

Chapter 5

Stakeholders' Perceptions About Language Teachers in a Multilingual School System

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ABSTRACT

The use of English as an international language has contributed to its spread worldwide, and the ideologies and beliefs linked to it have also been scattered in diverse multilingual settings. The assignation of the “native speaker” (NS) and “non-native speaker” (NNS) labels and their implication for language teaching have exhaustively been investigated in English, but research has ignored its implications for the learning of other languages. Language ideologies appear to be crucial for the survival and maintenance of minority languages, and the effect of detrimental beliefs may act as a threat for languages like Basque. This study presents an analysis of education stakeholders' attitudes and preferences for English and Basque native and non-native speaking teachers (NSTs/NNSTs) through an analysis of their beliefs. Results point towards an overall preference for NSTs in both languages. Participants appear to assign specific characteristics to NSTs and NNSTs, regardless of the language. The data is particularly insightful for multilingual education and linguistically diverse settings.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, or the current era of connectivity and accessibility to distinct sources, has brought with it a set of economic, social, political and cultural changes to the modern world (Babacan and Babacan, 2007). Among others, it has originated the adoption of English as the primary tool for international communication, enabling dialogues between speakers of different first languages (Selvi, 2014). Still, language cannot be categorized as a purely communication tool, as it is also used as a channel for individuals to express ideologies, identities, beliefs and feelings, and consequently, language usage is perceived as a determinant factor in assigning speakers to different communities of practice (Gao, 2021; O'Rourke

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and Ramallo, 2018). Language ideologies are understood as fixed beliefs about a language by its users as a result of their justification of perceived language structure and use, and they link linguistic features with other social factors that go beyond language itself, affecting individuals' attitudes. In turn, these attitudes are influenced by ideologies, specifically by those that tend to be normalized and regarded as "best" or "most correct" forms of language, labelling other forms as "incorrect" (Walsh, 2021). In this regard, one of the aspects of language that has received most attention is *native speakerism* (Holliday, 2006), the assumption that native speakers (NSs) are perceived as superior and more authentic users of English, and consequently better positioned to teach the language. The entrenchment of such ideologies often results in negative implications for non-native speaking teachers (NNSTs), who are in turn perceived as individuals suffering discrimination in classroom practice and job opportunities, and may consequently generate professional and identity (self-) perceptions of prejudice (Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003). By means of adopting native speaker standards for the development of teaching materials, the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry promotes the image of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) worldwide, prejudicing non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and influencing the attitudes of education stakeholders towards the latter (Rose, McKinley and Galloway, 2020; Si, 2020). Although the effect of *native speakerism* in the English language and in its teaching has been widely researched, the effect of this language ideology has not been so much analyzed in multilingual contexts, particularly focusing on the transmission of such beliefs to other languages.

NATIVENESS AND MULTILINGUALISM

Globalization has established multilingualism as the norm in many territories worldwide, and now many societies and individuals live in settings where two or more languages co-exist (Piller, 2016). With multilingualism have come both opportunities and challenges for education systems, and it is therefore crucial for language teaching to adjust to the ongoing reality, where previous monolingual ideologies clash against present multilingual approaches (Duarte et al., 2020). In response to this new situation, education systems across the globe have adapted their approach and have opted for focusing on internationalization and working on the coexistence of English, the main international language, and other languages with more local-specific relevance (Ampuja, 2015). One of the areas that has received linguists' attention is the nativeness paradigm, a non-elective binary classification of speakers that assigns the "native" or "non-native" labels based on individuals' order of language acquisition or place of birth. Although scholars have reflected on it for decades, this separation of language users keeps having an impact on society and especially on English speakers, being particularly detrimental for the social and professional identities of those perceived as "NNSTs" (Kiczkowiak and Lowe, 2021; O'Rourke and Ramallo, 2011).

Although the majority of studies have focused on nativeness in English, the impact of this ideology is likely to cross language borders and impact other languages in multilingual contexts where the ideology of the standard or the majority language may be transferred to the minority language (Kudriavtseva, 2021; McLelland, 2021). In the case of minority languages, ideologies related to speakers' legitimacy and identities are crucial for their usage, learning and survival, and it is therefore fundamental to examine the extent to which detrimental beliefs affect the ideologies of minority language speakers.

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