"I'm Missing Something": (Non) Nativeness in Prospective Teachers as Spanish and English Speakers[1]

"Me Hace Falta Algo": La calidad de ser o no nativo en futuros profesores como hablantes de Inglés y Español

John Jairo Viáfara[2]

Abstract

Rooted in the need to confront the pervasive and harmful effect of the myth of the native speaker and affiliated language ideologies, this article shares the findings of a research study conducted in two public Colombian universities. The study examined participants' self-perceived (non) nativeness as speakers of Spanish and English. Using surveys and interviews within a qualitative approach, the study found that participants perceived themselves as over-empowered in their being native Spanish speakers. Conversely, as speakers of English, most prospective teachers feared the disadvantages of not achieving native-like abilities, but they were confident in their university programs and their previous experience as English users' to achieve their language learning education goals.

Keywords: language ideologies, the myth of the native speaker, nativespeakerism, non-native English speaker teachers, self-perceived (non)nativeness

Resumen

Este artículo que surge de la necesidad de enfrentar los efectos perjudiciales y persistentes del mito del hablante nativo y sus ideologías asociadas, revela sus hallazgos en dos universidades públicas colombianas. Utilizando encuestas y entrevistas en un enfoque cualitativo, se analizó la auto percepción que los participantes tenían de sí mismos como hablantes nativos o no de inglés y español, y como futuros profesores. Se encontró que los participantes se percibían como super empoderados hablantes nativos de español. En contraste, como hablantes de inglés, la mayoría de participantes temían las desventajas de no lograr habilidades similares a las de nativos. Sin embargo, confiaban en sus programas universitarios y su experiencia aprendiendo inglés para lograr sus objetivos de aprendizaje del idioma.

Palabras clave: ideologías lingüísticas, mito del hablante nativo, calidad de ser nativo, profesores no nativos de inglés, auto percepción de natividad

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1   This article reports a set of findings in the first study conducted by the author as part of a three article Ph.D. dissertation.

2   Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, Boyacá, Colombia. jviafara25@gmail.com

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Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J.

Printed ISSN 0123-4641 Online ISSN 2248-7085 • July-December 2016. Vol. 18 • Number 2 pp. 11-24.

Introduction

Nativespeakerism, the set of beliefs about native speakers (teachers) and how closely they adhere to the ideal model of an L1 in its linguistic, sociocultural, pedagogical, and psychological implications (Holliday, 2006), has become one of the most influential language ideologies in EFL/ESL today. Not only has this language ideology been examined from the perspective of its effects on learners, but it has generated a robust interest in teacher education (Braine, 1999; Llurda, 2004; Mahboob, 2003; Moussu, 2006; Reyes & Medgyes, 1994). English learners and teachers' perceptions of themselves as native or non-native speakers, as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual individuals or as users of a mother tongue in contrast to an L2 contribute not only to their development of language abilities, intercultural skills and identity construction, but also to the formation of the macro-ideologies shaping English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL), English as an international language (EIL), and English as a lingua franca (ELF).

Drawing from the broader fields of language ideology and critical applied linguistics, this study examines two groups of EFL undergraduate pre-service teachers' self-perceptions regarding their (non) nativespeakerism at two Colombian public universities. Specifically, the study examined what participants' self-perceptions as (non) native speakers of English and Spanish were.

Research studies on non-native speaking English teachers (NNESTs), which examine participants' self-perceptions concerning their language abilities, have generally centered on participants' skills in English. However, this study also examines their self-images in connection to their L1, Spanish. In doing so, this article addresses the interrelation of pervasive (non) native language ideologies associated to their self-image as Spanish users and their self-perception as speakers of English.

This study also seeks to expand the research on NNESTs Latin-American countries where studies targeting this population of teachers is scant. Bearing in mind that, as in the case of Colombia, governments in the region are implementing ambitious programs for the teaching of English which usually favor native speakers' status and knowledge over the local non-native Colombians (Guerrero, 2008; Usma, 2009a; Valencia, 2013), this type of study can contribute to analyzing the effect that such policies might have on prospective teachers' self-image. The following section reviews the literature regarding nativespeakerism and associated language ideologies in connection with the spread of English and Spanish in the world.

