

## Bilingual education in English as a contact zone of neoliberal rationality

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the school classroom constitutes a contact zone that promotes transculturation processes that configure the imaginary of English as the global dominant language. The school classroom is understood as a physical space, in which neoliberal educational policies are materialized from bilingualism, so it operates as a contact zone from which, in the implementation of bilingual education in the English language, students interact with political and economic imaginaries which are subjected to criteria of consumption, social competence and individualism. The methodology adopted is critical discourse analysis which is underpinned by Foucauldian conceptual tools. These allow, on the one hand, to unveil the dominant rationality in the policies and texts oriented to bilingual education in English in the contact zone of the school classroom, and on the other hand, to uncover the discursive practices which promote students' transculturation processes in favour of this rationality.

**Keywords:** Contact zone, English language, neoliberal rationality, school classroom, transculturation.

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## Introduction

Phillipson (2003) identifies some of the aspects that underpin the spread of English globally taking advantage of other European languages, such as the historical spread of the English language by the British Empire as an indispensable strategy to sustain and consolidate industrial capitalism. This strategy is currently adopted by the United States as one of the pillars to maintain the current neoliberal economic order. This order has been reinforced through the creation of global organizations like the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and the WB (World Bank).

These multilateral institutions serve to sustain and nourish neoliberal corporate power. Thus, from neoliberal rationality, the promotion of English as a world lingua franca is essential to maintain hegemony in areas such as finance, politics, the military, education and the media. Consequently, this rationality brings the imposition of 'contact zones' in the different institutional spheres of the nation-states subscribed to this neoliberal order (Pratt, 2010, p. 31). Through these contact zones, the policies inscribed in the neoliberal rationality are materialized, bringing as a consequence the cultural, political and economic imposition of this rationality. The domain of policies focused on bilingual education in English language and its materialization in the contact zone of the school classroom does not escape from the influence of neoliberal rationality, generating processes of transculturation in students who are learning this language (Ortiz, 1995).

This article follows the theoretical approaches mentioned above and is structured in four sections. The first section is titled *Conceptual framework*. It focuses on proposing the conceptual structure which allows us to understand the historical evolution of English as the hegemonic language of neoliberalism. In this context, the phenomenon of linguisticism that favours bilingual education processes in the English language is described. Also, this section states the research problem that guides this article.

The second is named *Methodology*. This outlines the theoretical, conceptual and procedural approaches framed in the critical discourse analysis approach (CDA) adopted for this study, which is based mainly on the contributions of Fairclough and the Foucauldian conceptual tools. Particularly for this study, CDA focuses on a methodology of textual, discursive and social analysis proposed by Fairclough (2003).

The third is entitled *Results and Discussion*. This section is divided into three subsections: *Policies of bilingualism: the irruption of neoliberal rationality*; *Bilingual education in English language and transculturation*; and *Subjectivation and neoliberal rationality in the field of the transculturation processes*. *Policies of bilingualism: the irruption of neoliberal rationality* problematize the eminently economic vision that has been permeating bilingualism policies and the curriculum in Colombia since 1990. It is suggested that this vision aims to place bilingual education in English language at the service of the neoliberal global market. *Bilingual Education in English Language and Transculturation* seeks to put in tension the transculturation processes that emanate in the school classroom through bilingual education in English language. *Subjectivation and neoliberal rationality in the field of the transculturation processes* refers to the educational forms assumed by discursive practices linked to neoliberal rationality which constitute processes of subjectivation.

It is stated that these processes take place in the contact zone of the school classroom and create conditions in which the transculturation phenomenon materializes. This materialization implies the adoption of values attached to neoliberal rationality on the part of the students. The fourth is entitled *Conclusions and recommendations*. This section closes with some reflections and final considerations.

### 1. Conceptual framework

Pratt (2010) alludes to the concept of *contact zone* as a social space, in which different cultures interact, collide and struggle with each other from unequal relations of power. She cites Ortiz (1995)

to define the concept of transculturation. This refers to a certain loss or reordering of a cultural configuration. The concept of transculturation carries the idea of the creation of new cultural phenomena, or what could be called a process of neoculturation. In this regard, this article inquires about the form of subjectivation that is promoted in the school classroom as a contact zone through bilingual education in English language, and how this in itself implies a process of transculturation that fosters the promotion of neoliberal rationality among the students of this language.

