linguistic theories and used Fairclough's (1992) model for critical discourse analysis (CDA). The analysis reveals a systematic attempt on the part of the Colombian press to represent FETs as superior, which is achieved through the use of several mechanisms, such as stressing their foreignness and voluntariness; raising their status from inexperienced teachers to tutors, advisors and benefactors; making them the actors; and attributing them superpowers. It is concluded that by doing this, newspapers are contributing to the discrimination of local English teachers, perpetuating native-speakerism ideologies, and disregarding the enormous benefits of having LETs in the educational system, among other aspects.

Key Words: Native-speakerism, non-native English teachers, native English teachers, representations, critical discourse analysis.

Resumen

En un esfuerzo por aumentar el dominio del inglés de sus ciudadanos y de hacer que éstos sean más competitivos en la economía global, muchos países latinoamericanos han recurrido a la importación de docentes de inglés para apoyar a los maestros locales en las escuelas. El fenómeno ha sido ampliamente documentado por la prensa colombiana, la cual ejerce una gran influencia dentro de la población. Este artículo informa los resultados de un estudio de caso que exploró las representaciones de estos docentes en tres importantes periódicos colombianos publicados entre 2010 y 2015, y los mecanismos lingüísticos utilizados para representarlos de esta manera. El estudio se basó en teorías lingüísticas críticas y utilizó el modelo de Fairclough (1992) para el análisis crítico del discurso. El análisis revela un intento sistemático por parte de la prensa colombiana de representar a los docentes extranjeros como superiores, lo cual se logra mediante el uso de varios mecanismos como el hincapié en su calidad de voluntarios y extranjeros; la elevación de su estatus de profesores sin experiencia a tutores, asesores y benefactores; la conversión de éstos en actores; y la atribución a éstos de súper poderes. Se concluye que, al hacer esto, los periódicos no solo contribuyen a la discriminación de los docentes locales, sino que también perpetúan el ‘native-speakerism’ e ignoran los enormes beneficios de tener docentes locales de inglés en el sistema educativo, entre otros aspectos.

Palabras Claves: Native-speakerism, profesores de inglés, profesores nativos, representaciones, análisis crítico del discurso.

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to increase the English proficiency level of their citizens and thus make them more competitive in the global economy, many Latin American countries have taken a series of actions which include the importation of the so called ‘Native English Speaker Teachers’ (NESTs), henceforth called foreign English teachers (FETs). These teachers have been brought to support the work of ‘Nonnative English Speaker Teachers’ (NNESTs) (Correa & González, 2016), henceforth called local English teachers. As stated by González and Llorca (2016), this last measure is not original to Latin-American countries. It is a copy of measures already being taken in countries such as Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan (Coskun, 2013), which have supported an old phenomenon called ‘native-speakerism’. This, according to Holliday (2006: 385), is:

“a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology.”

This language ideology has been reported extensively in the literature produced by scholars around the world and in the press of these countries, where it is very easy to find a number of articles with titles such as the following, which upgrade FETs and downgrade LETs.

- (1) Super gringos have arrived to teach English in schools in Barranquilla (*Súper gringos llegan a enseñar inglés en colegios de Barranquilla*) (El Tiempo, January 27, 2015)
- (2) English teachers also fail.
- (3) (*Profesores de inglés también se rajan*) (El Tiempo, April 5, 2011)
- (4) English teachers: few and without certification.
- (5) (*Profesores de inglés: pocos y sin certificación*) (El Nuevo Diario, December 15, 2014)
- (6) Failed, 1 in 6 English teachers.
- (7) (*Reprobado, 1 de cada 6 maestros de inglés*) (El Universal, February 11, 2015)
- (8) There are teachers with no ability to teach the English language.
- (9) (*Existen maestros sin habilidad para enseñar el idioma inglés*) (El Universo, July 24, 2010)

The spread of this ideology through the press is particularly worrisome for at least three reasons: First, it has brought about many discriminatory practices which include lower salaries for LETs, the requirement of a native speaker (NS) status in job advertisements (Selvi, 2010), the treatment of LETs as second class citizens in the world of language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2016), the assignment to FETs of the advanced challenging courses, while confining LETs to basic courses (Corcoran, 2011), and the hiring of FETs without teaching qualifications over qualified and experienced LETs (Alseweed, 2012), among other practices. Second, it has divided “all speakers of English into those who possess and those who do not possess an unstated set of preferential attributes” (Rivers, 2016: 77) and created a hierarchy between NSs and NNSs, where the former is ‘privileged’ and the latter is ‘subordinated’ (Huang, 2018), and where “one group benefits and one group is excluded” (Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012: 3). Finally, the press is known to exert an enormous influence on people’s opinions. Certainly, as stated by van Dijk (1996: 17), the press has a “special access to the minds of the public”. It exerts a particularly powerful “persuasive power” on them, and “is particularly effective (when) its reporting is consistent with the interests of most readers” (van Dijk, 1996: 17).

In spite of the pervasiveness of this type of articles in the Latin American press, and of the impact that these may have on people’s conceptualization of FETs and LETs, no studies have been conducted so far on how both FETs and LETs are being represented in the press of Latin American or other countries in the globe. The closest studies have been those conducted by González and Llurda (2016), Mackenzie (2020), and Rivers (2016). The first explored the main themes regarding native-speakerism that stemmed from a theme analysis of leading newspapers of Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico. The second and third investigated online employment advertisements for English language teachers in Colombia (Mackenzie, 2020) and Japan (Rivers, 2016) to find if there was any preference for NESTs. However, none of

them was concerned with FETs and LETs representations in media, such as newspapers, and the mechanisms used by these to represent them in those ways.

As for studies on FETs or LETs conducted in Colombia, these are also very scarce and, as most studies on FETs and LETs around the world, have mainly focused on other issues, such as preservice LETs' self-perceptions (Viáfara 2016a, 2016b), LETs' subjectivities (Gómez & Guerrero, 2018), expert and novice LETs' global professional identity (Guerrero & Meadows, 2015), and the importance it has for university LETs to have native-like accents (Arboleda & Castro, 2012).

Aware of the enormous harm that spreading this ideology about FETs and LETs can have particularly on LETs, of the power of the press to influence people's minds, and of the paucity of studies regarding this issue, in 2015 a group of scholars from a university in Colombia and Spain, of which the authors of this article made part, initiated a study which intended to analyze the discourses published in the press of Latin America about FETs and LETs between 2005 and 2015. The purpose of this article is to share the results of a smaller study, within the larger one, which focused on news reports published in three major Colombian newspapers between 2010 and 2015 and featured the arrival to Colombia of FETs during this period. Specific questions addressed by this smaller study were the following: (a) What are the representations of FETs in major Colombian newspapers published in these years, and (b) the main mechanisms employed to represent them this way? To respond to these questions, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was conducted, drawing on Fairclough's (1992) CDA framework.

The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the history of FETs in Colombia up to December 2017, when the program in charge of bringing them was canceled. Next, they present the theories that grounded this study, and the methods employed to collect and analyze the data. Finally, the article presents the main findings, and some conclusions and implications of the study.

