

Chapter V

The social imaginaries of the English language and its academic-professional component

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Introduction

The economic, political, social, and cultural development of society is considered to depend mainly on the teaching of foreign languages¹ (FL), as it is said that its mastery can be a determining factor in the decrease of poverty (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011) and economic growth and social exchange (Bonilla, 2010; Angulo et al., 2012; Barro, 1991).

In Colombia, the Ministry of National Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN]) established the National Bilingualism Program (Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo [PNB]) in 2004. The main objective of the PNB was to improve the communicative competence of English as a FL at all educational levels across the country. This state policy focuses on a predominant type of bilingualism: Spanish-English (Mejía, 2006). As a result, the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC) established various legal guidelines that include obtaining a "B1-Vantage" level (Agreement 073, 2009) based on the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR). At the time, this document also formed the basis for the PNB.

The problem presented to the undergraduate student academic community at UPTC concerns their perception of English language policies, their professional training, and the actual demands of the job market. It implies that students' perceptions of the English language teaching and learning process may differ substantially from the expectations set out by the state, the UPTC and the demands of the labor market. The way in which policies shape students' behaviors and academic progress is closely related to power dynamics that generate social punishments if students fail to acquire the language that social institutions promote.

1 MEN understands a foreign language as a language that is not spoken in the immediate and local environment, since everyday social conditions do not require its permanent use for communication.

In light of the above, the objective of this article is to present the results of a study that aimed to identify the existing relationships between the students' social imaginaries of English in their professional academic training and the meanings about this language presented in UPTC, MEN and CEFR policies issued between 2000 and 2020².

The situation described is understood through what Castoriadis (1983) refers to as social imaginary meanings. These meanings are fundamental because they influence how individuals perceive reality. In other words, they represent how a social group, both collectively and individually, interprets concepts such as life and death (Cristiano, 2009). Castoriadis (1983) emphasizes that this meaning is inherently social as it exists within society itself. As explained by Cristiano, "there is nothing that grounds the social outside or beyond the social itself" (2009, p. 16).

This article is structured into three sections: the first outlines the theoretical framework, the second describes the methodology, and the third presents the results and conclusions.

Theoretical References

This study adopted Cornelius Castoriadis's concept of the 'imaginary institution of society' due to its close relationship with the social sanctions imposed by social institutions. The word 'imaginary' regularly denotes falsehood or something that does not correspond to reality; the wife says to her husband, "it is not what you imagine," or the psychologist says to his patient, "the enemies are a product of your imagination." In these events, the imaginary is understood as something invented or as a slippage of meaning, in which a part of reality is articulated in conjunction with an image in the mind. However, the connotation of the imaginary is somewhat different for Castoriadis (1983) because,

2 The aforementioned research is entitled "Social imaginaries: meanings about the English language and its professional academic component", Geological Engineering, UPTC, and was developed to obtain the degree of Master in Education-Research of the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia.

for him, the imaginary is the "capacity of creation that allows to order and somehow give existence to the real" (Cristiano, 2009, p. 19). The imaginary would then be the innate capacity of the human being to create images that sustain the reality constructed by social subjects. Thus, the author affirms that: "the imaginary must use the symbolic (...) to pass from the virtual to anything else, it presupposes the imaginary capacity to see in a thing what it is not, to see it other than what it is" (Castoriadis, 1983, p.134).

Therefore, to understand the imaginary meanings to which Castoriadis (1988) refers, it is necessary to recognize that they shape the construction of reality as it is accessible to the subjects of each historical society (Cristiano, 2009). Despite this, Castoriadis makes an effort to situate imaginaries more effectively within the social realm, particularly in two ways: as both the foundation of and the generator of reality.

Castoriadis refers to "instituted reality" as the fixed meanings embedded in institutions that appear to be solidified and relatively stable. However, it is said that this is only relatively so, as the dynamism and self-creation of the social cosmos mean that it is in continuous movement and transformation. Likewise, "instituted reality" refers to the process by which meanings become institutionalized and recognized by society as rules, norms, or social sanctions (Cristiano, 2009).