In this sense, Pratt (2008) indicates that all social spaces are contact zones. She adds that in the neoliberal order that consolidated in the 1990s, stories are created on the borders of metropolises, sometimes right before the eyes of their residents. Consequently, the neoliberal rationality manages to cross all the contact zones of the societies that follow this economic, political and cultural model. Hiramoto and Park (2014), who cite Pratt's concept of contact zone, argue that language is always present in contact zones and that this presence intensifies in the current times of globalization, producing experiences of cultural and linguistic contact at all times. From this point of view, the massively spread of English around the globe is a collateral consequence of the global diffusion of neoliberal rationality, which crosses the different contact zones of the nation-states subscribed to it.

At this point, Phillipson (2003) states that English language is essential for industrial capitalism of which the British Empire was the main agent until 1914. He argues that, in the same way, this language has been essential to promote the neoliberal global economic order that the United States has led since its emergence as the main economic, political and military power. The author affirms that thanks to its close relationship with the previously mentioned political and economic powers, the English language assumes a hegemonic position as the language of neoliberalism. He also offers the concepts of linguistic imperialism and linguicism which portray the historical relationships that allow the English language to assume a hegemonic position.

The concept of linguistic imperialism refers to the idea that the development of English as an imperial language implies a process of accumulating linguistic capital similar to the processes of accumulating the economic, political and cultural capital that in colonial times made up the British Empire and in modern times make up the United States as a global hegemonic power. In relation to the concept of linguicism, it refers to a complex of beliefs, social institutions and cultural practices that serve to justify, generate and perpetuate an unfair distribution of power and resources (both material and immaterial) among social groups that are identified on the base of the language (Phillipson, 2003). In this way, linguicism comprises the constitution of a social imaginary in which the dominant language is thought to be the holder of characteristics that make it superior, generating the stigmatization of languages considered of inferior category.

The phenomenon of linguicism can be observed, for example, when a nation-state's educational system privileges resources for bilingual training in a hegemonic language, as is the case of the Colombian State, where resources are mainly oriented towards bilingual education in English language. Therefore, the phenomenon of linguicism in the dominant language is structural, since greater amounts of resources and materials are assigned to this language than to other subalternized languages. The power of the dominant language is supported by ideologies, beliefs, attitudes and images that glorify it while stigmatizing other languages. Hence, the imaginary of the dominant language is internalized and naturalized as normal creating a linguistic hierarchy (Phillipson, 1996).

### *1.2. Research problem*

In the current times of globalization, neoliberal rationality permeates all of the political and economic institutional frameworks of the nation-states articulated to a global economic and political order nourished by this rationality. In the Colombian context, bilingualism policies do not escape from the irruption of this political and economic rationality. Since the 1990s these policies have been colonized by neoliberal rationality. As a consequence, the school classroom becomes a contact zone where these policies materialize through a bilingual education underpinned with written and audiovisual material aimed at fostering students' conduct toward individualism, consumerism and competition, or what

Foucault (2007) states as a *homo oeconomicus*. In this sense, this article seeks to unveil the discursive practices underlying both bilingualism policies and the English language textbooks for 11th graders provided by the Colombian Ministry of Education and which are articulated to these policies. Also, it is aimed to illustrate how these discursive practices are oriented towards the construction of students' subjectivity in favour of neoliberal rationality.

## 2. Methodology

CDA has its roots in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Rasmussen, 1996). It has been developed by authors such as Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak. Fairclough's work in relation to the research field involved in CDA is empowered with Foucauldian conceptual tools, which are extremely relevant to this study (Fairclough, 2005). Vaara (2015) argues that in CDA discourses as part of a social practice cannot be reduced to discourse alone, since, in a certain sense, they only represent specific moments of the complex social processes that make up the world.

Thus, CDA has a dialectical approach in the analysis of the social structure and discourse analysis. In other words, in CDA discourses are represented as products of social structures, as well as producers of social structures. In short, CDA is a broad field of study that includes various disciplines and theoretical–methodological perspectives. It is considered a scientific activity aimed at describing, explaining and even predicting the use of language in human communication.

### 2.1. Analytical dimensions of CDA

Fairclough (2003) points out that in CDA discourses must be examined from three dimensions of analysis: textual, discursive practice and social practice. The author brings together the various conceptions of discourse through a three-dimensional model of discourse embedded in the concept of discursive event. A discursive event can be comprehended in three ways: as a text, as a discursive practice and as a social practice.

#### 2.1.1. Description of the texts

It involves a linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, sounds and cohesion on the sentence level. With special attention to the function of words in the references made from other texts. It requires careful attention to the way sentences are put together (the combination of clauses), to the grammar and semantics of clauses, such as the use of transitive verbs, action verbs, voice and modality, as well as to the words used, such as vocabulary choice, meaning, collocation rules and metaphorical applications of words (Luke, 1997).