1. Background: Foreign English teachers in Colombia

The history of FETs in public schools in Colombia goes back to 1961 when the Peace Corps arrived in Colombia. According to one of the newspapers featured here, besides working with the communities in nutrition, health, agriculture and general education projects, these men and women, the last group of which was reported to have arrived in 2010, often worked with English teachers in public schools and with preservice teachers in universities (El Tiempo, May 11, 2010). Nonetheless, in 2009, a non-profit organization called Volunteers Colombia allied with World Teach (an NGO created by Harvard students in 1986), to bring 'volunteers' from different parts of the globe to work at public schools, universities, and a government funded vocation school called SENA, with branches in 14 cities around the country. These

volunteers were required to be 18 years or older and to have a Native level of proficiency in the language, although it is not clear what this meant. Their job was to “support Colombian teachers in their classrooms” (Jaramillo-Sanint, 2015: 15).

The project served as the basis for the *Programa de Formadores Nativos Extranjeros* (English Teaching Fellowship Program- ETFP) that the Colombian government launched in 2015 in partnership with the Heart for Change Foundation (HFC), another NGO supported by the Colombian government, as part of the Bilingual Colombia 2014-2018 initiative. As Volunteers Colombia, the ETFP quickly spread throughout the country, having a presence in over 20 cities and towns (HFC & the National Ministry of Education-NME, 2016). According to NME (2019), by the end of 2017, the program had brought 1470 fellows to Colombia.

The professionals in this group were required to be 21 years old or older, and to have a basic level of Spanish (HFC & NME, 2016). Even though they did not need TEFL Certification or English teaching experience, they were paid a salary that exceeded that of regular school teachers (Gómez & Guerrero, 2018). Also, in spite of the fact that many of them came from countries such as Serbia, Ghana and the Czech Republic, where English is not considered a native language, they were introduced as “native speakers” (HFC & NME, 2016: 13). Given the high prestige that NS enjoy in Colombia (Gómez & Guerrero, 2018; Vanegas, Fernández, González, Jaramillo, Muñoz & Ríos, 2016), this introduction of them as native speakers may have obeyed to an effort on the part of HFC and the NME to raise their status. Such qualification of them as ‘native speakers’ would be taken up by the Colombian press, as was soon evident to us in our analysis of the newspaper articles.

According to NME (2019), between 2015 and 2017, these so-called NS, worked with 4.235 LETs, in co-teaching and immersion programs, provided education to 398.800 public school students studying grades 9th through 11th, in 902 schools throughout the country, and raised the percentage of school graduates with B1 level of English from 1% to 5,6%. In spite of this supposed success, in December 2017, the HFC foundation issued a statement saying that it would not be taking part in the 2018 Colombian ETFP as they did not agree with the terms published by the NME (HFC, 2017).

2. Theoretical framework

The study draws on critical theories of language and language teaching, which problematize the notions of English as a language belonging to one single group of NS, and on CDA theories. The following paragraphs describe both bodies of theories.

2.1. English and the NS fallacy

For a long time, English was conceived as monolithic language, property of the NS of that language (Love & Ansaldo, 2010). These conceptions have long been contested by critical scholars who claim that: (a) English is “the non-private property of non-individuals” (Hutton, 2010: 640), and (b) the distinction between Ns and NNS has only served to promote what they call the ‘NS fallacy’ which basically consists in the belief that “the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker” (Phillipson, 1992: 193).

Among the scholars who contend that English is not “the collective property of a defined group” (Hutton, 2010: 640), but the property of all those who use it are those belonging to what used to be called English as an International Language (EIL) and is now called English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011). These scholars argue, among other aspects, that English is not a fixed or ‘standard’ set of rules to be learned (Seidlhofer, 2011) but:

“a shared communicative resource within which they [ELF users] innovate, accommodate and code-switch, all the while enjoying the freedom to produce forms that NSEs do not necessarily use” (Jenkins et al., 2011: 297).

Besides, they believe that all English varieties, native or non-native, should be accepted in their own right rather than evaluated against a NSE benchmark; and that non-native Englishes are different rather than deficient (Jenkins et al., 2011). In this sense, what NNES need is a “skillful use of English” not “the mastery of native English forms” because “lingua franca communication involves above all the acquisition of the pragmatic skills required to adapt one’s English use to the demands of the current communicative situation” (Jenkins et al., 2011: 301).

Among the scholars that believe the division between NEST and NNEST only serves to promote the NS fallacy that Phillipson (1992) discussed, are Jenkins et al. (2011), Diniz (2011), Zhang and Zhan (2014), and Huang (2014). To Jenkins et al. (2011), for example, the fallacy contributes to spread the idea that NNS are ‘failed native speakers’ when in fact they are:

“highly skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs, and who are found to prioritize successful communication over narrow notions of ‘correctness’ in ways that NSEs, with their stronger attachment to their native English, may find more challenging” (Jenkins et al., 2011: 284).

To Diniz (2011), it puts an unnecessary pressure on ELT practitioners worldwide and has a serious effect on institutional policies and practices, such as the refusal to hire NNEST or the firing of these because of their accents. To Zhang and Zhan (2014: 570), “it shifts attention from teachers’ professional knowledge and expertise to

linguistic status.” Finally, to Huang (2014) it promotes the belief that NEST can “perform a language and represent the culture of that language more accurately than their non-native counterparts” (Huang, 2014: 119), when, in fact, as Alseweed (2012) so clearly shows in his article, they are merely different from LETs and different does not mean better.

Studies on students, teachers and administrators’ perceptions, attitudes and preferences concerning FETs seem to confirm Alseweed’s (2012) findings. In these studies, FETs are considered better than LETs in some areas but not in others. In terms of pedagogy, for example, they are seen as more prompt to using innovative teaching strategies and to preparing students for independent learning, and as more capable of providing a relaxed learning environment (Alseweed, 2012). Also, they are considered to be more reluctant to spend time on grammar (Lipovsky & Mahboob, 2010), and more motivating for students to learn English (Tatar, 2019). Besides, they are believed to be better in areas connected to oral production such as pronunciation or oral exercises (Coskun, 2013; Rámila-Díaz, 2015), speaking, vocabulary, target language culture and civilization (Gutiérrez, 2014).

However, LETs are regarded as more capable of explaining lessons clearly; more conscious of the students’ learning styles; more aware of students’ language needs (Alseweed, 2012). Also, they are believed to be easier for students to understand, and to communicate with (Florence, 2012); more capable of explaining English grammar to them (Geeta, 2016), more able to help students build metalinguistic strategies and sociocultural understandings (Diniz, 2011); and preferable in areas such as reading (Gutiérrez, 2014) learning strategies (Rámila-Díaz, 2015), and vocabulary learning (Coskun, 2013). Finally, they are believed to have more cultural sensitivity to students’ realities as they have more awareness of their cultural backgrounds (Diniz, 2011).

In sum, as Subtirelu (2011: 5) states:

“while it appears that the NS fallacy continues to exist, and the NS norm prevails as the overwhelming choice of standards for English language learning (...) so do alternative discourses that construct NNSTs as legitimate, authoritative users and instructors of English”.