Castoriadis (1988) distinguishes between instituted imaginary meanings and secondary meanings. In the first case, the author refers to them as "nuclear identities", which means that in the center of every social group, there is a core significance that enables secondary ones. An example that Castoriadis (1988) uses is the explanation of God as a central identity in Western societies, where secondary meanings, such as the ordering of a sacred life, the fulfillment of commandments, and the division between the divine and the mundane, are the result of an ordering of the social cosmos. Castoriadis provides another example in the form of capitalism, where the economy is understood as a central social imaginary. This means that it enables the organization of its outputs as forces of production and surplus value (Cristiano, 2009).

On the other hand, in order to understand the meanings of social imaginaries as an instituting reality, the author refers to it as the cracking of the *social magma* throughout history. Namely, Castoriadis (2011) understands history not as a Hegelian or Marxist scheme with an order to maintain, a route to follow, a plan devised by man, abstract reasoning, or the attainment of explanations, but rather as a dynamic being in itself, continuously creating and reconstituting order. In this way, history is "the constitution of an order that cannot seek its precedent or antecedent anywhere, not even in its already traveled stages" (Castoriadis, 2011, p.140).

While the intent of this piece is not to delve deeply into the concept of social magma, it cannot be totally overlooked, as the author uses it as a metaphor from the field of geology to explain the dynamism and continuous nature of social transformation. In short, magma is a material (whether liquid or semi-liquid) beneath the surface that appears when there is volcanic activity. In the context of social imaginaries, magma constitutes "a hidden dynamic dimension, open, fluid and incandescent like volcanic magma" (Cristiano, 2009, p. 62). This metaphor illuminates the idea that the social is a continuous flow of creation and destruction, of crystallization and rupture, and of the emergence of new forms, orders, and social norms (Castoriadis, 2005).

Thus, for the author, the concepts of magma and history form a fundamental axis of creative mastery that enables individuals, groups, and social classes to generate new social realities. Castoriadis (1988) clarifies that the instituting is not limited to an individual level (i.e., the constitution of an order) but also occurs through the collective, as it is the force that creates the social cosmos, thereby driving transformation within the social realm. This explains why Castoriadis rejects the social as a conjunctive-identitarian logic, since the essence of the social is the anonymous force of creation itself.

At the same time that Castoriadis (1988) explains imaginary meanings within the instituting and instituted, he also does so through the positioning of the social in the psyche and in praxis. In this sense, it is

worth remembering that Castoriadis was also a psychoanalyst. Thus he seeks the relationship of the social with the subject through three stages: 1) the psyche as an ontological dimension of being that cannot be reduced to the collective ontological reality, 2) the psyche as raw material from which institutions and social meanings are formed, and 3) the psyche as a social substratum that remains irreducible to, and never fully controlled by, the institution.

The psyche as an ontological reality not reducible to the anonymous collective explains that, although the psyche needs the social, it is not strictly reduced to it, nor to biological life; this is how “the psyche requires the social and the social requires the psyche” (Cristiano, 2009, p. 25)—viewing the psyche as raw material highlights the idea that, within the subject, the interweaving of socially acquired content always preserves an element that is individual and unconscious. This element appears in the form of a disease, as Castoriadis (1988) refers to it as the ‘Social Institution’.

In this sense, the psyche serves as the virtual medium of the social, yet it is also a force that seeks to alter the established order. The psyche as a social substratum that institutions never dominate reflects the amalgam that Castoriadis establishes in front of what he calls reflexive and deliberative subjectivity. These concepts are nothing more than the human capacity to become aware of their relationship with the institution, altering the established order and creating new realities that are relatively deliberate and conscious. The conditions of the institution are never fully or voluntarily realized, since the individuals themselves embody the institution (Cristiano, 2009).