#### 2.1.2. Discursive practices

There are two categories of analysis: the first refers to the discursive process of an institution and the second is oriented towards the discursive process of the text (production/text and consumption). It depicts the correspondence between the text and its context. For example, in the discursive practices related to legal documents, one should focus on how they are created (what rules are used and the use of language that is assigned in institutions/governments) and on the form (how they are distributed and read). Fairclough (1995) states that these practices are related to the production, distribution and consumption of a text. Therefore, they include the step-by-step of how people produce and interpret the texts to make visible the embedded discursive practices.

#### 2.1.3. Sociocultural practises

These imply an understanding of the social processes generated by the text and include the social conditions and the context in which these processes occur. This analysis rather than focusing on revealing what is present in the text, aims to reveal the silences, what is absent in the text that often implies deeper meanings. In other words, it examines what the dominant powers and ideologies in a sociocultural context are (Fairclough, 1995).

## 2.2. Methodological steps

For this study, the CDA's analytical dimensions described above require a rigorous articulation of a series of steps. The first is to make a broad and deep reading of the bilingualism policies and programs that have been implemented in Colombia since 2004. These are: the National Bilingualism Program (PNB) 2004–2019, the Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences in Foreign Languages 2010–2014, the Bilingualism Law 1651 of 2013, the Bilingual Colombian Program 2014–2018, Colombia very well! The National English Program 2015–2025.

The second is to make a compendium of documentary texts in relation to bilingualism policies, the suggested curriculum proposed by the Ministry of National Education (MEN), and methodological and didactic texts linked to bilingualism policies aimed at 11th-grade students. The third is to make a thorough reading of the previously mentioned texts, to elucidate whether the underlying discourses of these texts, deploy a neoliberal rationality that permeates the suggested curriculum by the Bilingual Colombian Program, and therefore circulates through the *Student's Book. Fast track 11th grade*, and different written and audiovisual texts to which students are exposed so that as a consequence, this neoliberal rationality leads to discursive practices materialized by the English language teachers in the school classroom. The fourth is to investigate how the discursive elements that constitute both the written and visual texts presented in the contact zone of the school classroom, promote transculturation processes that configure the subjectivity of these students in favour of the neoliberal rationality.

In sum, the CDA methodology embedded in this study demands to analyse, discuss and critically evaluate the power-knowledge relations immersed within the texts framed in the bilingualism policies in Colombia, the suggested curriculum, the texts oriented to bilingual education in English for 11th-grade students in Colombian public high schools: *English, ¡please! Student's Book. Fast track 11th grade* (Ministry of National Education, 2016). This aimed to uncover the neoliberal rationality underlying the discursive and sociocultural practices previously mentioned, which permeates the contact zone of the school classroom, promoting the imaginary of English as the dominant global language.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Policies of bilingualism: the irruption of neoliberal rationality

The concept of classical liberalism refers to an ideology underpinned on individualism, individual rights, spontaneous order, the rule of law, limited government, free markets and massive production. From this concept emerges the notion of neoliberalism that would assume its own ideology. Styhre (2014) defines neoliberalism as a new global, political, economic and social order where market relations are emphasized in all areas of life with very limited nation-state intervention.

In the nation-states that follow a neoliberal political and economic model, market forces permeate all their social and cultural spheres, including the educational sphere. It should be noted that, according to Foucault (2004) and Ong (2007), neoliberalism has thus become a rationality that produces a subjectivity that directs the subject to a life of generalized competition, transforming the subject as an entrepreneur of his own (Díez, 2019). This subjectivity has also permeated the school institutions.

Laval (2004) puts forward the concept of neoliberal school to indicate how this institution has become an extensive part of the enterprise. In the neoliberal school students are considered as human capital. Hence, these students are subjected to a curriculum with a training plan, aimed at solving the needs of the market. The neoliberal school promotes values such as competition, productivity efficiency, individualism and flexibility. In this sense, Savage (2017) argues that in today's world, the educational field is inscribed and justified in public policies aimed at building human capital to cope with the needs of economic productivity from early childhood to post-secondary education. He

exemplifies this by demonstrating how educational policies in Australia have been permeated by neoliberal rationality:

In Australia, [the impact of neoliberalism in education] is evident in a wide range of schooling policies, including major agreements such as the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). The declaration, which was signed by all education ministers (federal, state and territory), frames education as an economic investment tied to the nation's global competitiveness. Education, it argues, is central to building a competitive twenty-first-century workforce. Giving the ability to compete in global economy on knowledge and innovation (Savage, 2017, p. 150).