2.2. Media discourses and CDA

To critical scholars, language does not merely reflect reality. It:

“constructs reality (...) it moves people to do things” and so do discourses. These “manufacture or produce people. They construct subjectivities, both an ‘us’ and an ‘other’” (Janks, 2010: 60).

As such, the discourses used by people to discuss topics, such as FETs and LETs, both reflect society's views or representations of them and construct certain views of them. Fairclough (1995a: 65) agrees with this claim when he states:

“It is I believe important both for linguists to be sensitive to how **discourse is shaped by and helps to shape social structures and relations**, and (...) to be sensitive to how social structures and relations are instantiated in the fine detail of daily social practices, including discourse”.

Particularly important are the discourses used by media sources such as the press since they reach all levels of society. Media discourses have “the power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, social identities” (Fairclough, 1995b: 2). They are “shaped by, and in turn contribute to shaping, the system overall” (Fairclough, 1995b: 12). In other words, they do ideological work, which according to Fairclough (1992: 110) consists of “transmitting the voices of power in a disguised and covert form”, and “offering images of and categories for reality, positioning and shaping social subjects, and contributing for the most part to social control and reproduction” (Fairclough, 1992: 161).

To find out how texts do this ideological work, scholars have for years used CDA. This, has been described as an analytical tool that discourse analysts employ “to understand how language works to position readers in the interests of power” (Janks, 2010: 23), and as an “approach to language, which analyzes discourse to highlight inequality that is expressed, produced, and reproduced through language” and which “focuses on linguistic analysis to expose misrepresentation, discrimination, or particular positions of power in all kinds of public discourse such as political speeches, newspapers, and advertisements.” (Young & Fitzgerald, 2005).

Although several different frameworks of CDA have been proposed, probably the most well know are Halliday's (1978) and Fairclough's (1992). Drawing on Halliday (1978), Fairclough's (1992) model is composed of three levels: text, discourse practice, and social practice. The inner part, 'text', describes, among other aspects, the process types and participants that are favored in a text, the attribution of responsibility or transitivity, the metaphors used in the discourse sample, and the effects these have upon thinking and practice, among other aspects. The middle part, 'discourse practice', looks at the discourses that are drawn upon, the intertextual chains that are made, and the processes of production (e.g., who are the authors of these texts), and consumption (e.g., what people do with the texts and their outcomes) of texts. The outer part, 'social practice', is concerned with the nature of the social practice of which the discourse is part. It analyses, among other aspects, the ideological and political effects of discourse, and the systems of knowledge and belief associated with

it. While the first part requires mostly description, the other two parts require interpretation (discourse level) and explanation (social level) (Janks, 2005).

3. Methodological framework

This study follows a case study methodology and uses content and CDA tools for the analysis of these data. The following paragraphs provide details about the data collected and how it was analyzed.

3.1. Corpus

Data for this study included 15 news reports published between 2010 and 2015 in the online version of three major Colombian newspapers: El Tiempo, El Colombiano, and El País. These newspapers were selected based on two aspects: First, they covered the news from the three biggest cities in Colombia and their surrounding regions: Bogotá (El Tiempo), Medellín (El Colombiano), and Cali (El País). Second, they were three of the major newspapers in the country, according to the number of digital readers, and number of visits that each newspaper reported at the time (2014), and according to tools used to estimate website traffic, such as Alexa (Hernández, 2014), as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Colombian news media ranking 2014.

Position	Alexa Ranking	News Media in Colombia	URL
1	11	El Tiempo	www.eltiempo.com
2	15	El Espectador*	www.elespectador.com
3	24	Semana**	www.semana.com
4	27	El Colombiano	www.elcolombiano.com
5	40	El País	www.elpais.com.co
6	49	Caracol Radio	www.caracol.com.co
7	55	Portafolio	www.portafolio.co
8	57	Vanguardia.com	www.vanguardia.com
9	65	Minuto30	www.minuto30.com
10	74	Noticias RCN	www.noticiasrcn.com

*This newspaper was left out because it was from the same region as El Tiempo, which had a higher number of visits and readers.

**Semana was left out since it is not a newspaper but a magazine.

As most main media outlets in Colombia, including television, radio and newspaper, the three newspapers are well known for their right-wing tendencies. El Tiempo, for example, which has a more national reach compared to the other two, has the Santos family as one of its main shareholders. This is the family of ex-president Juan Manuel Santos's (2010-2018), who strongly supported right-wing ex-president Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), and even made part of his government as Secretary of Defense (2006-2009) (Torres, 2012; Mier, 2014). El Colombiano, which is the third oldest newspaper in the country after El Espectador and El Tiempo, has also been charged with serving as a platform for the support of ex-president Uribe Vélez (Pardo & Ospina, 2014). Finally, El País, which was founded by a conservative family

of politicians in the region, the Lloredas, is nowadays considered a center-right newspaper (Moreno, 2018).

These newspapers were searched for the following words: English teachers (*profesores de inglés, docentes de inglés*), English teaching (*enseñanza del inglés*), foreign teachers (*profesores extranjeros*), foreign volunteers (*voluntarios extranjeros*), native speakers (*hablantes nativos*), bilingualism (*bilingüismo*) in the issues published online between 2010 and 2015. The decision to search for those years was based on the fact that it was in 2010 that the news about Volunteers Colombia began to spread, getting its highest peak in 2015 when the Colombian government launched the ETFP that brought ‘volunteers’ from different parts of the world to work with high school teachers of grades 9-11.

The search produced 207 news reports. From these 207 news reports, those that focused on the volunteer’s program, whether it was its earliest version with the World Teach foundation or the newest version with Heart for Change were chosen. The result was 15 articles. Of these 9 came from El Tiempo, 3 from El Colombiano, and 3 from El País. The spread and focus of these articles are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Collected newspaper articles.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
El Tiempo	1	0	2	0	0	6	9
El Colombiano	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
El País	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
Total per year	1	0	3	1	0	10	-
Grand Total							15
Focus	Arrival of volunteers from WT to schools in Cartagena	-	Arrival of 36 more volunteers to the country	Arrival of 43 more volunteers from WT	-	Arrival of volunteers from HFC to Barranquilla, Medellín and Cali	-

3.2. Design

To analyze the articles, we used Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional model for CDA explained above. But first, we prepared the articles for analysis. To do this, we took several steps: First, we made a content analysis chart in which we grouped the articles by topic, by newspaper and by year, so we could have a good sense of how many we had of each, and a second chart in which we laid out the structure of each article, using van Dijk’s (1986) model for how to structure news articles: headline, lead, main events, background, consequences and comments. Next, we divided each article into clauses.