Language Ideologies and the Current Status of Spanish and English

When looking at the status of English and Spanish on the current geopolitical stage, more commonalities than divergences appear. The historical expansion of both these languages is often associated with colonization, colonialism, and migration (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Pennycook, 1994; Train, 2007). Although the globalization of communications seems to favor "the acceleration of the volume of exchange" (Paffey, 2007, p. 326) in the case of Spanish, it is undeniable that English has benefitted more from this global tendency, becoming not only the most used language in electronic media, but also the language of science, technology, diplomacy, and business (Crystal, 2008; Graddol, 2003). Though Spanish and English are both major international languages, their statuses are different considering that English has become the global language.

In attempting to understand how Spanish and English consolidate and maintain their power and status, and the consequences of their spread, researchers have explored language ideologies which are ubiquitous in many language learning and teaching contexts around the world. Standardization, one of the most widespread ideologies "frames variability and diversity [in languages] as a supposed problem" (Train, 2007, p. 212). Regarded as the locus of prescriptivism and purism, standardization privileges certain varieties of English and Spanish while others are misrepresented as lower, inappropriate, defective, and undesirable (Mar-Molinero, 2004; Modiano, 2001; Tollefson, 2007; Train, 2007).

The selection of privileged varieties to function as standards is also bound up with ideologies that confer to native speakers of the standard, "ownership of language" (Widdowson, 1994). In this vein, native speakers of the standard maintain the role of legitimate authority and quality control over the language whereas other speakers, whose English is deemed inaccurate, inappropriate and strange, in other words, non-standard, should look to as models. This ideology disregards the power of a growing number of speakers of WEs, EIL, and ELF who are and will continue to affect the form and function of this language.

Another ideology inextricably connected with standardization is the myth of "non-accent" (Lippi-Green, 1997). This ideology is rooted in the belief that language learners' L1 accent, when transferred into the L2, deems their L2 speech incomprehensible. An ideology of "non-accent" then promotes prejudice and injustice since it attempts to invisibilize and undermine diversity in speakers.

Critical Applied Linguistics and the Myth of the Native Speaker

A review of pervasive language ideologies contributing to the construction of English, Spanish, and their users' statuses, nowadays, would be incomplete without one pivotal ideology: nativespeakerism. Originally coined by Holliday (2006), nativespeakerism denotes "the belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (p. 1).

This ideology buttresses the economic and politic power of ELT in the world (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1990) and deems invisible the characteristics, conditions, and rights of English speakers in today's world (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Graddol, 2003; Kramsch, 2003; Modiano, 1999).

From a theoretical linguistics perspective, scholars associate the term "native speaker" with other notions namely, "mother tongue," "monolingualism," and "ideal speaker-hearer."

Bearing in mind that Chomsky's linguistic program emphasized a monolingual ideal speaker-listener possessing a unitary, decontextualized, and mostly genetically acquired competence, and who possesses natural intuition to produce and make accurate judgments about language, scholars have identified Chomsky's linguistic theory as a precursor of nativespeakerism (Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Kramsch, 2003; Mahboob, 2005; Paikeday, 1985).

In problematizing the native speaker, arguments point to the ambiguity and inconsistency of the concept. Implications deriving from Chomsky's linguistic theory in the ideological construction of the native speaker are summarized by Rampton (1990, p. 79). This scholar emphasizes that stereotypically, native speakers are those who have inherited the language, genetically or by being born in countries where the target language is deemed official. It is believed that these individuals produce and understand the language appropriately.

Approaches to the study of language with strong social and anthropological foundations have questioned the diverse constructs which support the native speaker ideology. Answering the question of who is a native speaker and by default, who is not, continues to be a struggle since as Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001, p. 102) convincingly argue "socially constructed notions" prevail over "linguistic categories" in the accreditation of users as native or non-native speakers. In addition, subjective judgments as, for instance, how someone looks and how her/his speech sounds might play a role in this judgment. Another complicated issue is an individual's perceived degree of nativeness, which hints at the possibility that a non-native speaker could eventually become a native speaker (Mahboob, 2005; White & Genesee, 1996). In the educational field, for instance, it has become commonplace to depict individuals' abilities or expected competence as native-like or near native.

Coupled with these approaches, applied linguists in the fields of WEs, ELF, and EIL bring to bear the effect of the changing global scenario on how native and non-native English speakers position themselves and are positioned as proficient users

of the language. The progressive increase in the number of speakers of English as a second language, which has already surpassed that of native speakers, challenges the imposition of native speaker norms on non-native speakers (Graddol, 2003). In a like manner, several scholars problematize the ideologies of national identity underpinning the concept of nativespeakership. The connotation of "nation state," historically packed with ethnolinguistic prejudices (Bonfiglio, 2010), grants legitimate ownership of the language to those born in specific nations. In this vein, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001) posit that the nation state is regarded as the natural environment for acquisition which "ties the concept to a static model of language acquisition" (p. 104).