Finally, what Castoriadis refers to as praxis is the most political and revolutionary aspect of his theory, as it is oriented towards the transformation of institutions as a collectivity that questions, reflects, and reorders. This attempt raises the following question: Do we need a theory like Marxism to effect revolution and to change society structurally? Castoriadis’ answer is no, as for him, there are two ways in which praxis is separated from the notion of “theory-practice.” The

first consists in understanding that knowledge does not precede action, but that the two are constitutive of one another (Cristiano, 2009). In other words, "praxis itself constantly gives rise to new knowledge, because it makes the world speak in a singular and universal language" (Castoriadis, 1983, p. 130). This means that what constitutes the subject in his or her thinking and knowledge is indisputably directed towards an action. However, it is essential to note that this initial understanding of the world is grounded in practical interests; in other words, action may be preconditioned by the aim of making exploitation or the extraction of surplus value more efficient.

The second aspect is that action may precede knowledge in such a way that the subjects, by acting, give meaning to the world. Castoriadis states (1988) that theory cannot be unifying and totalizing in its explanation of the world, because praxis continually challenges theory; in this sense, neither dominates nor controls the other. The interest in praxis in the study carried out at UPTC was to understand that praxis transforms the world and, as it transforms it, simultaneously produces knowledge about the world (Cristiano, 2009). In summary, the instituted is the social reality established by the whole (relationship of constituent elements), the instituting is the creative force, both individual and collective of society, and the psyche is the way of existence of the instituted. It is the most provocative force of social change, and praxis refers to a deliberate action taken to effect transformation.

To conclude, social imaginary meanings depend on the symbolic and historical elements that underpin its theoretical conformation. In this study, these elements served as foundational axes to analyze the social chaos surrounding English language teaching at UPTC. Thus, the social imaginary is understood as the driving force that enables the subject to appropriate and contribute to institutions in order to operate (Castoriadis, 1983).

This relationship is structured by the order that the institution confers on the symbolic, since the social is constructed based on the sanctioned agreements. Consequently, the boundaries of the symbolic are not

restricted exclusively to rational logic but are also shaped by historical processes (Castoriadis, 1988).

Method

Based on Castoriadis' (1983) conceptual explanation, a methodological procedure is required for the characterization of social institutions based on UPTC, MEN and CEFER policies related to the teaching and learning of the English language. In the same line of thought, Castoriadis' proposal aims to understand the meaningful and symbolic aspects of the historical-social axis to explain the existing imaginaries in relation to the English language among those directly involved in this research process. These categories are intended to answer the question: What are the relationships between the social imaginaries that students have of English in their academic and professional training and the meanings of this language present in policies?

This study was developed within a socio-critical approach, which understands research as "a cultural, material and social production, since it is impossible to investigate without our bodies without some relations and without some cultural reservoirs" (Cristancho, 2017 p. 204). This perspective aligns closely with Castoriadis' (1983) view of historical processes as continuous and ongoing acts of creation in which "in all the activities we carry out (...), within this historical process, we create ourselves and produce our societies" (Williams, 2000 as cited in Cristancho, 2017, p. 205). In this sense, research is conceived as a historical process that, rather than seeking to dominate and control the object of study, aims to emancipate the subjects involved and critically reconfigure the world (Cristancho, 2017).

Therefore, within the socio-critical approach, knowledge is understood as a social form of creation, through which research reveals the political and historical dimensions of sociocultural processes. In this framework, epistemological inquiry is directed towards self-criticism and empowerment (Cristancho, 2017).

In conclusion, this socio-critical approach is consistent with Castoriadis' theoretical proposal (1983), since power relations and heterogeneity in society must respond to issues of historical constructions, recovery of the collective psyche, state claims, political agreements, and recognition of symbolic and meaningful networks in society.

Population

Participants in this study included UPTC students who form a chapter of the European Association of Geoscientists & Engineers (EAGE) in Geological Engineering (GE). This academic group is a private non-profit European student association that is autonomous and governed under Colombian and international laws. EAGE serves to promote specific branches of geoscience in the oil, gas, mining, environmental, and civil engineering industries. This organization aims to promote internationalization activities, where students play a crucial role in building local and international academic communities, demonstrating their interest in the future of the industry (EAGE Student Chapter, 2016). The participants in the study included 10 students between the ages of 17 and 24, who were in their fourth to ninth semester of the GE program at the Sogamoso campus of UPTC.