From these, we made an analysis of participants to draw the representations associated with FETs, with LETs (e.g., volunteers, teachers, superheroes), noting their recurrence, location, and the author¹ of the representation. Next, we grouped the representations that were related, creating a series of lexical chains (e.g., FETs as volunteers, as foreigners, as teachers). We also made a subchart in which we included all of the metaphors we found in each article, clause by clause, and the author of these metaphors. Finally, we took all the processes and did a transitivity analysis to discover how many times both FETs and LETs were being presented as doers and as done to's. Once we had all the charts, we were able to draw some conclusions as to the main representations of FETs and LETs on the newspapers and the mechanisms used by the press to represent them this way (see results section below). Nonetheless, as Fairclough's model requires going beyond mere descriptions, following Janks (2005), we put these findings on the left-hand column on a chart (e.g., Stressing FET's voluntariness and foreignness), and then added a column named 'interpretation' in which we wrote the discourses that these drew upon (discourse level), and the ideological or political effect of these discourses (social level). Once we had this, we proceeded to write up our results.

4. Results

A CDA of the news reports at the three discourse levels reveals a systematic attempt on the part of the Colombian press to represent FETs as superior to LETs. This is achieved through the use of several linguistic mechanisms such as stressing FETs' voluntariness and foreignness; raising their status from inexperienced teachers to tutors, advisors, and benefactors while lowering the status of LETs; making FETs the actors; and attributing them superpowers.

4.1. Stressing the FET's voluntariness and foreignness

Attempts to stress the voluntariness and foreignness of FETs are clearly seen in the analysis of lexical chains that was done after the transitivity analysis. This analysis shows that the most common representation of the FETs was as 'volunteers' (41 times). This representation is connected to processes that, although also found in connection to people who do not do volunteer work, reflect activities performed by volunteers and reinforce the idea that is being transmitted with the use of the word 'volunteer', as can be concluded from Table 3 and the examples below.

Table 3. Lexical chain 1: FETs as volunteers.

Participants	Related Processes
Volunteers (<i>Voluntarios</i>) (41)	Work (<i>trabajan</i>) (7)
	Support (<i>apoyar</i>) (3)
	Can help (<i>pueden ayudar</i>) (1)
	Will seek to improve (<i>buscarán mejorar</i>) (1)
	Will not charge (<i>no cobrarán</i>) (1)
	Will help improve (<i>ayudarán a mejorar</i>) (1)

Examples:

- (1) A group of 15 foreigners **will support** the bilingual program in District’s public schools. (*Grupo de 15 extranjeros **apoyará** el programa de bilingüismo en instituciones educativas del Distrito*) (Lead in *El Tiempo*, January 27, 2015).
- (2) “They are volunteers who **will not charge** a penny for the work they will do in the country. Quite the contrary, they had to spend some money to come.” (*“Se trata de voluntarios que **no cobrarán** ni un solo peso por la labor que realizarán en el país. Al contrario, debieron aportar una cantidad de dinero para poder venir”*) (President of Volunteers Colombia cited in *El Tiempo*, January 13, 2012).
- (3) The idea is that the volunteers **can help** English teachers at the schools selected in each city, and **work** teaching lessons after school hours to community members interested in learning English. (*La idea es que los voluntarios **puedan ayudar** a los docentes de inglés de las instituciones elegidas en cada ciudad y **trabajen** dando clases en contrajornada a las personas de esas comunidades que estén interesadas en aprender inglés*) (*El Colombiano*, January 12, 2012).

The representation of FETs as ‘volunteers’, who ‘work’ hard, ‘provide support’, ‘help’ and do not charge a penny, helps to construe them as non-ordinary people, altruists who are not in it for the money but to fulfill a service to Colombians, especially when the word appears in the headline of the article, as happened in the following cases:

- (1) 40 foreign **volunteers** want Cali to learn English. (*40 **voluntarios** extranjeros quieren que Cali aprenda inglés*) (*El Tiempo*, July 14, 2015).
- (2) The first **volunteers** arrived to Colombia to teach English. (*Llegaron a Colombia los primeros **voluntarios** para enseñar inglés*) (*El Tiempo*, January 20, 2015).
- (3) Program to teach English with **volunteer** ‘gringos’ will reach other towns in Cartagena. (*Programa para enseñar inglés con **voluntarios** ‘gringos’ se extenderá a otras poblaciones de Cartagena*) (*El Tiempo*, May 3, 2010).

The representations are simultaneously exalting of FETs and misleading, considering that FETs were not ‘volunteers’ in the real sense of the word. As explained in the Background section, volunteers from HFC received a salary that exceeded that of many Colombian novice teachers.

The analysis also shows that the second most recurrent (more than 10 times) representations of the FETs was as ‘foreigners’ (36 times). These representations link with other representations of them as ‘native’, ‘US citizens’, ‘gringos’, and ‘foreign’, as can be appreciated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Lexical chain 2: FETs as foreigners.

Participants	Related Processes
Foreigners (<i>extranjeros</i>) (36)	Come (<i>llegan</i>) (24)
Native (<i>nativos</i>) (27)	Arrived (<i>arribaron</i>) (8)
US citizens (<i>estadounidenses</i>) (12)	Will be (<i>Estarán</i>) (3)
Gringos (4)	Will join (<i>se unirán</i>) (2)
Foreign (<i>foráneos</i>) (2)	Will go (<i>irán</i>) (2)
	Will be sent (<i>serán enviados</i>) (2)

These representations are understandable, if we consider FETs in Colombia are, indeed, from different countries. Nonetheless, representations of them as ‘native’, ‘gringos’, and ‘US citizens’, are highly untrue since, as mentioned earlier, these ‘volunteers’ come from countries as varied as Serbia, Ghana y Czech Republic, not just the US, and therefore, do not qualify as ‘US citizens’, or as ‘gringos’, as the latter is a word reserved for US citizens in Colombia. Besides, most of them did not speak English as their first language, which is the meaning that the word ‘native speaker’ most commonly evokes for Colombians, but had a C1 level of English.

The representations do not just appear in the text of the articles. They are also frequently seen in the headlines, which are the most visible and influencing part of the news article. In fact, of the 15 headlines, 10 contain one of these words. Here are some examples:

- (1) **Foreigners** arrived in the country to teach English.
(*Extranjeros arribaron al país para enseñar inglés*) (El Colombiano, January 12, 2012).
- (2) **Gringos** will teach English in poor schools.
(*Gringos dictarán inglés en instituciones pobres*) (El Tiempo, January 13, 2012).
- (3) **US citizens** will be English teachers in the poorest schools.
(*Estadounidenses serán profesores de inglés en los colegios más pobres*) (El Tiempo, January 11, 2012).
- (4) 76 **native** teachers have arrived in Medellín.
(*76 profes nativos llegan a Medellín*) (El Colombiano, July 4, 2015).

In each of these headlines, the foreign quality of the ‘volunteers’ is used as a head noun instead of as an adjective, which makes this quality the center of the clause. Although the processes associated with these representations do not seem to constitute specific attempts to depict them as ‘foreign’, they do seem to reinforce the image, especially the first two: ‘come’ (*llegan*) and ‘arrived’ (*arribaron*), as these are all processes associated with traveling and passing.

Also noteworthy here is how, even though in most cases the authors of these representations are unclear, most of the representations where attribution is made come from high-ranking government officials such as the minister of education (14 times), secretaries of education (13 times), or the ministry through its pages and delegates (9 times), Colombia’s president (1), city mayors (1), all of whom are cited both directly and indirectly.

