

# Non-Localizable vs Localizable English

## *New Linguistic Hierarchies in ‘Democratizing’ English in Spanish Education*

EVA CODÓ

### I. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment rates in Spain are the second highest in the EU (around 33 per cent), only after Greece (see data in Expansión 2019). The few available jobs are precarious and low paying. Many educated youngsters have come to the realization that they will not be able to reproduce their parents’ status (in the case of the [upper] middle classes), let alone move upwardly. The feelings of insecurity engendered by the 2008 recession have intensified old-standing linguistic anxieties. Discourses of employability focus on developing English proficiency as a key form of self-capitalization (Martín Rojo 2019). This is certainly not new, but what *is* new is the intensity of the phenomenon.

Spanish parents have adopted the role of careful nurturers of their children’s capitals (Park 2016), engaging in fine-grained processes of school selection (Hidalgo McCabe and Fernández-González 2019). Declining birth rates have sharpened competition among schools in an increasingly marketized educational sector. The severe budget cuts imposed during the crisis have aggravated the undermining of public schooling, a process which began in the early twenty-first century with the systematic schooling of newcomer migrant children in state schools<sup>1</sup> (Bonal and Zancajo 2018).

Over the past decade, both public and private schools have tried hard to find (new) ways of making their offer (more) attractive to families. This has often pivoted on the multilingualization of the curriculum, with English-medium instruction playing a particularly central (although not exclusive) role (see Codó and Patiño-Santos 2018, for the popularity of French-Spanish baccalaureate, and Codó and Sunyol 2019, for the ascendancy of Mandarin in elite education).

Based on ethnographic data collected in two educational institutions in Barcelona (Catalonia), that is, a state secondary school and a fully private, elite international school, this chapter aims to uncover what kinds of language ideologies sustain and are generated in and through the process of establishing English as a regular language of instruction; what language ideological connections exist between the two schools explored; how these ideologies are related to the institutional, educational and socio-economic context of

each school; what is considered ‘good English’ in each school; what role the ideology of native speakerism plays in establishing what is viewed as ‘good English’; and what social inequalities are (potentially) underway. This study will contribute new data and insights to the underexplored area of the sociolinguistics of English (education) in Catalonia and Spain from a critical and a language-ideological perspective (but cf. Maslanka (2019), Relaño-Pastor and Fernández-Barrera (2019), and Sunyol (2019) for recent scholarship on the topic). The following sections will provide the theoretical and methodological grounding for this study before the examination of the empirical data is undertaken.

## II. UNEQUAL ENGLISHES AND HISTORIES OF LOCALIZATION

Tupas and Rubdy’s (2015) concept of *unequal Englishes* delineates the framing of this chapter. This concept problematizes the egalitarian and liberationist claims of pluralization approaches to English(es). For Tupas and Rubdy, linguistic equality is “a thoroughly political and ideological question which therefore cannot be blind to configurations of power and social relations in different societies today” (2015: 3). Researchers are, thus, compelled to attend to the contingent histories and evolving dynamics of English inequality as they play out in specific language policy and socio-economic contexts.

The study of the worldliness of English and of its localized forms (or Englishes) has a long trajectory in applied linguistics. Recent scholarship has moved away from the spread and nativization paradigm, which conceptualizes English as an external entity that gets inserted – and eventually appropriated – into a given society, to a performative and practice-based perspective (e.g., Pennycook 2010). In this view, English is a contingent semiotic resource that emerges locally to fulfil certain expressive needs, becoming emmeshed in forms of languaging where the boundaries between named languages get blurred. From this perspective, English is not an alien(ating) linguistic resource, but part and parcel of the process of linguistic transmutation of contemporary (globalized) localities.

A somewhat different strand of research in localization studies has focused on the convertibility of English ‘capitals’. Most studies have foregrounded the lack of transferability of ‘placed’ forms of English across different normativity regimes (Blommaert 2010). Although convertibility concerns underlie the present study, this chapter does not address them. Convertibility is an empirical matter and any claims on convertibility (or the lack of it) can only be based on the examination of situated selection processes (e.g., job recruitment). This chapter’s focus on education, by contrast, provides insights into how future convertibility is visualized in contemporary Catalonia. It shows how imaginaries of class and global circulation delineate an emerging contrasting ideological pair, that is, ‘non-localizable’ versus ‘localizable’ English, that supersedes traditional access dichotomies, that is, ‘English haves’ versus ‘English have-nots’. As will be discussed later, the ‘non-localizable English’ desired by the parents and the students of the elite school is a classed linguistic marker hoped to confer distinction to its bearers in a linguistic market viewed as becoming saturated with English-haves. I understand this as a process of *ideologizing* (Silverstein 1998) by which certain ideas about language, in this case ‘good English’, become naturalized. It is to a brief account of the language ideological paradigm, and in particular the notion of *ideological sites* (Philips 2000; Silverstein 1998), that this chapter now turns.