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to answer research questions. In this vein, the researcher considered participants while in their natural settings in order to holistically examine their self-perceptions of (non) nativeness (Glesne, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). Within the qualitative tradition, the study employed both survey and interview data.

Study Context and Participants

Two groups of students from two public universities constitute the study's participants and setting. The first site was a five-year modern languages program (EFL and Spanish as a mother tongue) at University A in a small Colombian city of 145,000 inhabitants, characterized by a semirural environment. Every year, the program welcomes two or three teacher assistants who support English classes. Usually they are U.S., England, or Jamaican born and work with non-native instructors in their classes.

Twenty-one 3rd-year student-teachers (13 women and 8 men) attending an intermediate English course participated in the study at University A. Their ages ranged from 18 to 28 years, and most of them, 15 students, were between 18 to 21 years of age. Seventeen of them were born in the city in which University A was located or the surrounding small towns. The remaining four

student-teachers were also originally from small towns, but in neighboring "Departamentos" (states). The majority of students, 12, started to learn English while in primary school, whereas two began in pre-school and eight began by secondary school. Five prospective teachers had taken additional English courses in institutions outside the official school system prior to their enrollment in the program. None of them had traveled to an English speaking country. Sixteen of them had been in contact with native speakers, and in 11 of these cases, those native speakers were assistants who had temporarily studied at the university as part of international exchange programs.

The second site was a four-year B. Ed in Education (EFL) program in Bogotá. Two teacher's assistants, generally from the U.S. or England, spend a year in the program supporting non-native instructors' lessons. Twelve female and eight male 2nd year student-teachers who were registered in a third level English course participated in the study. Their ages range from 16 to 29, and most of them, 16 students, were between the ages of 17 to 20. Whereas 14 participants were originally from Bogotá, the remaining six were born in other major cities. Twelve participants started to learn English in primary school whilst 5 began during pre-school and the remaining three started in secondary school. Five prospective teachers had studied English in courses independent from University B before enrolling in the program. Only one student had visited an English speaking country. Out of 16 students who had had contact with native speakers, 11 made that contact with people other than assistants in the program.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data collection started with a questionnaire. This instrument provided information regarding pre-service teachers' demographics and background and self-perceptions as speakers of Spanish and English. Items in the questionnaire were taken and/or adapted from existing instruments (Llurda, 2008; Medgyes, 1999; Rajagopalan, 2005) to ensure their validity. A combination of 30 closed-ended and opened-ended questions elicited qualitative and quantitative data. The use of Qualtrics Survey Software allowed Colombian student teachers,

in the two universities, to provide their answers electronically. Participants were contacted, invited, and reminded to submit their answers through the software and, after signing consent forms, they had access to the surveys for two weeks. Forty-one questionnaires were answered, which resulted in a 100% return rate.

Semi-structured interviews (Leech, 2002; Merriam, 2009) were the second type of instrument for data collection. The interviews focused on pre-service teachers' past experiences in connection with their self-perceptions of (non) nativeness. In this vein, the instrument provided data about their history as English and Spanish users and it helped to expand upon participants' answers in the questionnaires. The interviews were conducted through Skype and participants were required to answer the questionnaire prior to the interview. Nine students from University A and nine from University B participated in the interview via Skype. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was recorded by means of an internet application.

The last source of data emerged from documents. The curriculum of the two programs, the syllabi of courses students had taken in the past or those of the courses in which they were currently enrolled, and the web-pages of the two universities provided information used to understand the educational milieu in which the study took place.

Data Analysis

Nvivo research software for qualitative data supported efforts to organize, explore, code, and visualize data. Two coding cycles took place (Miles, Hubberman, & Saldaña, 2014): The first incorporated descriptive and in vivo techniques to support the identification of initial patterns within relevant data, the second cycle involved the grouping of similar patterns into themes displayed by means of the software.