4.2. Raising FET’s status while lowering that of LETs

Attempts to raise the status of FETs, from inexperienced teachers to teachers at the same level of LETs, to ‘tutors’ and ‘advisors’ of these teachers, all the way to benefactors of both LETs and students, are seen again in the analysis of the third major representation of FETs: ‘trainers’ (*formadores*) (18). When looking at the lexical chains for this representation, it is obvious that the news reporters are making an effort to represent them as ‘teachers’ who came to perform some of the same roles as LETs. This is seen in the widespread use of the words ‘trainers’, ‘teachers’, ‘profs’, and ‘educators’, when referring to them, and in the use of accompanying processes such as ‘reinforce’, ‘dictate’, and ‘teach’ (see Table 5 below).

Table 5. Lexical chain 3: FETs and LETs as teachers.

FETs		LETs	
Participants	Related Processes	Participants	Related Processes
Trainers (<i>formadores</i>) (18)	Reinforce (<i>reforzarán</i>) (4)	Teachers (26) (<i>docentes</i> 22, <i>maestros</i> 4)	Work (<i>trabajarán</i>) (3)
Teachers (<i>docentes</i> 5, <i>teachers</i> 2, <i>maestros</i> 1) (8)	Improve (<i>mejorar</i>) (4)	Profs (<i>profesores</i>) (12)	Do not reach (<i>no alcanzan</i>) (2)
Tutors (<i>Tutores</i>) (5)	Dictate (<i>dictarán</i>) (3)	Educators (<i>educadores</i>) (2)	Have received (<i>han recibido</i>) (2)
Profs (<i>profesores</i>) (3)	Teach (<i>enseñando</i>) (3)	Trainers (<i>formadores</i>) (1)	Maintain (<i>mantienen</i>) (1)
Advisors (<i>asesores</i>) (2)	Strengthen (<i>fortalecer</i>) (3)		Are (<i>son</i>) (1)
Educators (<i>Educadores</i>) (1)	Be (<i>serán</i>) (1)		Prepare (<i>preparan</i>) (1)
	Advising (<i>asesorando</i>)		Be (<i>estarán</i>) (1)
	Be advisors (<i>servir de asesores</i>) (1)		Benefit (<i>se beneficiarán</i>) (1)
	Provide training (<i>darán capacitación</i>) (1)		
	Benefit (<i>beneficiarán</i>) (1)		
	Came to support (<i>vinieron a apoyar</i>) (1)		
	Will seek to improve (<i>buscarán mejorar</i>) (1)		

Although representations of FETs as ‘trainers’, ‘teachers’, ‘profs’, and ‘educators’ seem fair at a first glance, they are in fact both deceiving and demeaning of LETs. They are deceiving for at least two reasons: First, they assign FETs roles that they are neither hired nor prepared to perform. As explained in the Background section, FETs are usually less prepared than LETs pedagogically speaking since they are not required to have a teaching certificate either in their own areas of study or in English. Nor are they required to have any kind of experience teaching English while LETs, at least those working in high schools, are required to have a bachelor’s degree in English language teaching, and usually have several years of experience teaching the subject. Second, they imply that they are in charge of the classroom, when in fact, according to the handbook issued by the national government in conjunction with the HFC foundation, they are hired to collaborate and assist the LETs (HFC & MEN, 2016)

The representations are demeaning because they rob LETs from their functions and displace them from their position as head teachers, as evidenced in the following clauses and headlines.

- (1) “We’ll have some 45 foreigners **teaching the best English** in our schools.”
(*Tendremos unas 45 foráneos **enseñando el mejor inglés** en nuestros colegios*)
(Bogotá’s Secretary of Education cited in El Tiempo, January 27, 2015).
- (2) 200 foreigners **have started teaching English** lessons in public schools.
(*200 extranjeros **comienzan a dar clases** de inglés en colegios públicos*) (Headline, El Tiempo, July 2, 2015).
- (3) 31 foreigners have arrived **to teach English**.
(*Llegan 31 extranjeros para **enseñar inglés***) (Headline, El Colombiano, January 25, 2015).

As can be noticed, nothing in these clauses and headlines suggests even remotely that FETs are here to work jointly with LETs, who are the real experts since they not only have the knowledge of the language but also of the school, the students, the local needs and so on. What they do suggest is that the English spoken by LETs is not as good as that spoken by FETs who are prepared to teach the ‘best’ English, that there is a great need for them in public education, and that LETs have really accomplished very little in terms of English instruction in this sector, as FETs are here to “teach English”, not to help teach or assist LETs.

This idea that the LETs are incompetent is reinforced by heavily charged metaphors such as ‘flanked’ (*rajados*), through which LETs are depicted as plainly incompetent and ignorant of their subject matter. In the article *Foreigners Arrived in the Country to Teach English* (*Extranjeros Arribaron al País para Enseñar Inglés*), for example, after the lead ‘Flanked in English’ (*Rajados en Inglés*), the journalist from El Colombiano explains that the students who could not reach the intermediate basic

level B1, expected in, the national test *Pruebas Saber* were not the only ones who ‘flanked’ (*rajados*). The LETs, who taught them, also were.

According to figures from the Ministry of Education, **only 15 %** of the teachers who teach English at public schools **reach** an advanced-intermediate level (B2)

(*Según cifras del ministerio de Educación, solo el 15 por ciento de los docentes que enseñan inglés en los colegios oficiales alcanzan un nivel intermedio avanzado (B2)*) (El Colombiano, January 12, 2012).

But, as can also be concluded from Table 4, FETs are also assigned other roles that LETs are not, such as ‘tutors’, ‘advisors’ and benefactors, the last of which is implied. These roles are reinforced with processes such as ‘advise’, ‘provide training’, ‘serve as advisors’, ‘benefit’, ‘come to support’, ‘strengthen’, and so on, as seen below.

The representations of FETs as ‘trainers’, ‘tutors’ and ‘advisors’ do not just put FETs at an undeserved equal level with LETs. They also portray them as much more prepared than they are, so much more that they can tutor and train them, as seen in the following clauses:

- (1) Students from several schools in La Boquilla village will also have volunteers teaching them and **advising** English teachers.

(*Los estudiantes de varios colegios del corregimiento de La Boquilla también tendrán voluntarios enseñándoles y asesorando a los profesores de inglés*) (El Tiempo, May 3, 2010).

- (2) There they will become the **reinforcement** for the English teachers of 5.400 students and will also **provide them with training**.

(*Allí se convertirán en el refuerzo de los docentes de inglés de 5.400 estudiantes y, además, les darán capacitación a ellos*) (El Tiempo, January 13, 2012).

- (3) The volunteers (...) live in the town and, besides **working as advisors** and **teaching lessons**, mingle with the community.

(*Los voluntarios (...) conviven en la población y, además de servir de asesores y de dictar clases, se compenetran con la comunidad*) (El Tiempo, May 3, 2010).