*A Language Ideological Approach to Inequalities of English*

Language ideologies have been defined as conceptualizations about language and its nature, learning and use, “which index the political economic interests of individual speakers” (Kroskrity 2010: 192). In that sense, ideologies are never abstract rationalizations of language use, but are, rather, grounded in and responsive to speakers’ situated experiences of language. Ideologies are not totalizing, but incomplete, multiple and contradictory. For this reason, according to Kroskrity, rather than invoking language ideologies as generalized beliefs, we need to engage in their ethnographic probing as they are produced in specific locales. Silverstein (1998) refers to these spaces as *ideological sites*, sites where ideologies get (re)produced, exposed or transformed. These sites are typically “centers of powerful metapragmatic commentary” (Rosa and Burdick 2017: 111), spaces where ways of speaking/writing are (de)authorized, (de)legitimized and (de)valued. Philips (2000) emphasizes the importance of investigating the institutional grounding of ideologies to understand their articulation across institutional contexts, but also, crucially, the conditions under which certain ideologies get (re)appropriated, (re)formulated or altogether challenged, as they circulate.

To dissect the ideological making of linguistic difference in specific locales, Irvine and Gal (2000) posit three semiotic properties of ideologies, that is, *erasure*, *iconization* and *fractal recursivity*, which, the authors claim, apply universally. In this chapter I am drawing on *fractal recursivity* for its explanatory value in understanding the contrasting value of different forms of English in the two sites investigated (cf. Irvine and Gal 2000 for definitions of the other two properties).

Gal (2012) argues that ideologies are paired systems of differentiation that allocate contrasting values to linguistic forms. These contrasts “are co-constituted: they define each other” (23) and are iterative. She draws on the recursive nature of ideologies to argue that current normative individual multilingualism (as defended by EU bodies) is not a new sociolinguistic regime, but rather a recursion of the old contrast between the national standard (viewed as modern, instrumental, apersonal, placeless and mobile) and regional dialects (presented as authentic, localizing and backward). According to Gal, these contrasting values have now been transferred, respectively, to global *lingua francae* such as English (embodying modernity and placelessness) and national standards (signifying tradition and localization). Gal herself notes the need for investigating the new inequalities produced by this ideological iteration: “If this multilingual sociolinguistic regime is also a form of standardization, then we may ask, what hierarchies are reproduced or created?” (2012: 35). This is the question this chapter attempts to address.

Language ideological research on English is abundant (as this volume attests to). Native speakerism (Holliday 2006) is still a powerful ideology, no doubt reinforced by soft-power institutions, such as the British Council (Codó and McDaid 2019), and the dominance of Inner Circle textbook publishers and the testing industry. However, its relevance is systematically assumed, often based on curricula and language policy statements (see e.g., Saraceni 2015: 173), rather than empirically investigated. In fact, political economy-based scholars of multilingualism have pointed out that globalization and the increasing skillification of language are destabilizing the ideology of the native speaker (henceforth NS); however, the same scholars also argue that processes of skillification exist in tension with processes of authentication, and that “even when language teaching is ‘skilled’ it can draw on ideologies of authentic languages and authentic speakers; English, notably, is most valued when delivered by “native” speakers” (Heller and McElhinny 2017: 244).

Scholars of World Englishes often assume that what counts as ‘good English’ is native-like English; yet, what exactly is meant by that category tends not to be scrutinized. Modiano (2009: 66) claims that learners of English aim at “mimicking the idealised native speaker”. This “mimicking” entails, according to him, comparable fluency but “with the understanding that native-like proficiency in phonological terms is not required” (2009: 65). This extract exemplifies the linguistic under-specifications that abound in the literature (e.g., what is comparable fluency?), but also points toward a key dimension of native speakerism: accent. Although Modiano dismisses it, accent is the area where most research on aspirational models of English has been conducted. Generally, it is claimed that non-native speaker (henceforth NNS) accents are stigmatized (see Beinhoff 2014), and that learners aim to adopt either the British or the American standard. However, in an earlier study, Modiano himself claimed that Mid-Atlantic English, “in which decidedly British pronunciations have been neutralised, and of which the vocabulary includes both American and British items” (1999: 207), was gaining ground in many education systems around Europe. A recent study on pronunciation by Rindal and Piercy (2013) goes in a novel direction. A small but significant proportion of the Norwegian youngsters investigated preferred not to speak British or American English but a ‘neutral’ English; they did not aim “towards *any* recognisable English accent” (2013: 224). This had to do, as they reported in the interviews, with their wish to avoid the indexicalities associated with either standard. We will see similarities with this stance in some of the data presented.