Phases of the Investigation

The study was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved a literature review on social imaginaries in education, with a particular focus on the teaching of English. A compilation of the official documents produced from 2000 to 2020 by the CEFR, MEN, and UPTC was also carried out. The most relevant sources were selected, and the data were organized using the Atlas Ti Software (version 8.3.0). A document was then prepared, which identified and analyzed the social meanings that each institution has of the English language.

The second phase began with the creation of a semi-structured interview template, based on the criteria established by various authors (Sáez et al., 2012; Pintos, 1995, 2004). The expert judgment technique was also

employed, involving three nationally recognized experts from diverse fields within higher education. A pilot test was conducted to ensure that the instrument effectively captured the symbolic relationships between students' imaginaries about the English language and their learning-related behaviors. Informed consent was also obtained from all participants.

The third phase corresponded to the comparison, analysis, and interpretation of the differences between the social imaginaries that participants had about English and the social imaginary meanings of this language as presented in the policies of the CEFR, MEN, and UPTC. The most significant relationships were categorized between students' symbolic constructions and the imaginary meanings embedded in the political agreements, in line with the theoretical perspective of the imaginaries developed by Castoriadis (1983).

In this research process some ethical considerations were taken into account. Written informed consent was requested due to the ethical responsibility as a researcher, which implies the non-disclosure of the research results on a personal basis. The right to integrity, privacy, and intimacy of the research participants must not be affected. Ethical considerations are mainly framed in confidentiality when collecting data, as well as the inappropriate use of the results.

Ethical considerations mainly relate to confidentiality when collecting data and the inappropriate use of results. In the same way, there was an informed consent of the organization of the project, the exercise is legalized through a document that certifies the conscious and voluntary authorization of the students, expressing their desire to participate in the research and the use of the information collected. In accordance with Law 1090 of 2006, it is guaranteed that the names of the participants will not appear in any report, presentation, or academic publication of this research.

Results

This section presents the results obtained through the characterization of the social meanings of the English language as presented in CEFR, MEN, and UPTC policies, and the identification of the symbolic relationships between the social imaginaries that students hold about English and their behavior in relation to learning. First, Saber Pro tests were reviewed to verify if students achieved the "B1-Vantage" level of English at UPTC Sogamoso, Boyacá. Saber Pro is a mandatory state-level higher education exam taken by all students who have completed at least 75% of the credits for their corresponding academic program.

The results show that the average English level remained stagnant at A1 from 2012 to 2017, with the GE program recording the lowest scores (ICFES, 2017). Apart from reviewing the state exam, a preliminary analysis was conducted using a survey applied to 82 students of the Sogamoso branch to understand the perceptions that students have towards the English classes provided at UPTC. Table 1 presents statistics that gauge the importance of learning the language.

Table 1. How important is the learning of English compared to other subjects in your academic curriculum?

Importancia	%	%	%	%	%	%
0	2					
1		2,4				
2			13,5			
3				34,1		
4					35,4	
5						13,4

Source: data collected by the author on October 18, 2019.

It was found that only 13.50% of the students surveyed consider English to be an important subject or more important than the other subjects

they must take in their curriculum. Consequently, it can be concluded that students may dedicate less time to English classes than to other subjects.

Table 2 presents the functionality that students perceive as benefits of their English classes in terms of professional employability and the requirements that govern the relationship between obtaining a professional degree and the importance of the English class.

Table 2. What do you think English is proper for?

	%	%	%	%	%
Viajar	6,11				
Globalización		7,3			
Requisito			23,17		
Información				25,60	
Posición Laboral					37,80

Source: Consequently, it can be concluded that students may dedicate more time to English classes than to other subjects but in reality it does not happen because of curriculum structure

It was found that 37.80% of survey participants consider English to be the gateway to successfully gaining employment in Colombia. However, the rest of the population is split between the other options, with English being the main requirement for obtaining their professional degree. In the past, UPTC policies have implemented various measures regarding English requirements.

These include requiring students to take a proficiency test in order to continue to the seventh semester (Agreement 050, 2008), students bearing a cost if they did not attend 80% of English classes (Resolution 11, 2013), and mandating more than four levels as a degree requirement (Agreement 005, 2017). These initial findings led to a working hypothesis that the coercive forces of power, framed within political agreements, govern the teaching of English and how society generates and sanctions

agreements as valid; this is related to what Castoriadis (1983) refers to as social imaginary meanings.