The excerpt shows how, from a market logic, the conceptual framework that structures the neoliberal rationality, permeates progressively and with greater intensity the different social environments of the people, including the educational field, this being denominated by Foucault (2007, p. 278), as *'the economization of the entire social field'*. This rationality promotes the adoption of a market logic as a principle of intelligibility of individual behaviour and government action that sees the worker as an entrepreneur of his own and manager of the development of his own capital, among others. This explains why investment in human capital comes to be seen as the main source of economic development (Alves, 2019).

The irruption of neoliberal rationality in the bilingualism policies of the Colombian State can be traced back in the *curricular guidelines in foreign languages* (Ministry of National Education, 1999). This document highlights the importance of learning *'the most widely used international language in technologies: English'* (Ministry of National Education, 1999, p. 4). Cárdenas (2018) states that the irruption of neoliberal rationality in education is established as a requirement for the implementation of the *National Bilingualism Program* (PNB) 2004–2019. In this program, bilingual education in the English language is proposed in a hierarchical way, leaving in a subalternized position the offerings of bilingual education in other international languages and even more in the local indigenous languages. This reflects an intertwined phenomenon of linguistic imperialism and linguisticism articulated to the neoliberal rationality (Phillipson, 1992).

The PNB is a clear example of the irruption of neoliberal rationality in the Colombian educational field. This program, which follows the guidelines of the Common European Framework (CEFR), classifies the attained level of proficiency in a foreign language in six scales, in which the descriptor can be used to categorize the ability of students to use a language in communicative skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. The scale is as follows: levels C1 and C2 represent a competent level; levels B1 and B2 represent an independent level; Levels A1 and A2 represent a basic level (Council of Europe, 2001).

Thanks to the global expansion of the English language, several nation-states around the globe which follow a neoliberal political and economic model have adopted the CEFR as a mechanism to suit their local bilingual education processes in the English language following international standards. The *'Basic Standards of Foreign Language Proficiency: English. Education in foreign languages: the challenge! What we need to know and know how to do'* (Ministry of National Education, 2006) are born as a result of the articulation of the PNB with the CEFR in consultation with the British Council. In the school context, this document is also known as guide 22. These standards focus on the discourse of bilingual education in English language as what students must understand and be able to do, and explicitly state that a strong command of the English language makes it easier to access possibilities for education and employment that enhance quality of life. In today's globalized society, linguistic proficiency is crucial. Being multilingual increases your prospects to be more competent and competitive (MEN, 2006). From this argument, it is possible to unveil a discourse permeated by a process of lexical transculturation articulated to neoliberal rationality, *"competent"*, *"competitive"* (MEN, 2006, p.3). From this fragment, it is possible to unveil a discourse permeated by a process of lexical transculturation articulated to neoliberal rationality, *'competent'*, *'competitive'* (Ministry of

National Education, 2006, p. 3). In which, through the discursive practices underlying the bilingual education in English, configures an imaginary of possibilities to the Colombian students about improving their quality of life in terms of a neoliberal rationality, that is, competitiveness, individuality and progress.

On page nine of the standards, the *'reasons for learning English'* are explicitly published (Ministry of National Education, 2006, p. 9). One of these reasons makes reference to the hierarchical position of the English language, which is thought of as a privileged linguistic tool for global communication which allows access to other cultures. Therefore, learning this language implies greater intercultural interactions and the development of interpersonal relationship skills.

In addition, it is proposed that the learning of the English language gives access to major employment and immigration opportunities in cultures or territories with dominant economies. From the cognitive aspect, it is proposed that learning the English language as a foreign language involves the conscious development of a learning process that implies linguistic awareness. In this sense, the student develops the ability to generate autonomous learning strategies. This can be summarized in terms of the development of a metalinguistic ability (Ministry of National Education, 2006).

In the following statements of the PNB (2004–2019), it is possible to observe the structuring of a linguistic hierarchy conditioned to both neoliberal rationality and the geographical position of ethnic communities. In general, and in the first place, it is considered that the bilingual education processes must be carried out in the English language in most of the territory of the country which is close to the main economic centres. In contrast, for the ethnic communities which are located far away from the economic centres of the national territory, and whose mother tongue is an indigenous language, Spanish language is offered as a second language. In this regard, the PNB 2004–2019 PNB promulgated by the Ministry of National Education (2004) states:

English as a Foreign Language: preschool, primary school, secondary school, and tertiary education programs oriented to skill training for employability and human development. 'English as a second language: (bilingual schools)' [...] 'Raizales and ethnic communities (languages of cultural identification, Spanish as a second language, Spanish in frontier territories, other languages)'.