Apart from the ideology of the NS just discussed, another key ideology in relation to English is that of *linguistic instrumentalism* (Wee 2003), that is, the idea that English (alone) will guarantee the socioeconomic advancement of individuals, institutions or countries. In the case of South Korea, Park (2009) identified three further ideologies structuring practices and feelings, namely (a) *necessitation*, (b) *externalization* and (c) *self-deprecation*. Necessitation refers to the assumption that English is a must for everyone irrespective of individuals’ actual need; externalization encapsulates the naturalized idea that English is the language of an essentialized superior foreign Other (with indexicalities of race and social class); and self-deprecation refers to entrenched perceptions of South Koreans being unable to speak English. In later studies, Park (2016) has underlined the importance of the ideology of “language as pure potential” (2016: 457), which holds that acquiring English empowers its acquirers irrespective of other factors, and individualizes the responsibility for one’s success and social position. In what follows I will present some contemporary sociolinguistic sketches of English in Spain/Catalonia to frame the study presented.

### III. THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF ENGLISH IN SPAIN AND CATALONIA

Declared knowledge of English among the Spanish population is fairly low (around 20 per cent according to data in Linn [2016] taken from the 2012 Eurobarometer). This places Spain on a par with other Mediterranean countries, such as France and Italy, considered to have moderate proficiency levels – in contrast with Northern European countries. There are a lot of factors that explain these results, among which is the very methodology used in many surveys (self-perceptions),<sup>2</sup> but this is hardly ever problematized. Instead, English-knowledge country ranks are systematically scrutinized in search of signs of Spain’s improvement but to no avail (see Zafra 2019). This constant surveillance is grounded on

the ideology of self-deprecation (Park 2009). Deeply entrenched and regularly animated in informal conversations, discourses of self-deprecation maintain that Spaniards have a collective issue with English that cannot be reverted. This rhetoric builds on many an individual frustration with English and serves to legitimize life-long investments.

English was not introduced in Spanish mainstream education until the 1980s, as French was the foreign language traditionally taught. This means that the over-fifty population, even if educated, may not have had access to English through schooling. Of course, many enrolled in private language schools in the 1990s when this industry began to expand (see Codó 2018), but a late beginning was added to the ineffectiveness of traditional grammar-based language instruction in Spain.

Recent English proficiency surveys have shown soaring competence levels among the younger generations. The results of the British Council APTIS test among Catalan students (Vicente 2018) indicate that 65.9 per cent of students aged fifteen to sixteen have a B1 level of English or higher (CEFR). The UE sets desirable rates at 50 per cent. So, contrary to the mantra, the situation does seem to be changing. However, on close inspection, significant class-based inequalities are revealed. The Basic Skills Test (*proves de competències bàsiques*), which all Catalan students must take at ages twelve (end of primary schooling) and sixteen (end of secondary schooling), has uncovered differences among socio-economic groups, which were more marked for English than for maths, Catalan and Spanish, the other skills tested. Students from (upper-)middle-class *milieux* scored significantly higher in English than those from underprivileged areas. This variance was also apparent when school type was considered, with private schools clearly outperforming public ones (Rodríguez 2015).

One of the key ways in which policymakers have tried to remedy the chronic social inequalities associated with and produced by English is through the promotion of Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL) pedagogies in state schooling placing special emphasis on inclusiveness and social justice (Escobar and Evnitskaya 2013). Catalan CLIL has not expanded as quickly or systematically as elsewhere in Spain (education being highly decentralized in the country). Navés and Victori (2010) attribute this to the desire to avoid the top-down imposition of CLIL in a context fraught with numerous language policy tensions. By contrast, the private education sector in Catalonia has in general embraced instruction-through-the medium of English (in its different variants) more eagerly than the public sector owing to more flexible employment practices and a heightened market orientation.