Finally, the use of processes such as ‘strengthen’, ‘seek to improve’, and ‘came to support’, in relation to FETS, and the use of processes such as ‘have received’, in relation to LETs, both portray FETs as benefactors of LETs and suggests that something is wrong with LETs and the English they have been imparting, as this needs to be ‘improved’, ‘strengthened’ and ‘reinforced’, as evidenced in the examples below.

- (1) 124 foreigners have come to Colombia to **strengthen** the teaching of English.
(124 extranjeros llegan a Colombia para **fortalecer** la enseñanza del inglés) (Headline, El País, January 20, 2015)
- (2) They **will seek to improve** teachers' and students' capacity to acquire this language (Ellos **buscarán mejorar** la capacidad de los maestros y alumnos para apropiarse de esta lengua) (El Colombiano, January 12, 2012)
- (3) "The volunteers **came to support** us with our teachers and students at public schools so that the Bilingual Colombia program become a reality."
(Los voluntarios **vinieron a apoyarnos** con nuestros docentes y con nuestros estudiantes de colegios oficiales para que el programa de Colombia Bilingüe sea una realidad) (Parody cited in El País, January 20, 2015)
- (4) Most teachers **have received support** from the volunteer American citizens to **perfect** the methods of teaching English as a second language.
(La mayoría de profesores **han recibido apoyo** por parte de ciudadanos estadounidenses voluntarios **para perfeccionar** los métodos de enseñanza del idioma como segunda lengua) (El Tiempo, May 3, 2010).

4.3. Making the FETs the main actors

Attempts to make FETs the actors are reflected in a transitivity analysis of the news articles. This analysis reveals that, while FETs are actors in 57 occasions and done-to's in none, LETs are actors in only 5 occasions and done-to's of the FETs in 16. Besides, while FETs are actors who perform a variety of tasks (e.g., teach, strengthen, work, improve, support, reinforce), including the highly demeaning fine-tuning, LETs are only actors who 'work jointly' with FETs, or 'do not achieve', as can be gathered from Table 6 and the examples below:

Table 6. Transitivity analysis: Doers and done-to's in the news reports.

FETs		LETs	
Doers (57)	Done to's (0)	Doers (5)	Done to's (10) Objects of:
Teach (<i>enseñar</i>) (10) Strengthen (<i>fortalecer</i>) (7) Work (<i>trabajar</i>) (6) Improve (<i>mejorar</i>) (3) Support (<i>apoyar</i>) (3) Reinforce (<i>reforzar</i>) (3) Join 4 (<i>se unirán</i> 2, <i>se integran</i> 2) Will become (<i>se convertirán</i>) (2) Have (<i>tienen</i>) (2) Came to support (<i>vinieron a apoyar</i>) (2) Fine-tune (<i>afinar</i>) (1) Others (25)		Work (<i>trabajar</i> 1, <i>trabajarán con</i> 3) (4) Do not achieve (<i>no alcanzan</i>) (1)	Work (<i>trabajar</i>) (6) Received (<i>han recibido</i>) (2) Support (<i>apoyar</i>) (2) Advise (<i>asesorar</i>) (1) Complement (<i>complementar</i>) (1) Provide training (<i>darán capacitación</i>) (1) Practice (<i>practicar</i>) (1) Teach (<i>enseñar</i>) (1) Fine-tune (<i>afinar</i>) (1)

Examples of FETs and LETs as doers can be found in the following clauses:

- (1) “The idea is that this becomes a permanent program through which more volunteers may come to **fine-tune** teachers each year.”
(*La idea es que esto se convierta en un programa continuo, con el que cada año lleguen más voluntarios que **afinen** a los docentes*) (Parody cited in El Tiempo, January 20, 2015).
- (2) Gina Parody welcomed 124 native foreign trainers who **will benefit** 30.240 students of ninth, tenth and eleventh grades.
(*Gina Parody, dio la bienvenida a 124 formadores, nativos extranjeros que **beneficiarán** a 30.240 estudiantes de los grados noveno, décimo y 11*) (El País, January 20, 2015).
- (3) “We’ll carry out a co-teaching process with 1.050 Colombian English teachers who **will work** in tandem with the 350 natives of different nationalities.”
(*Realizaremos un proceso de co-enseñanza con 1.050 docentes de inglés colombianos que **trabajarán** de manera conjunta con los 350 nativos de diferentes nacionalidades*) (Parody cited in El Tiempo, July 2, 2015).

In these clauses, FETs are both actors and benefactors of teachers and students (they ‘fine-tune’ and ‘benefit’ them), while LETs are, at best, workers that cannot be trusted to ‘work’ alone; and at worst, malfunctioning objects that need to be manipulated and improved, hence the fine-tuning.

4.4. Attributing FETs superpowers

Attempts to attribute FETs superpowers are seen in the lexical chain of the fourth major representation: superheroes. This analysis shows some nouns, such as ‘celebrities’, ‘super gringos’, ‘pale-faced superheroes’, and ‘justice league’, which, although not as recurrent as the ones used to portray them as ‘foreigners’ and ‘volunteers’, or to raise their status, are still very salient. The nouns are accompanied by a series of processes which reinforce the representation, as show in Table 7 and the examples below.

Table 7. Lexical chain 4: FETs as superheroes.

Participants	Related Processes
Celebrities (<i>personajes</i>) (2)	Face (<i>se enfrentan</i>) (1)
Súper gringos (1)	Will make possible (<i>va a hacer que</i>) (1)
Pale-faced super héroes (<i>súper héroes cara pálida</i>) (1)	To perfect (<i>perfeccionar</i>) (1)
Justice league (<i>liga de la justicia</i>) (1)	Take over (<i>se toman</i>) (1)
	To advance firmly (<i>avanzar con paso firme</i>) (1)

Examples:

- (1) Then, the foreigners, as if they were part of a justice league, accepted the task.
(*Después, los extranjeros, como si fueran parte de una **liga de la justicia**, aceptaron la tarea*) (El Tiempo, January 27, 2015).

(2) After the phrase, which reveals like a photograph what happens in a school when a foreigner comes, a burst of laughter came from the audience, including the group of ‘**pale-faced superheroes**’.

(*Después de la frase, que expone como una fotografía lo que ocurre en colegio cuando llega un extranjero, vino una carcajada del auditorio, incluyendo la del grupo de ‘**super héroes carapálida**’*) (El Tiempo, January 27, 2015).

(3) **Super gringos** have come to teach English at schools in Barranquilla.

(***Super gringos** llegan a enseñar inglés in colegios de Barranquilla*) (Headline, (El Tiempo, January 27, 2015).

These attempts to represent FETs as ‘superheroes’ who, collecting from the other categories, are ‘foreign’, ‘do not charge’ for their work, and are much more knowledgeable and altruistic than LETs, is reinforced with a series of processes which leave no doubt as to the image that the news reporter wants to create of them in the readers’ minds, as seen in the following examples:

(1) “The presence of these trainers is a wise decision that will surely allow to **advance firmly** in the foreign language competences of teachers and students in the 11 public schools.”