On one hand, the excerpt portrays a correspondence between bilingual education in English language and the neoliberal rationality, and on the other hand, it depicts a phenomenon of linguisticism subjected to geographic and ethnic conditions. Therefore, in ethnic minorities who are located in remote areas of the national territory, where the mother tongue corresponds to an indigenous language, the bilingual education processes are given in Spanish, leaving these people excluded from bilingual education in the English language. In contrast and for the majority of the Colombian population who live near the economic centres of this nation-state, the contact zone of the school classroom operates as a linguistic bridge where, in juxtaposition to bilingual education in English language, students are transmitted values that are subscribed to neoliberal rationality.

In this logic, Jordão (2009) claims that languages are essential to human progress and are essential to the transmission of information and the current international financial marketplace. He points out that, due to the advantageous position of the English language, as the world's lingua franca, Bilingual education in English has risen in importance as a valuable resource. Thus, the association between neoliberal rationalism and bilingual education in English fosters the imaginary in most Colombian students that having access to the economic, *"scientific, artistic, commercial, social developments"* of today's global world *"makes it necessary" to learn this language*" (Şan & Aykaç, 2020, p. 1108).

### 3.2. Bilingual education in English language and transculturation

Cheadle and Pelletier (2007) in reference to Ortiz (1995), indicate that the concept of transculturation implies a turbulent and unpredictable process resulting from an asymmetric contact

in terms of power relations between cultures that enhances the emergence of new cultural forms. They indicate that the concept of transculturation has become a controversial term since it has been denounced as an ideology whose ultimate goal is to serve to a hegemonic power. According to Pratt (1991), the concept of transculturation can be understood as a phenomenon of the contact zone, from which subalternized individuals interact with a dominant culture. She states that these individuals, being in an unequal position, end up assuming some elements of the dominant culture. In this way, it is possible to affirm that the contact zone of the school classroom, where the processes of bilingual education in English are carried out, becomes a space of transculturation where students assimilate forms of reasoning typical of the Anglophone culture, among these, the neoliberal form of economic reasoning.

In addition to the above, Hult (2012) argues that English language can be thought of as a transcultural language that has the potential to integrate global elements into the local culture. The English language is promoted as a global language from a framework of hegemonic power relations at the political, cultural and economic levels, which are articulated to various multilateral organizations that aim to universalize the particular interests of the economic powers at the global level. These interests refer to the global dissemination by these multilateral organizations of the neoliberal rationality as an economic, cultural and social model. Presenting them as a norm, requirement and universal destiny (Bourdieu, 2001).

This rationality promotes the neoliberal homo oeconomicus. Foucault (2007) conceives the homo oeconomicus as a subject who assumes a neoliberal behaviour to increase competitiveness as an individual entrepreneur, and who rationally evaluates the economic risks in all life spheres (even in the sphere of private life), whose lifestyle is modified by the truths and information gained through experience, and, lastly, whose wishes, thoughts, and his/her very self are controlled by contemporary forms of governmental neoliberal rationality that comprise a sort of neoliberal biopolitics. This connection between neoliberal rationality and the expansion of English as a language that strengthens the competitiveness of the neoliberal homo oeconomicus depicts an active process of integration, through which foreign ways of thinking from the linguistic, from the cultural, but above all from the economic point of view are inserted into the local culture and thus are assimilated almost imperceptibly into the local social body. In this sense, Saban (2020) affirms that this integration process represents a process of transculturation, globalism, and discursive cosmopolitanism, which becomes a hybridization phenomenon, through which ideas that circulate adopt new social and cultural configurations at the local level. Although neoliberalism shapes life in economic, political, social, and cultural terms, it has a paradox as an ubiquitous and omnipresent global phenomenon: it is disunified and not stable, so it varies geographically and temporally (Brown, 2005). Hence, it is relevant to analyse its effects in Latin America (Castelao-Huerta, 2020).

Thus, in the neoliberal educational context of most Latin American countries, including Colombia, the school institution is directly associated to the economy and the labour market. In this sense, this institution should massively produce labour, prepare children for their positioning and distribution in the overall system of the division of labour and support the concepts of individual social advancement. Under this logic, it is argued that large school systems are inefficient and of low quality, and thus, the participation of the nation-state in the financing of education must be reduced and the engagement of private actors strengthened. This is oriented towards the necessary improvements to achieve higher levels of quality, productivity, competitiveness and efficiency (Blanco et al., 2017), thereby producing the aforementioned transculturation phenomenon. Colombia as a State which follows a neoliberal rationality does not escape from the transculturation phenomenon which emerges from the process of interaction with hegemonic nation-states like the United States, at a political, economical and cultural level. This process of transculturation permeates all domains of the Colombian State, including the domain of bilingual education in English language. Hence, The Ministry of National Education (2016, p. 14) states:

Colombia has not been the exception to this impact [the globalization of English language] and, as evidence of this, are the projects created by the Ministry of National Education such as the Colombia Bilingual program, which seeks to encourage the use and the strengthening of English language in all educational institutions in the country [...] and is complemented by the [...] implementation of the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Language: English [...] with which it was possible to have a clear vision of what should be taught to children and young people in Colombian educational institutions.