CLIL discourse has carefully problematized the glorification of the NS found in commercial ELT. Promoters emphasize that CLIL programmes aim at achieving functional, not native-like proficiency (Marsh 2002), and that learners are not to be treated “as (deficient) novices but as (efficient) users” (Lorenzo and Moore 2010: 24). In general, CLIL implementation has normalized the NNS teacher by moving the focus away from linguistic competence towards content teachers’ expertise in their disciplines. We shall see how this CLIL rhetoric has percolated to the level of policy implementation when we analyse the state school data.

### *Ideologies of English in Catalonia*

Available research on English in Catalonia has mostly focused on adolescents or young adults. In a study with high school students (sixteen-year-olds), Flors-Mas (2013) identified the ideology of necessitation as the most prevalent, connected to the ideology

of linguistic instrumentalism. Contrary to expectations, the ideology of externalization was not present. English was viewed as a language with a wide ownership, which the author analysed along the lines of Woolard's ideology of anonymity (2008). In line with Comellas (2009), Flors-Mas (2013) also identified class-based differences. While all students adhered to the idea that they *must* know English, working-class students were more prone to see this as a burden than middle-class students. The author connects this to the generally lower competence of the former, for whom the language feels more remote, but also to the fact that they do not envisage personal or professional futures for which English might be relevant. Focusing on higher education students, Maslanka (2019) observed widespread ideologies of necessitation and linguistic instrumentalism grounded on the "promise of English" (Park 2011: 443), although her informants did not manifest the intense feelings of anxiety or shame reported in South Korea. Speakers identified class-based inequalities, in particular, in relation to study abroad programmes. Finally, they showed nuanced views on the prevalence of the ideology of self-deprecation in Spain. They reported feeling fairly self-confident about their English, although admitted that general proficiency was still low and that most people felt embarrassed when having to speak in English. The combination of age and social class may explain these results, which contradict the findings by Comellas (2009) among secondary school students. Let us now turn to the empirical study reported here with a brief introduction to the schools and the ethnographic approach adopted.

#### IV. TWO SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHIES: SITES, APPROACH AND DATA

The data examined in this chapter comes from two simultaneous ethnographies of language policy undertaken between 2015 and 2018 in two schools located in the Barcelona metropolitan area.<sup>3</sup> In both cases, instruction through the medium of English was gaining a prominent role in the curriculum and was being showcased to increase enrolment rates.

##### *Els Pins*

*Els Pins* (EP)<sup>4</sup> is a state secondary school located in a lower-middle-class city on the outskirts of Barcelona. It offers four years of compulsory secondary education and elective baccalaureate (two years). All students at EP must take EFL classes; French is offered as an elective. After a pilot one-year scheme, in 2014 the school joined GEP,<sup>5</sup> a government programme to support CLIL in Catalan schools through the provision of staff training (for further details, see Codó and Patiño-Santos 2018). GEP/CLIL was instrumental in consolidating the upward academic trajectory of EP, after a few years of high social disruption and lowering standards in which (lower-)middle-class families had fled the school. Three courses began to be taught using English as the vehicular language: Science Research (twelve- to thirteen-year-olds), Physical Education (thirteen- to fourteen-year-olds) and Technology (fifteen- to sixteen-year-olds). Two further courses were partially taught in English.

##### *Forum International School*<sup>6</sup>

*Forum International School* (FIS) encapsulates a totally different reality. FIS is a fee-paying, fully private school attended by children of (upper-) middle-class local and expatriate families. It offers education from kindergarten through to baccalaureate, as well as some vocational training options. Founded in 1989 as a Catalan-medium school, it

was sold in 2008 to a hedge fund. The first decision of the new ownership was to turn it into an ‘international school’, and to implement an officially trilingual policy in which the two local languages, Catalan and Spanish, were to share teaching time with English. The school has a wide multilingual curriculum on offer, with Mandarin being compulsory from age four to age ten and then becoming one of three foreign language electives alongside French and German. The school has recently begun to offer the curricula of the International Baccalaureate Organization (see Sunyol and Codó 2019).