The study of patterns allowed the construction of categories and subcategories (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Constant testing and verification of data in multiple revisions of initial categories and subcategories produced the final

version of findings included in this manuscript. Considering that this study sought to provide a 'a thick description' of participants' self-perceptions, validity in the research process was regarded as "holistic" (Cho & Trent, 2006) and based on descriptive data, and methodological triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Miles, Hubberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Findings

The description of prospective teachers' self-perceptions of (non) nativeness begins by their self-characterization as "native" or "(non) native" speakers. In their questionnaire responses, all 43 participants indicated that they considered themselves to be native speakers of Spanish and non-native speakers of English. Student teachers in both universities conferred nativespeakership based on birth, prolonged immersion in the language and culture, and the ability to use the language in various settings. The only interview answer that diverged from these nativespeakership criteria was provided by a University A prospective teacher who expressed that: "A native speaker according to the Common European Framework (CEF) would be in the highest level, C2" (UniA-S3-INT-February, 21)[3]. When asked about the origin of their notions to define a "native speaker," they mentioned university courses, their reflections upon others' and their own language learning experiences.

"Of course, I Regard Myself as a Native Spanish Speaker." This is one of two patterns which characterizes participants' self-perceived images as Spanish speakers. The pattern was named after the words used by a participant in a survey when answering if she compared herself to native speakers of Spanish in Colombia (UniA-S21-Q-March, 18). Her answer captured the essence of most participants' replies, which revealed that they saw themselves as highly competent users of Spanish. In fact, 57% of University A and 50% of University B prospective teachers either compared

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3 Abbreviations in participants' quoted answers: "UniA" and "UniB" refers to the university where they studied. "S" followed by a number is used to identify students. Concerning data collection instruments: Q (questionnaire) and INT. (interview). Participants' testimonies were translated from Spanish into English, keeping faithful to participants´ original ideas.

or did not compare themselves to other native speakers because their nativeness buttresses or makes their language expertise irrefutable.

Likewise, 55% of University B and 86% of University A student teachers self-evaluated their proficiency as a 4, the second best, on a scale from 1 to 5, and 40% of University B and 14% of University A student teachers thought their level was the highest possible, 5. In like manner, when asked about their Spanish language limitations in the survey, 12 University B and 6 University A student teachers did not answer the question. Not providing an answer might covertly imply that they did not acknowledge any limitations. Conversely, one University B and five University A prospective teachers directly expressed that they did not have any difficulties.

For five University A and three University B students, it was not just being native speakers that explained their advanced knowledge and skills in Spanish, but also their studies: "I have always had, like, a good level, I mean in relation to others (Spanish speakers) because, well, we are native speakers but I have already taken courses about my mother tongue for five semesters" (UniA-S3-INT-February, 21).

"Of course, I regard myself as a native Spanish speaker" also connoted a sense of pride and appreciation for Spanish (nine University A and seven University B prospective teachers). Spanish was an expression of their culture and identity (four University A and one University B participants): "Identity, because it was the language (Spanish) I grew up with, I mean, for me, it is my mother tongue, I would say, so that identifies me" (UniA-S9-INT-February, 23). In addition, participants valued the language as a key to "opening doors" in the world (two participants in each university): "My native language is one of the most spoken in the world and this makes me proud because it represents a big advantage" (UniB-S5-Q-February, 25).

"**Despite Our Being Native Speakers, We Certainly Have Limitations**." Even though they expressed high confidence in their language knowledge and abilities as native speakers, some participants sensed that there were aspects of

their language ability that could be enhanced. This perception of language ability, which varied among pre-service teachers, highlights the contradictory nature of their views concerning their nativeness.

For some, there were "little problems," aspects to polish or to become more specialized in their language knowledge (12 University A and 8 University B from qualitative data in surveys and interviews). Other pre-service teachers viewed the learning of Spanish as a continuous endeavor due to the complexity and vastness of the language. There were language skills which they lacked and associated limitations they felt very concerned about (six University A and seven University B from qualitative data in surveys and interviews): "Though I am a native speaker, there are aspects I do not know about the structural part of the language, but because of what I have learnt in the university, I have improved about my oral expression, grammar knowledge and syntax" (UniB-S12-Q-February, 25).

Pre-service teachers expected to learn from educated or prestigious Spanish speakers; often times, these speakers were socially legitimized authorities in language usage who exhibit accurate and acceptable linguistic conventions. A pre-service teacher commented:

I try to pay attention to what RAE says and look at the new rules…and there are things I don't agree with, but if they say it should be that way, well, these are people who have studied and so, it kind of makes sense. (UniB-S2-INT-March, 2)

Prospective teachers in both universities felt that "knowledge of grammar rules," "reading," and "writing" were the most problematic in their learning. Specifically, academic reading and writing proved challenging for participants, and regarding the latter ability, they also mentioned difficulties in spelling and punctuation. Regarding grammar rules, concerns involved knowledge in relation to complex verb tenses.