It is clear that the specific direction of what *'should be taught'* portrays an active process of transculturation, which is promoted by the Ministry of National Education (2016, p. 14). Following Hult (2012), this active process of transculturation that occurs through the contact zone of the school classroom, through bilingual education in English language is characterized by being part of a strategy that seeks to build a Colombian State which is typified by being a legitimate (local) site for globalization placing at the same time its society and culture as participants on the global stage. The tensions reflected in the above excerpt around the duality of the English language as a global language, which seeks to be adapted as a local language, suggest that the policy of bilingual education in this language is in itself a dynamic process of transculturation (Hult, 2012). Thus, for this article, the spatio-temporality of the school classroom constitutes in itself a contact zone, since it is considered that the neoliberal rationality underlying the current guidelines of the bilingualism policies proposed by the MEN of the Colombian State, concrete in this contact zone, through bilingual education in English language. These guidelines show that rather than promoting bilingual education in English for its linguistic, cultural or historical value, these are oriented towards the configuration of a transculturality aimed at moulding the subjectivity of students at the image of the homo oeconomicus.

### *3.3. Subjectivation and neoliberal rationality in the field of the transculturation processes*

According to Foucault (2004), subjectivity refers to how the subject perceives itself in a genuine game of truth. Here the notion of truth is not understood by Foucault as a strictly epistemological problem, where the purity of knowledge is opposed to the effects of coercion produced on the subject through power. Rather, this notion implies power-knowledge relations that compel certain behaviours and produce particular forms of subjectivity.

In this regard, Foucault (2004) asserts that it is necessary to reject an a priori theory of the subject, as phenomenology and existentialism do. He indicates that the subject is not a substance, but a form in constant transformation. He seeks in consequence, to question himself about *'the relationships between the historical constitution of the different forms of subject; that is, the processes of subjectivation and the games of truth, this is, the ensemble of rules and procedures for the production of truth'* (Foucault, 1997, pp. 290–291). Thus, certain practices of truth conditioned to specific historical moments produce particular forms of subjectivation.

Underlying the processes of subjectivation are power-knowledge relations that unfold from discursive practices. In this sense, power and knowledge are intertwined with each other. This intertwining between power and knowledge produces the discursive practices that constitute the truths (dominant discourses), that configure particular forms of subjects.

To complement this, Bilge-Ülker (2019) describes the configuration of the subject constituted from its subjection to power-knowledge relations underlying the discursive practices fostered by the form of governmentality that unfolds from neoliberal rationality. She claims that this subject can be described from three characteristics: the subject is everywhere only and exclusively homo oeconomicus; this subject is configured as human capital oriented towards competitiveness; the field of activity of this subject is not only focused on economic production but also on capital investment. Currently, discursive practices are inscribed in a form of governmentality that fosters the diffusion of neoliberal rationality in the different institutional settings of a large part of the nation-states of the globe, among them the educational institutional sphere.

Within the framework of the bilingual education processes in English language that are developed in the school, the classroom is the physical space where discursive practices are carried out. These discursive practices imply a process of subjectivation in students which favours the neoliberal rationality. From a Foucauldian reading, Correia Cunha and Aranha (2018) indicate that discursive practices are the connection between discourse and the real conditions of a situation. They describe these practices as phases of resignification and also of elaboration of meanings, related to the actual use of language, that is, language itself in action, in movement and the way in which subjects assume positions in their daily lives. They argue that these practices cannot be considered only as forms to create statements, but are, above all, effects of power relations. Thus:

Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them (Foucault, 1997, p. 200).

English language textbooks can be thought of as the materialization of pedagogical forms articulated with discursive practices, which promote neoliberal rationality in the students. In this context, the school classroom is constituted as a contact zone between students and these discursive practices, also generating a transcultural space, where subjectivation processes are produced. In consequence, the students assimilate the rationality of what Foucault calls the neoliberal '*homo oeconomicus*' (Foucault, 2007, p. 182; Kim, 2016). Therefore, through the textbook '*English, please! Student's Book. Fast track 11th grade*' (EpSB11 module 2, page 72, activities: 1, 2, 3) discursive practices which promote neoliberal rationality can be revealed, as seen in Figure 1.