### *The Corpus*

As is customary in ethnographic projects, the corpus includes a variety of data types (field notes, group and individual interviews, recordings of sessions and of other school events, visual data, institutional documents, etc.) involving multiple stakeholders (teachers, students, administrators, families, policymakers, trade union leaders, etc.) and spaces, often beyond the school site. Although for reasons of space only a small part of the corpus will be presented in this chapter, the data chosen is representative of the logics in relation to English observed in each school over a period of three years.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS

### *English-as-Communication at Els Pins*

When asked in a group interview about the goals of English education/CLIL at EP, all the teachers involved agreed that they hoped to bring the language closer to the students (‘make students familiar with it’) and eradicate the feeling of ‘fear’ engendered by English (Anna, the PE teacher, even employed the word ‘panic’ to describe her students’ reaction when they heard her begin to teach in English). The main objective was, thus, to de-exceptionalize English as a language of instruction. Pepa, the head teacher, claimed that they hoped to improve students’ oral abilities (understood, as she explained, as the capacity to understand and communicate basic information). Jordi, the fourth-year Technology teacher, summed up the staff’s thinking by saying that they wanted their students ‘to have a better level of English than we had’ to which his colleagues all acquiesced. In an individual interview (see Extract 1), I asked Jordi to be more explicit about his linguistic ambitions for his students.

Extract 1 J (*Jordi*), *Technology teacher*; E (*Eva*), *researcher*

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01 J: sempre que parlin (1.3) el més important/ 02 (.) ÉS: (.) comunicar\ (.) val/ (.) i que:: 03 si s'equivoquen amb la paraula que es 04 deixen la essa no sé què coses d'aquestes/ 05 (.) que això és (.) a priori/ secundari\ 06 [. . .] i i que jo en la meva trajectòria 07 personal jo sempre que he parlat en 08 anglès/ (.) e:l noranta per cent/ ha estat 09 amb alemanys/ francesos italians no amb 10 anglesos\ (.) llavors\ (.) tots tenim les 11 nostres mancances i limitacions/ en quant 12 a l'accent/ la pronunciació/ i no sé què/	J: if they speak (1.3) the most important thing/ (.) IS: (.) to communicate\ (.) okay/ (.) and i:f if they make a mistake with a word or forget the esses things like that/ (.) that is a priori/ secondary\ [. . .] and in my personal trajectory every time I've spoken in English/ (.) ninety percent/ has been with Germans/ French or Italians not with English\ so (.) we all have our weaknesses and limitations in terms of accent/ pronunciation/ and whatever/
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- 13 E: mhm/ (.) i això els hi els hi expliques\  
 14 [o:/:
- 15 J: [sí intentem-ho fer bé però ja està o sigui J: [yes let's try to do it well but that's it let's  
 16 no:: no ens obsessionem amb amb: (.) no:t not get obsessed with with (.) with  
 17 amb coses que:: que no toquen\ [. . .] things that are of no concern\ [. . .] I think  
 18 jo crec que: ajuda/ el fet de que vegis a it helps to see someone who doesn't fear  
 19 algú que no tingui por/ malgrat ho faci speaking in English/ no matter whether  
 20 (.) millor/ o pitjor\ (1.2) vale/ (.) no sé they're better or worse at it/ I don't  
 21 com a mínim:: A MI em va servir\ no/ know at least it worked for ME\ right/ I  
 22 °de:: un professor això no:/: m:° (.) had °a university professor\ uhm° whose  
 23 profe de la universitat\ (.) que a nivell pronunciation wa:s (.) AWFUL\ (.) but  
 24 de pronunciació era::: (.) FATAL\ (.) grammatically he was perfect then you  
 25 però gramaticalment/ era (.) perfecte\ would say jeez (.) everyone understands  
 26 llavors deies hòstia (.) tothom::\ l'entén him right/ (1.8) so that's it (.) it's all  
 27 perfectament no/ (1.8) pues ja està (.) communication/ so (.) let's take this  
 28 com és comunicar/ pues (.) cap a aquí\ direction\

There are a number of issues intertwined in Jordi's response. We see what I call the ideology of 'English-as-communication' emerging right at the beginning (lines 1–2). Jordi draws on his experience in lingua franca contexts to justify a less-than-perfect type of English. Although he initially focuses on morphology ('forgetting the esses'), it is pronunciation that characterizes the type of English he is trying to legitimize. In lines 16–17, he animates a dialogue with his students in which he encourages them not to 'get obsessed' with 'things of no concern' and to adopt this same stance towards English, that is, to have no 'fear' (line 19). Jordi's 'fear' (and subsequent discourse) points towards EP students' embodied anxieties, as described by staff, which the GEP programme aimed to overcome, and also reminds us of the long-standing ideology of self-deprecation that, as we discussed, defines Spaniards' relationship to English.