Based on these findings, the European policy CEFR (2002) was analyzed in terms of how it operates as a heterogeneous force of power within the administrative regulations by the MEN and UPTC. In other words, the way this policy was organized and regulated in Europe served as a model for doing the same in Latin American countries, where English has a direct impact on the Gross Domestic Product (Portafolio, 2015). One of the most used arguments in the policies of these institutions is that English proficiency influences the average income per individual; therefore, it seeks to position the English language as a central imaginary that turns this language into an instrument of control and domination.

It was found that the social meanings of English within political agreements are constituted through sanctioned agreements as social pacts (Castoriadis, 1988). There is evidence of this, particularly at UPTC, where policies have been implemented, including fines for absence from class, exams required to progress to the seventh semester, and requirements to obtain a bachelor's degree. At the internal level of the academic institution, the teaching and learning of English is within the coercive system of power. This system aims to foster a focused and centralized social imaginary, where the English language contributes to processes of internationalization and academic mobility, which are often underutilized, as most of UPTC's international alliances are with Spanish-speaking countries (Agreement 015, 2016).

The relationship established through internationalization and mobility policies constantly resorts to processes of globalization, perceiving such phenomena as the cause and provocateur for which students must learn English. In this sense, the meanings that the policies confer on the English language are those of organizing education around the pursuit of a better quality of life, which is necessarily related to the mastery of the English language. It is also clear that this meaning is closely related to the concept of the "American dream."

It was also found that there is a tendency in the policies to assume that the country's economic stagnation, in large part, is because the levels of English language proficiency are not as expected. Therefore, the investment of foreign companies (multinationals) is hindered. There is a clear policy intention to establish that the better the command of English, the greater the investment of economic capital in the country. At this point, attention is focused on analyzing how the subordination of the education system to the economic system is naturalized. In this sense, it is clear that the objective of the State and its policies involving the teaching of English is to improve the quality of the labor force of professionals through the learning and teaching of English.

It is also crucial to establish that the needs of the economic system and its requirements for training bilingual professionals form a central social imaginary that orders social sanctions, from the individual psyche to the collective. By focusing on the economic needs and the prospect of a better future as the driving force for learning English, the subject and social group that shape policies and their social meanings through the English language already have a predetermined way of thinking.

Substantially, it is the incessant and unattainable search for purchasing power in the access to goods and services that are acquired with a specific sum of money. This idea may seem harmless within the economic system proposed by the policies of the English language; however, it does not cease to comply with state intentions and the search to position Colombia in the globalized world.

It was also found that the meanings of subordination embedded in the policies are so deeply internalized that it seems natural to assume that foreign language proficiency goals established in the CEFR should also apply to the Colombian MEN. The adoption by MEN (2007) of the CEFR (2002) in terms of its English standards for secondary education and UPTC in its Agreements 073 and 005 is nothing more than a search for the homogenization of education with international standards and the annihilation of the recognition of minority languages in Colombia.

The intention to equalize or compare a professional with English communicative skills in Colombia with one from Europe or the United States is often driven by the need for certification to secure better salaries or the possibility of emigrating to another English-speaking country.

Similarly, it is important to note that this work is certified by international standardized tests, which are designed to support the immigration visa application process. In other words, the levels of foreign language proficiency expressed in A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 according to the CEFR (2002) may be nothing more than a form of migratory control or a way of restricting those who could be part of the globalized world and those who could not; that is, those who could have a better quality of life and those who could not.

It was also found that the social meanings of policies regarding the relationship between the mother tongue and a foreign language tend to create not only economic inequalities but also gender and geopolitical ones. Economic imposition through the forced learning of English has displaced more than 65 indigenous, Creole, and gypsy languages in Colombia. The importance of these languages does not have a positive impact on the globalized economy, and as a result, the future of these languages is often relegated and left behind. In this way, the identification of the subject/student with their culture is broken, and subsequently, education in foreign languages takes precedence over education in native languages.