(*La presencia de estos formadores es un acierto que con seguridad permitirá **avanzar con paso firme** en las competencias del idioma extranjero de docentes y estudiantes de las 11 instituciones educativas oficiales*) (Cali’s Secretary of Education cited in El Tiempo, July 14, 2015).

(2) English teachers **take over** the classrooms in Cali.

(*Profesores de inglés **se toman** las aulas de Cali*) (El País, August 9, 2015).

(3) Presently in Cali there are 29 trainers who work in 12 public schools and **have to face** daily between 4 and 5 groups of 38 students from 9th, 10th and 11th grades, on average (*En Cali actualmente se encuentran 29 formadores que trabajan en 12 instituciones educativas y **se enfrentan** a entre 4 y 5 grupos de 38 estudiantes en promedio de grados 9°, 10° y 11° diariamente*) (El País, August 9, 2015).

In all these clauses, it is evident that FETs are not regular teachers. They are all white (gringos, pale-faced), have qualities that are outstanding (they face, perfect, take over, advance firmly), they are altruists (volunteers) who have come to work in the poorest schools to rescue students from the hands of badly prepared LETs, they have superpowers (super gringos), and they can perform marvels like the ‘justice league’. LETs, by default, become the ones whose teaching is faulty, obsolete and needs to be ‘taken over’; and the ones in need of ‘support’, ‘improvement’, ‘help’, and ‘strengthening’.

Attempts to represent FETs as ‘superheroes’ are also evident in an analysis of metaphors in the news reports. In this, apart from the strong metaphors flanked

(*rajados*) and fine-tune (*afinar*), which have already been mentioned, we find the metaphor ‘vital’ (*vitales*) in a clause that reads as follows:

“Educators like the ones in this group, from pre-school, elementary and secondary school, are **vital** in the teaching of a second language, especially English, hence the efforts of the Ministry of Education to train them.”

(Educadores como los de este grupo, tanto de pre-escolar, primaria y secundaria, son vitales en la enseñanza del segundo idioma, en especial el inglés, por eso los esfuerzos del ministerio de educación para capacitarlos) (Lead, *El Colombiano*, January 25, 2015).

The metaphor suggests both that there cannot be real learning of English with LETs as FETs are ‘vital’, and that they are hired to provide professional development to LETs who are less prepared; hence, the efforts by the NME to train them.

In sum, throughout the news reports, there is a conscious effort to represent FETs in a very good light by somehow twisting their roles, fictionalizing their characters, stretching the truth about who they are, and what is worse, invisibilising the LETs. Indeed, nowhere in these articles is the LETs status and qualifications, their knowledge of the local context and students, and their often extended experience acknowledged. They are never represented as ‘tutors’, ‘advisors’, or ‘trainers’. Neither are they represented as ‘superheroes’, a title that many of them deserve by virtue of working in poor violent neighborhoods where their lives are at risk every day and where they often have to work under strenuous circumstances (Correa & Usma, 2013).

5. Discussion

As important as it is to unravel all of these representations of FETs and LETs, a CDA of the kind proposed by Fairclough (1992) requires that we go beyond a description of such representations and the linguistic mechanisms employed to construct them into an analysis of the discourses these news reports seem to be drawing on and the ideological and political effect they have.

In terms of discourses, the news reports seem to be drawing on at least three distinct ones going on in Colombia about teaching, all of them promoted by the government. The first is that everything foreign is best, which is the reason why it does not matter if the professionals arriving are ultimately ‘native speakers’ according to some definition. They are foreign and that is what counts. This discourse is promoted by the Colombian government through many of its practices. Indeed, as pointed out by González (2007), the Colombian government has privileged foreign entities, materials, and exams over Colombian ones every time. Some examples of this are its hiring of the British Council, not local academics, as consultants before

launching the National Program of Bilingualism 2004 (NPB), and its subsequent versions, the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference to measure students and teachers proficiency, the use of international certification programs, such as the Teachers Knowledge Test (TKT), produced by University of Cambridge to measure their knowledge of English teaching methods (González, 2007), and the hiring of FETs as the solution to students and teachers apparent low English proficiency (Gómez & Guerrero, 2018).

Although in recent years there has been some opening to Colombian companies and academics in terms of allowing their participation in the production of textbooks, TV programs and other materials, such as ‘English Please!’ and ‘Bonny Bonita’ (Correa & González, 2016), the message has always been clear: foreign is best. This message has infiltrated the media, since as we saw in the results section, high ranking government officials seem to be the main source of information for their news about the state of English in the country.

The second discourse that the news reports seem to be drawing on, and that can easily be traced back to government documents, is that which suggests that there is a correct and an incorrect way to speak the language. Indeed, in most government documents on the NPB (mostly booklets, web pages and power points), readers can find that the objective is for students and teachers to learn the ‘right’ way to speak the language, as can be seen in the following excerpt from a booklet prepared by the government to launch the Program for Strengthening the Development of the Competences in Foreign Languages-(PSDCFL), one of the many versions of the NPB.

“De acuerdo con la ley 1651 de 2013, que modifica la ley 115 de 1994, se consideran como objetivos de estos niveles ‘el desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas para leer, comprender, escribir, escuchar, hablar y expresarse **correctamente** en una lengua extranjera’”. (NME, 2014: 3)

(According to Law 1651 of 2013, which modifies Law 115 of 1994, the objectives of these levels are considered to be “the development of communication skills to read, understand, write, listen, speak and express oneself **correctly** in a foreign language).

If we consider that most of the resources bought by the Colombian government come from the British Council (González, 2010), it is easy to assume that the correct way would be that used by British people who are supposed to be the model native speakers. This of course, contradicts the arguments posed by critical scholars from the ELF and EIL, such as Seidlhofer (2011) and Jenkins et al. (2011). As we saw in the theoretical framework. These scholars believe that whether what people say is correct or incorrect should be decided, not based on a standard or a particular set of norms with which everybody must comply, but based on other factors, such as whether it

was accepted and understood by members of the community to which it was addressed (Jenkins et al., 2011).

The third discourse the press seems to be drawing on and promoting has to do with the idea that all that is needed to be a good teacher is knowledge of the subject matter. This discourse has also been highly circulated by the Colombian government in all of its documents, especially in those promoting the ETEP (HFC & NME, 2016), where no mention of the need for these teachers to have a teaching license is to be found. Not surprisingly, the discourse is taken up only when it suits the government, since it does not appear in documents, such as Law 1651, commonly known as Bilingualism Law, which demand that primary school teachers, who do not have any knowledge of English, teach this language (NME, 2013).

The idea that anyone who speaks English at a certain proficiency level is prepared to teach English also contradicts those claims posed by critical scholars who believe English teachers should be not only knowledgeable of the subject matter, in this case English, but have other kind of knowledge, such as pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, contextual knowledge, continuity with past experiences, and support knowledge (Zhang & Zhan, 2014). Nonetheless, as with the theories on English, professional development, theories stating who counts as a good English teacher unfortunately never reach the press, which continues to buy into the government discourses and promoting the idea that FETs are better teachers merely because they speak the language well.