Jordi presents himself as an attitudinal model for his students. Jordi's own attitudinal model (a university lecturer he once had) is depicted as having an 'awful' English, by which Jordi means heavily Spanish-accented, which allegedly did not prevent him from communicating successfully. Clearly, effective communication, which Jordi attributes to grammatical accuracy, is the aspiration for Jordi and his students. This ideology brought with it a devaluing of NS varieties in the school, as we shall see in Extract 2.

During the year 2016–2017, EP received an Irish English language assistant, Michael (for further details, see Codó and McDaid 2019). At no time was Michael's nativeness showcased; rather it was his youth (and thus assumed closeness to the students) that was systematically emphasized as his number one asset. In fact, in one of the Technology sessions in which Michael was present there was a moment of metapragmatic evaluation of the three varieties of English present in the class: Irish (Michael's), Australian (one of the students had lived in Australia) and Spanish English.

Extract 2 J (*Jordi*, *Technology teacher*; S (*student*))

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- 01 J: =so::\ is easie::r/ an Australian/ accent\ tha::n\  
 02 ((some Ss laugh)  
 03 S: a Spanish accent



- 04 J: than/ Ireland\  
 05 J: e::h/ (.) [Spani:sh/  
 06 S: [Spanish accent\ [i:s (.) [is better\  
 07 J: [is/ [the most understandable for all of us\ (.) right\

We see how Jordi and his students transition from ‘easier’ to ‘better’ to ‘most understandable’ in evaluating varieties of English to construct value for their collective Spanish-accented English (line 7), but also how two ‘native’ varieties (Irish and Australian English) are not given the appreciation we often encounter in the literature. Such bold and unproblematic defense of ‘Spanish English’ was observed regularly at EP. This was undoubtedly related to the need to boost some CLIL teachers’ self-confidence in English (they were all not as confident as Jordi). In the CLIL classes, we observed a fair amount of Spanish used by the students and a great deal of translingual practices, such as ‘put the *dit*’ (Cat. finger) instead of ‘put your finger in’ (Science Research lesson, 25/01/2016, twelve-year-olds). The students often playfully subverted English grammar/lexis to convey their message. Many of those expressions were calqued from Spanish/Catalan (*‘mi computer no function’*, ‘my computer does not work’, Science Research lesson, 21/12/2015), and words often had the endings removed or anglicized, for example in the expression ‘in aguantiing’ (from the Spanish/Catalan verb *aguantar* instead of English *hold*). By and large, these contributions, which were less frequent – but not rare – as students grew older, were tolerated by the teachers, who sometimes reformulated students’ turns in ‘correct’ English but sometimes did not, adhering to the ideology of ‘English-as-communication’ that was prevalent in the school.

The students voiced an analogous discourse founded on the same ideology. The following extract comes from a focus group discussion with three academically oriented high-performing students aged sixteen who were attending Jordi’s English-medium Technology course. They respond here to my question ‘how would you characterize a good student of English?’.

Extract 3 S (*Susanna*), Ed (*Eduard*) and M (*Miquel*), students; E (*Eva*), researcher

- |        |   |     |  |
|--------|---|-----|--|
| 01 S:  | capaç de mantenir una conversa estable/ | S:  | able to maintain a stable conversation     |
| 02     |   |     |  |
| 03 E:  | mhm/                                    | E:  | uhu/                                       |
| 04 Ed: | improvisada\                            | Ed: | improvised\                                |
| 05 E:  | improvisa:da:::/ o sigui\ la improvit-  | E:  | improvi::sed/ so\ improvi- the             |
| 06     | la capacitat\ d’improvitza:r/ la        |     | capacity\ to improvi:se/ the capacity/     |
| 07     | capacitat/ de\ la fluïdesa\ no:/ una    |     | of\ fluency\ ri:ght/ a bit/ (.) what else/ |
| 08     | mica/ (.) què més/ diríeu/              |     | would you say/                             |
| 09     | (2.0)                                   |     | (2.0)                                      |
| 10 Ed: | que tingui vocabulari\                  | Ed: | that they have vocabulary                  |
| 11 E:  | per expressar-se\ no:/ aha\             | E:  | to express themselves\ right:/ uhu\        |
| 12 M:  | que comuniqui bé                        | M:  | that they communicate well                 |

- 13 E: que comuni-un bon comunicador\ E: that they commu- a good  
communicator\  
14 M: hm\ M: hm\  
15 (.) (.)  
16 E: vale\ (.) a::::hm::\ (.) tenir un bon E: okay\ e::::rm\ having a good accent/  
17 accent/ és:\ importa:nt\ o:::/ i:s\ that impo:rtant\ or not/  
18 S: =no\ mentre se t'entengui:/ S: =no\ as long as you're understood/.