Though speaking skills were not ranked among the lowest abilities in the survey, qualitative data

evidenced that eight University A and six University B prospective teachers were also concerned about their oral expression skills. Their concerns involved mostly psychological issues, such as nervousness and insecurity while speaking publicly in academic settings.

Additionally, three students (two University B and one University A) perceived that their regional varieties of Spanish were deemed undesirable in the capital cities where they lived. One of them commented: "I have many problems, many problems in relation to Spanish, because I am not from Bogotá and there are many regional uses in my Spanish then you arrived to Bogotá and people don't understand you" (UniB-S8-INT-February, 27). Feeling their use of Spanish was inadequate on the basis of their origin, acknowledging their concerns for what they regarded as inaccuracies at certain levels of their language use and manifesting a latent desire to resemble socially sanctioned ideal models of language use, makes apparent participants' conflicting self-perceptions of their nativeness.

"I Feel like I'm Missing Something." Regarding their self-perception as non-native speakers of English, participants brought to bear their language limitations as a central topic in their description of their self-image. The following excerpt illustrates this tendency in participants: "Sometimes I listen to myself speaking and I feel like I'm missing something, like a bit of fluency to achieve the right accent" (UniA-S2-INT-February, 21).

Fifty-two percent of University A and 80% of University B prospective teachers compared themselves to native speakers who they regarded as the ideal. Thus, these models became the point of reference used to evaluate their own abilities, correct their mistakes, and improve imitating them. Five University A and two University B student teachers expressed that they did not compare themselves to native speakers because currently their language abilities were too limited to attempt to make a comparison. A smaller group, three University A and one University B student teachers, believed it was very unlikely that they would reach the level of skill native speakers have.

When asked to self-evaluate language ability in English, 80% of University A participants graded their ability to use the language as a 3 on a scale from 1 to 5, while 10% saw themselves as having a lower ability, grading themselves with 2, and the remaining 10% thought their ability was higher, giving themselves a 4. On the whole, University B students revealed that they had a higher self-perception of their language skills than the University A prospective teachers. Sixty percent of University B participants scored themselves with 3, 25% with 4, and 15 % with 2.

Pre-service teachers' in both universities considered "grammar rules," "grammar in use," and "reading comprehension" as their best skills whereas "oral communication" was given the lowest score. These results also point out that University B students exhibited a higher regard for their abilities than University A students.

Participants' feelings regarding having a foreign accent when speaking in English, also reveal their self-perception as "missing something." Ninety percent of University A and 95% of University B prospective teachers felt concerned about their accent in English. Their preoccupation was mainly anchored in the belief that they would not be understood if they did not have a suitable accent (8 University B and 14 University A student teachers). Another reason was that they wanted to sound more natural, polished, and "beautiful" resembling a native speaker and without any trace of L1 accent (8 University B and 3 University A student teachers).

Student teachers' envisaged goals in their use of English gravitated primarily towards their acquiring sufficient skills to be able to maintain communications with other English speakers (13 University A and 8 University B prospective teachers), whereas for 8 University A and 15 University B participants the aim was to achieve native-like proficiency and mimic a native speaker's communicative performance. In this case, they aspired to resemble U.S or British native-like proficiency. Other varieties were oftentimes deemed undesirable as the following excerpt reveals: "Honestly, I watched a movie, I don't remember how it was called, it involved some

Jamaicans in the Olympic Games, and I don't know, it was funny how they talked, I didn't like it much" (UniA-S2-INT-February, 21).

The perception of themselves as lacking ability and knowledge caused 12 University A and 9 University B student teachers frustration, fear, and insecurity which seem to be connected with their idea of masking their identity in certain situations to pass as native speakers. There was usually the impression that native speakers would act as judges of their performance:

> Well, I think that we, nonnative speakers, we would like to achieve that, I mean, that when you are in a native country they don't notice that you come from somewhere else, I mean that the Latin variant is not so evident, that would be the goal, the ideal. (UniB-S8-INT- February)

"I Am Increasing My Abilities and Opportunities." Despite thinking of themselves as "missing something," 15 University B and 14 University A prospective teachers felt encouraged because they still had time ahead of them to shape their language skills into what they expected:

> Every day I learn something new regardless of my being in an academic context or not, I learn from television shows, from books, from songs. I have learned a lot of things I did not know and this has been a great help for my academic preparation. (UniB-S9-Q-February, 25)

They deemed their accomplishments valuable since oftentimes, especially during previous levels of their education, they had iteratively faced challenges related to unsuitable conditions in schools, lack of resources, and poor teaching.