**Figure1**

*Subjectivation Processes are Produced (Note: A Differential Inductive Subjective Structure is Evident.*

*Taken From the Ministry of National Education [2016])*

In the images from EpSB11, module 2, page 72, activity 1, students are confronted with respect to social, economic and gender inequalities promoted by neoliberal rationality. The left image shows a man with lavish clothing, a luxury car and a private plane. The image and body language (upright position, wide smile and air of confidence) reveal a competitive, enterprising and productive man who is located in a hegemonic and privileged position. In sum, from the neoliberal rationality, this image represents a successful man with a great capacity for accumulation and consumption. In contrast, (with the only man on the left image) on the right image, several women are seen working in a garment factory, each of them in front of a weaving machine. These women wear very humble outfits.

The body language presented in the images (hunched back that denotes physical fatigue) portrays women located in a subalternized social structure, in a probable situation of labour exploitation, with long hours of work and Pyrrhic salaries. In this sense, it is relevant to highlight the imbalance between the value of work and the value of the wage present at the base of the capitalist pyramid. According to Marx (1975, p. 42):

'The rate of surplus value [...] will depend on the necessary to reproduce the value of the labouring power and the surplus time or surplus labor performed for the capitalist. It will, therefore, depend on the ratio in which the working day is prolonged over and above that extent, by working which the working man would only reproduce the value of his labouring power, or replace his wages'.

Thus, the labour effort does not determine the salary, but the fixed salary, conditions productivity and labour without pause. Between the left image of men and the right image of women, there is also a gender inequality. From the socioeconomic aspect, These images portray the man in a hegemonic position, while depicting women in a subalternized position. In turn, these photographs are linked to the following dilemmatic propositions, which constitute part of the activities to be carried out in the school classroom and that can be analysed in social, political and economic terms, from the critical formation of the student body.

2. Read the comments. Do you agree/disagree with them?

- a. Rich people should pay high taxes.
- b. Poverty is the cause of most crime.
- c. Rich people are lucky. They get fantastic salaries without contributing to society.
- d. If you help to create wealth you have an obligation to spread it.
- e. The rich are not responsible for the world's problems.
- f. Rich countries are violating the rights of poor countries.
- g. Rich people should share their fortunes with the disadvantaged.
- h. People are poor because they don't work hard.
- i. You don't become rich if you don't deserve it.
- j. We all need to help the poor, not just rich people.
- k. It's not fair that 0.6% of the population owns almost 40% of the world's wealth.

These dilemmatic propositions confront the students with their own subjectivity in relation to the political, economic and social inequities deployed from discursive practices that promote neoliberal rationality. In this sense, '*subjectivity and subject positions are produced and established by the discourse*' (Nabilla & Wahyudi, 2021, p. 3). Here, it is important to carry out a dialectical exercise of CDA to contextualize and illustrate the contradictions to which students can be exposed through the analysis of the dilemmatic propositions proposed by EpSB1. For this exercise, the propositions b and c from the above excerpt are used. Then, the argumentative structure to which the students interact is contextualized through some scientific articles, which are used as a source to investigate issues of social inequality from the perspective of neoliberal rationality.

According to Wacquant (1999), neoliberal rationality strives to penalize poverty. This rationality normalizes unsteady paid labor. He claims that a notion like zero-tolerance against drugs is transcultured from hegemonic countries like United States of America and United Kingdom. He demonstrates this process of transculturation through the concept of zero tolerance, showing the way in which Anglophone societies have built discursive practices of a legal nature oriented towards the criminalization of poverty. Hence, these neoliberal discursive practices which, as already mentioned are also present in texts oriented to bilingual education in English language, promote a one-dimensional imaginary, in which the social phenomenon of '*Poverty is the cause of most crime*'. Underlying the promotion of this imaginary hides the intention of supporting the neoliberal social pyramid (Ministry of National Education, 2016, p. 72).

In addition, Wacquant (1999) argues that discursive practices aimed at criminalizing poverty seek to delegitimize social policies that provide quality of life and opportunities for social advancement to communities in conditions of poverty with the excuse that they promote social problems such as laziness, moral degeneration and violence. Under this rationality, any policy that seeks to balance the social order in terms of access to social rights constitutes a threat to the very structure of the neoliberal social pyramid, since it is sustained and strengthened from a great social inequality, where the vast majority of society is subjected to long hours of labour to be able to cover in a very precarious way, vital needs such as housing, health and food. In contrast, a very small social elite benefits from disproportionate amounts of economic, political, cultural and social resources that allow them to perpetuate the cycle of inequality in their favour. In this sense, Proposition C: *'Rich people are lucky. They get fantastic salaries without contributing to society'*, goes against the orthodoxy of neoliberal rationality (Ministry of National Education, 2016, p. 72). In this regard, Oxfam Briefing Paper (2019, p. 6) points out that:

Today's neoliberal orthodoxy teaches us that inclusion and justice are luxuries. That health and education should be left to the mercy of the free market, available only to those who have the money to pay for them. That ever-lower taxation on the richest will only benefit economic growth. But this view is wrong and backward.