Through this dialogue we confirm, again, how the NS category is nowhere to be found at EP. The students, like their teachers, identify good English performance with being able to sustain longish ('stable') non-scripted ('improvised') conversation in English. Note that this ideal(ized) speaker, who is able to quickly (and with apparent ease) produce messages in English, echoes, through contrast, the paralysed prototypical Spaniard discussed earlier. Interestingly, when I ask them to explain the category further, the students seem at a loss for words; only after two seconds does Eduard indicate vocabulary as another key aspect, and then Miquel utters the magic word, 'communication' (line 12). I decide to explicitly enquire about the importance of accent, but Susanna immediately (note the latching) responds that accent is not important as long as you are understood. The topic dies after Susanna's turn. There are various important elements in this extract: the total erasure of grammatical accuracy, the elevation of communication, and the dismissal of accent, presenting intelligibility and good pronunciation as separate processes. Let us now turn to ideologies of English at FIS.

### *Quality English at Forum International School*

At FIS, the fully private international school, discourses around English were totally dissimilar. In fact, FIS' distinctive educational offer pivoted around offering 'more' to students than the rest of schools in town (Codó and Sunyol 2019); this 'more' was in many ways epitomized by their type of English instruction.

The school's official trilingual policy established that 33 per cent of teaching time was to be in English. In its website, FIS showcased its 'English language immersion' programme, which according to the head teacher was radically distinct from (state) CLIL. In practice, immersion meant that pre-school children were taught literacy skills not only in Catalan but also in English. The school had a clear monolingual ethos (De Mejía 2013) grounded on the ideology of multilingualism-as-multiple-parallel-monolingualisms. At pre-school, classes were monolingual in one language or the other depending on the day of the week, and at higher levels of education, each subject was taught in one of the three school official languages (see Sunyol 2017 for a fuller discussion).

The institution placed a great deal of discursive emphasis on the quality of their English instruction (*'fer anglès molt bé'*, lit. 'to do English very well', see Sunyol 2019). This expression referred ambivalently to the school's central concern with English and the way it was taught, but also, very importantly, to how the school was socializing its students in the ideology that not any kind of English was enough. For example, in one of the classrooms there hung a small poster with the following statement: 'Good English, well spoken and well written will open more doors than a college degree. Bad English will slam doors you didn't even know existed.' The quote, by William Raspberry, an American journalist, displayed

on the wall with no reference to its author, encapsulates FIS' stance towards English. Not only is the 'promise of English' (Park 2011) said to be contingent on 'good English', but the argument is buttressed through threats of severe penalties for offenders. However, the question still remains, what was considered 'good English' at FIS?

To unpack the category we must first review the trajectory of the school. FS was rebranded as an 'international school' in 2008 becoming FIS. One of the key traits of FIS' internationality was its unique educational model, defined in an interview by its head teacher as a 'Catalan international school'. What this meant was that the local Catalan language/culture retained greater presence than in other international schools, but also that FIS did not aim to imitate British or American school models. In keeping with this distinct school profile, the ideal FIS teacher was not an NS but an 'international teacher' (as showcased in the school's website).

An international teacher was defined as a proficient English speaker as well as a well-travelled and cosmopolitan professional with educational experience abroad. According to the head teacher, the international teacher, who could potentially be a national of several countries, was more aligned with the school model fostered than British or American 'natives'.

Despite the ideological defense of the international teacher, there was a pragmatic side to it (as we were able to find out ethnographically). In the past, the school had had unsatisfactory experiences with NS traveller-teachers hopping schools to see the world, as was reported by the school head. In preferring proficient NNS teachers, the school had a larger pool to choose from and was not obliged to hire NSs. In any case, the truth was that the head's valuation of NNS is rather rare in the field of elite schooling and challenges long-standing native-speakerist ideologies. But the interview also illuminated the multifarious tensions the head teacher had to navigate, countering parents' expectations that teachers be NSs while at the same time guaranteeing that all teachers had 'native-like' English proficiency – later reformulated as 'correct fluency' in the language. We witnessed how the NS teacher category, which the head teacher tried hard to *erase*, kept propping up at different moments.