In identifying the symbolic relationships between the social imaginaries that students have about English and their behavior in relation to learning, it was found that students position the English class as a space of academic flexibility, sanction, and inequality. It appears that students have internalized the dominance and hegemony of the so-called world powers, particularly the United States, through their drive to work for large multinational corporations in the country.

Regarding the first point, the students of the EAGE chapter recognize that the internal system of UPTC has led to students positioning English

class as a space where there is a lack of diversity methodologically or conceptually. This means that there is a constant repetition proposed by MEN (2006) using the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages, delimitating the actions of teachers between basic and higher education. However, it should be noted that UPTC aligned its standards with the CEFR (2002), which requires students to demonstrate a B1+ level of English proficiency as stated in Agreement 073 (2009). This constitutes a semantic inaccuracy, since B1 corresponds to the *Threshold* level described by Trim (1980), while *Vantage* refers to the higher B2 level. Therefore, UPTC's policy should explicitly state B1-Threshold, not B1-Vantage, in accordance with the CEFR (2002).

Regarding the second point, it was found that the policies have generated a particular behavior in relation to the learning of English. One of these behaviors is reflected in the economic sanction, as students who did not pass the subject and also did not attend 80% of the classes were required to pay a cost equivalent to one extension course (Resolution 11, 2013). Another behavior is established due to the academic sanction, as a student who did not pass the English levels could not enroll in the seventh semester of the academic program they were taking (Agreement 050, 2008). Another academic sanction consists of understanding the English class as a degree requirement (Agreement 073, 2009; Agreement 005, 2017).

Along the same lines, it is the system of economic and academic sanctions that has led the English class to be perceived as an obligation that UPTC must accept through the MEN, as well as the asymmetrical forces that the labor market exerts on higher education. That is to say, the state's need for the formation of a professional who is communicatively competent in English forces the power relations between educational institutions and their actors. What has been exposed so far suggests that there are no minimum academic guarantees to ensure that a student achieves level B1+ in their professional training. Disturbingly, it is noted that the most severe consequence is exclusion from the workforce.

It was also found that the inequality between the private and public sectors in education is evident among proficient English students,

who typically arrive at university with this proficiency. In this way, the social imaginaries that students have created regarding English language learning depend on their historical process and social-academic contact; that is, while students who graduate from private schools understand in their reality the usefulness of this language, it appears that for public school students, the functionality of the English language is transferred to the field of requirements and sanctions. This does not mean that the students stop perceiving English as a symbol of advancement for a better future; on the contrary, this seems to assure them that the knowledge of the English language brings them closer to the professional profile needed by multinationals and the quality of life they expect to have after their professional training.

It was also found that within the symbolic relationships among the students' social imaginaries about English, the primary force that motivates them to learn the English language is the economic pressure exerted by rich countries on poor countries. This type of asymmetry is linked to the fact that the state with the most power is the state that imposes everything from the linguistic system to regulations and economic gains. It is in this sense that it is essential to understand that the way students behave towards learning English is expressed in terms of subjugation and coloniality.

The subjugation that students experience in their symbolic networks is related to the masked investment in the type of aid that the United States provides to Colombia. Student subjects assure us once again that American companies are not going to take the trouble to learn Spanish. On the contrary, it is future employees who must submit to the company's imposed system. Now, these types of relationships that students establish aim to perceive the English language as the only means by which the reality of the "American dream" is feasible. However, this "dream" is increasingly distant, as students recognize that they are not learning this language sufficiently in their academic or professional training process.

On the other hand, the relationship that students establish with coloniality is of great importance, as it links the nation's own identity

to its multilingual reservoir. For students, national identity is closely tied to the improvement of English, even though they recognize that Colombia has many more languages spoken. However, this idea does not resonate sufficiently with the idea of a better future, as indigenous communities are often not recognized in their own territory. Thus, the force that falls on indigenous languages has more to do with the territorial spaces inhabited by these communities, since they are a source of exploitation of natural resources for the multinationals in which the students wish to work. In that sense, the students recognize that it would be beneficial to learn an indigenous language, but primarily for negotiations with these communities, as some of them do not speak Spanish and, therefore, even less English. Thus, it can be said that the hegemonic forces that establish some states over others become naturalized in such a way that the territories themselves become colonized by their own inhabitants.