Participants also maintain their drive to learn English by focusing on the perceived benefits of learning the global language, its culture, and the skills necessary to teach it (four University A and five University B students). "I think that as a non-native speaker of English I have the opportunity to learn a second language like English which is obviously the most important and most spoken language" (INT-S2-UniB-March, 2, 2014).

Discussion

In the case of both languages, participants' self-perceived (non) nativeness buttresses the main ideological premises concerning the myth of the native speaker (Canagarajah, 1999; Kramsch & Lam, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; Ramptom, 1990). Although they regard themselves as native Spanish speakers taking for granted that their knowledge and performance as users of Spanish is close to the ideal or is the ideal, they simultaneously express unease when their self-images do not concur with their desired standards. In the case of English, participants regard themselves as possessing an insufficient level of competence in English, which is not the ideal and a substantial number of them aspire to speak like a "native speaker" because as one participant puts it, "the purpose of speaking another language is to do it as similar as possible to a native speaker" (UniA-S5-Q-February, 22).

Their self-perceptions imply a characterization of the ideal native speaker as a monolingual individual (Cook, 1999; Davies, 2004), also known as "monolingual bias" (Belz, 2002; Kachru, 1996; Mahboob, 2010). Despite their expectation of reaching the necessary expertise when using English, they never expected that they could achieve native-like proficiency. This suggests that they believe that they can only possibly be native speakers of one language, Spanish. They also seemed to believe that native speakers exhibit a "natural," spontaneous, and intuitive mastery of the language (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Davies, 2003; Norton & Tang, 1997; Timmis, 2002), participants perceived those skills associated with "natural and effortless performance" (speaking and listening), as their most well-developed Spanish language abilities. In fact, they scored their performance in these abilities close to the ideal. In English, where they see themselves as non-native speakers, participants do not regard their oral language skills as their strengths.

Coupled with the myth of the native speaker, pre-service teachers' self- perceptions exhibited an ideology of "native speaker standard language" (Train, 2007, 2011). The varieties of Spanish, spoken in the capital cities where the two universities are located, enjoy the status of

"standard." Whereas the Spanish spoken in certain areas of Bogotá is considered a national standard and enjoys high prestige, the variety spoken in the city in which University A is located, plays a similar role for the region. Four participants, who were not born in these capital cities, perceived their use of Spanish as not good enough since it reflects regional uses of the language, thus adhering to the social convention by which, as Train (2007) puts it, "standardness frames variability and diversity as a supposed problem" (p. 212).

Myths concerning the prestige of the Spanish spoken in Colombia's capital are socially supported, among others, through institutions which function as quality controllers for Spanish as RAE and the government's campaign to promote Spanish as "one of the best in the world." Likewise, participants' history in the educational system, especially during primary and secondary school, also contributes greatly to the naturalization of the Spanish standard in their language use. In interviews, student teachers described how, by means of prescriptive teaching techniques such as the repetition of misspelled words over and over, they learned the "correct" way to write words, namely, the "standard."

Considering participants' self-perceptions as speakers of English, the native speaker standard language ideology was contingent on their aim to resemble those they regarded as native speakers. However, not all those who were born and grew up in English speaking countries constituted a legitimate model to emulate; pre-service teachers favored the U.S and British varieties which globally enjoyed the prestige of standard (Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Modiano, 2001; Tollefson, 2007). In Colombia, U.S. and British English native speakers are regarded as the ideal model for language learning (González, 2010; Velez-Rondón, 2003). In fact, they are usually hired to teach without teaching credentials and they are hired as experts by the government to develop the guidelines of educational policies for English teaching and learning (Guerrero, 2008; Usma, 2009b).

Standardization has also become a language education policy promoted by the Colombian government. Standards for English based on the Common European Framework (CEF) were imposed by the Ministry of Education and they have influenced participants' self-perception of nativeness as revealed in the findings section. These standards for English were promoted by the British Council. An institution whose influence in Colombia's language policy for the teaching and learning of foreign language has been considerable.