The above extract shows the social inequalities promoted by the neoliberal social pyramid. Under this rationality, economic growth is associated to the benefit of the richest in terms of reducing taxes and guaranteeing overflowing access to social benefits. In contraposition, there is a policy of extreme austerity applied to the vast majority of the population, who interacts at the base of this social pyramid in very poor social conditions, where any hint of social policy for the benefit of this population is denoted as an attack on the morality established by the neoliberal social order. According to the same report, the unfair imposition of taxes at the benefit of wealthy people and corporations, fosters social inequality since for its maintenance, the neoliberal nation-state is obligated to impose the greatest burden of taxes to the rest of society (middle class and lower class), while cutting spending on healthcare, schooling, and other welfare programs aimed at ensuring general social protection.

The previous dialectical exercise of CDA illustrates how students are confronted with the different social problems promoted by the current neoliberal reality. Thus, in front of each dilemmatic proposition, students are asked if they agree or disagree with it: *'Read the comments. Do you agree/disagree with them?'*; *'Rich people should pay high taxes'*; *'The rich are not responsible for the world's problems'*; *'Rich countries are violating the rights of poor countries'*; *'People are poor because they don't work hard'*; and *'It's not fair that 0.6% of the population owns almost 40% of the world's wealth'* (Ministry of National Education, 2016, p. 72). These propositions are embedded by the promotion of a one-dimensional rationality limited to economic achievement (Marcuse, 1993). In this respect, to *'agree'* or *'disagree'* (Ministry of National Education, 2016, p. 72) with each of these propositions, seems to offer students some option and a false sense of free will. However, these options are limited to a one-dimensional perspective: that of progress embedded in a single rationality, the neoliberal.

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

This article seeks to portray the physical space of the school classroom, where policies aimed at bilingual education in English are executed, as a contact zone in which an unequal relationship takes place. This contact zone determines the imaginary of English as a hegemonic language at a global level. Through this imaginary, values subscribed to neoliberal rationality such as competition, individualism and productivity are disseminated. In this contact zone, discursive practices constitute processes of subjectivation. These processes configure the school classroom as a space of tension where students are exposed to different types of texts that are used as input for bilingual education in English and that promote and justify the learning of the English language as an eminently economic promise subscribed to neoliberal rationality. Thus, these students end up adopting the values subscribed to this rationality.

It is in the contact zone of the school classroom, where the discursive practices that reproduce values anchored to neoliberal rationality materialize. Values that in the words of Marcuse (1993) build a one-dimensional universe. The foregoing depicts the school classrooms of the nation-states subscribed to neoliberal rationality as true factories of the neoliberal homo oeconomicus. This encourages reflection about a bilingual education in the English language, which offers resistance to this rationality. However, this reflection does not imply falling into a radical denunciation of the spread of a modern Anglophonocentrism which represents in itself a colonial, monolithic and totalizing phenomenon (Castro-Gómez, 2019). On the contrary, this reflection seeks to promote a critical thinking that questions the methods, the contents and the rationality of bilingual education in English language, and in doing so, can identify the spaces of emancipation and resistance, that have been opened by the globalization of bilingual education of the aforementioned language.

In other words, this bilingual education can be considered as a linguistic bridge that more than fostering economic promises, encourages a fraternal and respectful approach to other cultures, to other ways of thinking about the world, existence, politics, economics and art, among others. A bilingual education that recognizes cultural enrichment as the primary reason for learning not only the English language, but also for learning other international and local languages. Thus, an alternative approach of bilingual education in English language implies the reconfiguration of the discursive practices, that permeate the textual and visual inputs underlying the didactic of this bilingual education. Textual and visual inputs which nowadays are widely presented to students in the contact zone of the school classroom, transculturalizing them in favour of the neoliberal rationality. In this regard, the reconfiguration of these discursive practices implies including in this contact zone alternative textual and visual inputs, that manage to expand the transculturalization phenomenon that occurs in the school classroom, and consequently, increase the possibilities of a cultural enrichment that goes beyond the one-dimensionality of neoliberal rationality.

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