Thus, the English language is not only a social imaginary of a better future for students, but also the way in which that reality is dreamed and imagined, closely related to what Castoriadis (1983) recognizes as the alienation of reality. In this sense, it can be said that the function established by the policies analyzed with regard to English language teaching constitutes an imaginary core that places the economy and academic development at the center of the student's daily life, allowing the student to generate secondary social meanings such as believing that better language skills lead to better job offers, better English skills lead to higher economic gains, higher English skills lead to more traveling around the world, more international training, and opportunities to see the world. However, these secondary imaginary meanings are only symbolic vehicles of the language, since the given reality always places students under the social sanction of exclusion and punishment in the academic professional training and the job market.

Therefore, the imaginary relationships that students establish through learning English in their everyday academic life are somewhat distant from the way in which they can access the benefits that this brings, since reality creates gaps between the opportunity to work in a

multinational company and the very act of passing the class. In this sense, the distance from the established imaginary punitive structure places students at a disadvantage in terms of their own cultural identification and professional development.

Finally, this work has contributed to the creation of the Linguistic Policy of UPTC, Agreement 076 de 2025, where the analysis of the agreements and resolutions has served as a guide for drafting a document that will certainly contribute to improving English language teaching as an integral part of students' professional training. In the same way, more foreign and native languages should be integrated into this institution's academic spectrum. Similarly, it is hoped that the contributions presented here will continue to serve in the collective policy implementation of such a document.

Conclusions

It can be affirmed in general terms, based on the demonstrations of the previous sections, that the existing relationships between the social imaginaries that the students have of English regarding their academic-professional training and the meanings of said language for the political agreements analyzed diverge and converge in terms of state purposes and concrete realities imagined by the students. The imaginary meanings of English in political agreements are constructed through the discourse of improving the quality of life, which does not align with the imaginaries that students have of this language. Firstly, the social imaginaries that students identify regarding the English language reflect the hegemony of some wealthy states over poorer states, where teaching and learning are often reliant on the obligatory nature and social sanction. Secondly, the meanings drawn from the policies utilize the English language as a means to facilitate obtaining a better job, acquiring greater knowledge in the disciplinary area, and traveling abroad. However, this meaning does not align with the imaginaries evidenced by the students, as for them, the English language functions as a means of division between those who can access the benefits of knowing English and those who cannot.

In the same way, the social imaginaries that students have of English in their academic-professional training demand the inclusion of the teaching-learning of a Colombian native language as a means of cultural identification, since the meanings for the policies, particularly of the UPTC and the MEN, hardly recognize another language as a means of interaction and local and international communication apart from English. In this sense, it should be noted that the students' social imaginaries are not directed towards the usefulness that these minority languages would have within the economic system, as they do not generate any monetary gain; however, they could strengthen national identity.

The social meanings of English within policies legitimize asymmetric power relations through the discourse of globalization, making it easier to homogenize communications and negotiations by using a standard language. Therefore, the imaginaries that students have of English are shaped by the perception of "third world" countries as inferior to "first world" countries. Particularly, students mention that it is easier for a Colombian to learn English than for an American to learn Spanish. Thus, the relationship between the meanings of the political agreements and the students' imaginaries coincides in terms of geopolitical segmentation and social division.

Finally, the meanings of English in the policies are subordinated to the structural purposes of each Colombian government and to geopolitical structures, which generate a continuous change in terms of purposes and methodologies, and are directly related to the students' imaginaries regarding the continuous requirements for graduation and passivity in terms of English language teaching models from basic education to higher education.

In this sense, this research allows for the problematization of the imaginaries in question in order to configure conditions of possibility to, on the one hand, establish public and institutional policies that recognize language as a phenomenon of great complexity in which what is at stake is not only to adapt to a geopolitical order but to strengthen the communicative capacity of the members of societies; on the other hand, to recognize the pluricultural and plurilingual nature of the country and in the world and the possibilities that it opens to approach peoples and cultures with languages different from the mother tongue.

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