Another ideology participants embraced regarding their self-perception of (non) nativeness was that of "non-accent" (Lippi-Green, 1997). Echoing the previous scholar's remark that the sole definition of what accent entails is problematic, prospective teachers usually equated "accent" with "pronunciation," "intonation," and "fluency." Although clarity regarding the meaning of "accent" was elusive for participants, what they had a clear understanding of was the consequence of displaying one that was not acceptable by those safeguarding English purism. Having a Spanish "accent" made their English incomprehensible, inappropriate, ugly, nonstandard, and a far cry from the native-like competence they sought to achieve. Almost all participants feared that their not having the right accent, namely an accent without Spanish influence and ideally resembling American or British English, would negatively affect their chances of being understood by others, especially native speakers.

As part of the previous discussion reveals, participants' tendency to adhere to the myth of the native speaker is not isolated from the ideological make up of their context. In addition to Colombian society's leverage of the ideological bias behind (non) nativeness and to language policies promoted by the government, educational institutions support this ideology as the following excerpts taken from University B syllabi objectives reveals: "Participates in conversation exhibit such a degree of fluency and spontaneity that they can interact with native speakers without generating tensions for any of the interlocutors" (Comunicación Oral II, Course Syllabus, 2014) and "Students will be able to understand main and specific ideas-even though this might not be possible in full detail-of an oral utterance performed by a native speaker or authentic text" (Comunicación Oral III, Course Syllabus, 2014).

Pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of (non) nativeness in both languages indicate that their embrace of the aforementioned ideologies affected their subjectivity. Though as native speakers of Spanish they felt proud and highly confident with their competence in the language and most of them regarded their limitations as a regular part of the learning process, nativespeakership ideologies also led participants to construct themselves as inadequate Spanish speakers when, for instance, their dialectal uses deviate from the privileged standard.

Feelings like fear, insecurity, and frustration constitute an expected outcome when students' learning goals are grounded in the standards of the ideal native speaker. On one hand, these models do not conform to the common language variability and partial language command found in the real world (Mahboob, 2010; Ramptom, 1990) as "the majority of communication in English does not involve native speakers" (Cook, 2007, p. 240). On the other hand, even if one sounds like a native speaker, one might not be granted the credentials unless an array of elusive socially-established requirements related to race, nationality, and class, among others, are met. Making the native speaker the target for language learning might not only be "silly" as Cook (2007, p. 240) exhorts, but painful. Far-reaching consequences of pursuing this ideal can directly affect English users' identity, as the following comment by a participant suggests:

> You should not transfer the characteristic accent of your language to that other language (English). When you listen to Mexicans or Argentinian speaking in English, there is a marked accent, and that's not really comfortable and that just because of that, they can see that you are a foreigner, that can make you uncomfortable or something like that. (UniB-S4-INT-February, 25)

The participants' desire to mask their identity subsumes issues of human dignity, justice, and prejudice. As Latino-Americans, participants feel that their specific Spanish accent indexed the discrimination they might suffer in countries such as the U.S, where Latinos are oftentimes associated with poverty, crime, and underdevelopment.

Therefore, passing for a native speaker becomes for them an option to avoid being the target of hatred. By so doing, they are denying themselves the right to show their uniqueness and to legitimize their needs and interests, not only through their language use, but through their culture and identity. In addition, Cook (2007) explains that "the denial of the right to L2 speakers to sound as if they come from a particular place reeks of power; native speakers are not treated in the same way" (p. 240). They are granted ownership and prestige because of their status while nonnative speakers' expertise and authority is always under suspicion.

It was not just disappointment and lack of confidence that they felt as English users, being in an undergraduate program, they also, and perhaps counter intuitively, saw themselves as surrounded by opportunities to reach their learning goals through their studies. Likewise, there was a desire to learn a language that in their context was believed to grant them substantial social, cultural, and economic capital. Interestingly, more prospective teachers (four University A and five University B) held this perspective concerning English than Spanish, (two students from each university) which might be related to the government's language educational policy to promote English as the language of opportunities; that discourse has been socially replicated (Guerrero, 2008, 2010; Usma, 2009a; Valencia, 2013).

English, when considered as a purveyor of future opportunities, encouraged participants to identify with it. Colombian student teachers manifested their desire to perceive themselves as being part of that language and its associated culture. Nonetheless, the inequalities that undergird prevailing nativespeakership ideologies generates concern about the extent to which they can aspire to make that language and culture theirs (Jenkins, 2006; Widdowson, 1994).