Although ideological and political effects of the circulation of these government discourses by the press are more difficult to trace, it is not too big a stretch to assume that these discourses have at least in part contributed to three distinct phenomena occurring in Colombia educational landscape. The first phenomenon has to do with the underappreciation of local knowledge in all of its forms. Indeed, following government steps, many schools and language centers in Colombia (see, for example, Smart, American School Way and LCN's web pages) only use foreign textbooks produced by national geographic, Cambridge University Press and Oxford. They also offer students and instructors international, not local, English tests, such as TOEFL or IELTS, to have them demonstrate proficiency in the language (Reyes & Plata, 2018); and use the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) and Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT), not local professional development models, to train their instructors (González, 2010; González & Llurda, 2016), all of which feeds into this idea that local knowledge is either bad or nonexistent.

The second phenomenon has to do with the use of obsolete imported English teaching methodologies through which students are submitted to drills and memorization exercises that are supposed to help them get the 'right pronunciation,' memorize the correct grammatical rules, and in general, be able to interact with NS of

the language in fictitious situations in target language contexts. These obsolete methodological approaches are suggested in textbooks and booklets produced by the government, such as the Basic Competency Standards for Foreign Languages- English (*Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras-Inglés* (NME, 2006), and the Orientations for the implementation of projects directed towards the strengthening of English in the territories (*Orientaciones para la implementación de proyectos del fortalecimiento del inglés en las entidades territoriales*) (NME, 2014) and are then used by public school teachers who, lacking the necessary training in the use of more updated and contextualized EIL and ELF methodologies, follow these obsolete ways of teaching (Macías, 2010).

The third and last phenomenon provoked in part by the circulation of these discourses has to do with the creation of a parallel force of teachers who, in spite of not having gone through any licensure program, get the best teaching jobs in private schools and language centers by virtue of being foreign and taking the TKT or ICELT training programs (González, 2010). Meanwhile, LETs, who go through five years of training in local universities, have demonstrated proficiency in the language, and knowledge of the local context, have to either conform with less-paying jobs in public schools, or get in line after these (González & Llurda, 2016), hoping there will be enough positions for everyone.

As can be seen, the political and ideological effects of the circulation of these discourses are enormous and suggest the need for news reporters, and the government officials that they are parroting, to update themselves in new views of English and of FETs and LETs such as the ones described above. This way, instead of focusing on the bad test results of both students and teachers, and the supposed solution: FETs, in their newspaper (news reporters), booklet, web page, and power point (government) communications, maybe they can focus on the real problems affecting English language proficiency of students and teachers in Colombia: the fact that most Colombian public school English teachers do not have the resources, time, training, or financial motivation to teach English this way (Correa, Usma & Montoya, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

This study has unraveled the representations of FETs and LETs in the Colombian press, and the linguistic mechanisms that newspaper reporters use to represent them this way. The study complements those conducted by González and Llurda (2016), Mackenzie (2020), and Rivers (2016) in several respects. For example, in their study, González and Llurda (2016), also found an attempt on the part of the Colombian government, that was then parroted in the news reports they analyzed, to exalt NESTs as excellent English teachers, which to them meant that “the myth of the superiority of the native speaker is still strong” (González & Llurda, 2016: 104). In his study of

job advertisements, Mackenzie (2020: 15), also found an attempt on the part of the advertisers to stress the fact that they were “volunteers” and to highlight their “superior status”, which to him, reinforced the low self-image of Colombian English teachers. Finally, in his analysis of job advertisements in Japan, Rivers (2016: 78) found that advertisers stressed the attribute NS, even though people with a proficiency in the English language were also accepted, a fact which suggested that to these employers NS really meant anyone not Japanese or “a foreigner,” and which served to condemn all other candidates to “an inferior and inescapable category of speakerhood”.

However, this study goes further than these in that it documents other representations of this group in the Colombian press, such as, tutors, advisors, benefactors, altruists, and superheroes. Besides, it also shows the ways LETs are represented, i.e., as unaccomplished, underachieved, incompetent, malfunctioning, and in need of help. Moreover, it shows the linguistic mechanisms used by news reporters to represent both groups: stressing FETs’ voluntariness and foreignness; raising their status from inexperienced teachers to ‘tutors’, ‘advisors’, and benefactors while lowering the status of LETs to tutees, trainees and beneficiaries; making FETs appear as the main actors; and even attributing them superpowers. Finally, it also unravels the discourses the news reporters are drawing on when they represent FETs and LETs this way and the ideological and political effects these representations may have on their readership.

The unravelling of all these aspects is important for several reasons. First, it makes readers less gullible. In Colombia, as in other Latin American countries, people still assiduously read the press and many of them have it as their only source of information. What is more, they believe what they read as the truth. This is seen very clearly every time newspapers publish a news report about LETs flanking national tests (see for example, *El Tiempo*, October 13, 2006, and April 5, 2011). One day later, every Colombian is speaking about it and commenting the supposed new-found truth about English teachers, without questioning the reliability and validity of the tests applied, which many scholars have found to be suspect (Gómez-Sarà, 2017).

If people are alerted as to the mechanism employed by the Colombian press to circulate certain discourses and influence their opinion, they are more likely to take news like these with a grain of salt. They will also know that there is no need for strong expressions such as ‘flanked’ or ‘super gringos’ for the downgrading of one group and the praising of the other to happen. Moreover, they will become aware that there are many seemingly neutral words, such as ‘teach’, ‘dictate’, and ‘reinforce’, which can be used to exclude some actors and signal their deficiencies (LETs), while undeservedly giving protagonism to others and positioning them as experts (FETs). Once alerted to the words, expressions and discourses used by the press and the

negative effect they may have on people's representations of LETs, people might think twice before parroting these discourses. They might also prompt the press to change their own views and discourses about FETs and LETs and take some of the actions proposed above.

At a time when the majority of English speakers all around the world are non-native (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2011); when most English language learners are taught by FETs (Butler, 2007); and when it is obvious that the supply of these teachers is limited (Braine, 2005), it is of paramount importance to conduct more studies that debunk these discourses and stop these false ideologies about FETs and LETs.

These studies could examine, for example, a larger sample of articles and newspapers, from an ampler stretch of time, to provide a more accurate picture of what is currently going on in Colombia and other countries in Latin America in terms of this topic. Finally, they could trace how the discourses regarding both groups of teachers have shifted through time in these countries and sources, as countries have moved from one bilingualism program to another, and identify when this upgrading of one group and downgrading of the other actually started, what it obeyed to, how or if it has shifted, and if it has, what has caused these shifts. The task is worth it.

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NOTE

¹ Drawing on Goffman (1981), Fairclough (1992: 78) defined author as “the one who puts the words together and is responsible for the wording.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank Drs. Adriana González and Enric Llurda for all of their comments and feedback during the early stages of this project.

FUNDING

This project made part of a larger project called Bilingualism, Globalization, Non-native Speaker English Teachers, and the Media: The Case of Latin America. The project was financed by the Research Development Committee (CODI) at Universidad de Antioquia, and carried out in collaboration with the EALE research group.