Conclusions

Being part of a socio-cultural and educational context in which nativespeakership and associated ideologies had historically circulated, most

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Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J.
Printed ISSN 0123-4641 Online ISSN 2248-7085 • July-December 2016. Vol. 18 • Number 2 pp. 11-24.

participants were aware of and supported the social demands that these ideologies imposed upon them.

The myth of the native speaker and associated ideologies influenced pre-service teachers by encouraging them to perceive themselves on one hand as over empowered native speakers of Spanish who were also anxious about their self-perceived inadequacies, and on the other hand as disempowered non-native speakers of English. Their substantially different roles socially constructed under the ideological premises of (non) nativespeakership put them at the opposite extremes of the power relationship scale. As educated Spanish native speakers, they felt confident and proud since they perceived themselves to possess high level language abilities; they could assume the role of judges:

> I don't know maybe my ego is a bit high but yes, as I learn new expressions I compare myself with other people, my neighbors, my friends who don´t attend the university and well, I sometimes correct them, 'don't express yourself like that, don't say it that way, you said it in the wrong way.' (UniA-S2-INT-February, 21)

As English speakers, they had granted the omnipresent and usually abstract idealized native speaker all the authority to judge them:

> With no doubt, there is always that fear to talk with them (foreign assistants), for example, when they arrived and introduce themselves and they say 'do you have any question about me?' And you think for yourself: 'well I do have questions but I don't want to make them because I am afraid I will make mistakes and you will correct me,' this is the way it is. It is not only me; my peers also are afraid to make mistakes when they face a native speaker. (UniA-S6-INT-February, 19)

As speakers of English, the majority of prospective teachers feared disadvantages that not achieving native-like abilities could bring into their lives. Being the target of future social sanctions, whether regarded as incompetent or "too Spanish-like," constituted an important element of their self-images. However, their self- perceptions were also imbued with a sense of confidence concerning their future. Because they viewed themselves as part of a teacher education program, they relied on their education process to achieve their language goals.

Pedagogical Implications

Bearing in mind the findings revealed and discussed in this study, the following section includes recommendations for the formulation of language educational policy, the implementation of university programs, and further research. In order to initiate transformation processes in the ideological foundations of ELT policies, government officials need to invite and involve Colombian non-native English speaker experts as their main advisers. The opposite, the invitation of native speakers, has become the norm in Colombia whenever new policies are configured (González, 2010; Guerrero, 2008; Usma, 2009b). Local experts' specialized knowledge can guide policy makers in issues concerning critical applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology, thus they gain the necessary awareness to identify and eventually contribute to dismantling nativespeakership ideologies. This can promote a counter nativespeakership ideology and grant non-native speakers authority and ownership over English to be part of the decisions being made regarding this language.

Findings showed that nativespeakership and associated ideologies also became a part of students' lives through their Spanish learning. Their exposure to these myths as they acquire Spanish provides fertile ground for the emergence of similar ideologies as speakers of English. Because of the symbiotic relationship between the two languages, undergraduate teacher education programs need to provide student teachers with courses involving both languages which allow the critical ideology analysis of the learning and teaching processes of English and Spanish.

Bearing in mind the participants' self-perceived language needs, programs should make sure that they provide prospective teachers plenty of opportunities to gain the necessary language ability expertise. This recommendation matches

those put forward by scholars in the NNEST field (Mahboob, 2010; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Although participants implicitly trust that they will develop sufficient competence in English through their studies, their programs can adapt their content and include methodologies to ensure that their individual needs are met.

Programs should also seek alternatives to help prospective teachers cope with constraints generated by the specific conditions of the Colombian context regarding scarce opportunities to practice the English language with a wide variety of world English users. By taking advantage of the array of possibilities created by electronic communication, universities can telecollaborate with international institutions thereby granting prospective teachers access to more structured language learning practices. These exchanges can incorporate pedagogical frameworks to guide participants' exploration and confrontation with nativespeakership ideologies.

Given that their ability and knowledge in using English will constitute one of the pillars in their teaching knowledge base, it is not surprising that participants' self-perception of being non-native speakers of English exerts a substantial influence on their self-image as prospective English teachers. Accordingly, how the type of population who participated in this study regard themselves as future NNESTs becomes a potential issue for further research in the Colombian context.

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