The NS category was rarely present in the school's daily workings; however, it did structure value for some staff members. Obviously, it was the NS teachers who most fiercely defended the worth of their nativeness, interestingly not in relation to their NNS colleagues, but in opposition to state schooling. We can observe distinction-through-English in the discourse of Kate, a key actor at FIS, given that she was the 'multilingual' programme coordinator in charge of the language interviews for teacher recruitment (see Extract 4).

Extract 4 K (Kate), *multilingual programme coordinator*; A (Andrea), *researcher*

- 
- 01 K: in immersion programs\ or/ I mean/ I think am:/ a lot of:/ schools are possibly  
 02 using to give a bit more English / ( ) but then of course you need the teaching  
 03 staff\ (1.5)
- 04 A: yeah\ mhm\
- 05 K: erm:/ I mean I have been on conferences or whatever set up in Barcelona\ (.) and  
 06 you know/ these are English teachers in state education and I don't understand  
 07 when they speak English\ (.) and yet they are teaching\ (.) CHILDREN\ in English\  
 08 and THAT'S the difference between/ (.) as it were our kind of school\ (.) and the  
 09 rest\ (.) em:/ you know/ the English we are giving the children is native English\

10 A: yeah yeah that makes a difference\

11 K: a massive/ massive/ massive difference

Kate starts off by focalizing immersion (as we have discussed, a distinguishing FIS feature) as the method to provide FIS students with enhanced exposure to English, but then immediately adds that simply ‘more’ is not enough; it has to be *more* AND *good* English. She presents a polarized dichotomy between FIS NS teachers and state schooling NNS teachers, whose English is unintelligible (to her, of course). She seems preoccupied and at the same time upset (notice her louder voice signaled through capitals in the transcript) that those NNS teachers are passing ‘such English’ on to their students. However, through Kate’s discourse we do not get any insights into what the source of the state teachers’ unintelligibility, hence ‘bad’ English, might be. For this we need to turn to another interview excerpt (see Extract 5), this time featuring Isabella, an ‘NS’ language assistant.

Extract 5 I (*Isabella*), *British English language assistant*; A (*Andrea*), *researcher*

01 I: [. . .] they have/ (.) quite a few\ (.) not native English teachers/ e:m/ (.) but they  
02 have/ teachers with very- with a good level\ (.) em:/ and they do loads of so:ngs/  
03 and it’s quite ( ) ((laughs)) and it (goes the same)/ all the way up/ (.) em:/ [until  
04 they leave\

05 A: [so you think- (.) do you think they should hire/ or they should have more native  
06 teachers than:/

07 I: ((inhales)) MAYBE WHEN THE- when it comes to infanti:l/ (2.0) I don’t know\  
08 (.) it’s a hard a one\ (.) I’d say no but then I’d say yes at the same time/ because  
09 if they want it/(.) so:/ they learn naturally like em:/ like as if they were in the  
10 country/ then I’d say native because/ (1.5) well that’s how a native learns/ they  
11 learn from other natives/ and they learn how to pronounce/ an:d the problem is  
12 there is a good amount of teachers that pronunciation is good/ I mean there’s  
13 others that pronounce/ like a typical Spanish person/ they roll the Rs [the letter  
14 r] and you know/ (.) obviously they are gonna make mistakes/ and those mistakes  
15 are what the kids is gonna- are gonna pick up/ so:/ (.) it’s:/ it’s a hard one\ (.) em:/  
16 (.) but/ (.) maybe from maybe from primary one/ (1.5) I’d say native teachers/ (.)  
17 which is basically I think that’s what they do here actually\ (.) thinking well

In lines 01–04, Isabella is discussing English education at FIS pre-school and we see how she praises the English of her NNS colleagues. When prompted by Andrea, the researcher, to explicitly say whether she thinks the school should hire more NS teachers, she hesitates, draws on comparisons with L1 learning contexts and finally focalizes pronunciation. Then, in a rhetorical turn almost identical to Kate’s above, Isabella engages in a discussion of how poor the pronunciation of some Spanish teachers of English is (Isabella does not mention state education but it is hard not to see the parallels with Kate’s discourse), and how those Spanish-sounding features (indexed by rolling their Rs) are going to be passed on to students (again, the same concern expressed by Kate’s as veiled justification of the importance of their nativeness). In her final comment (line 17), Isabella aligns with the school policy of hiring NS teachers for early schooling, engaging, like Kate, in distinction-through-English work.

Pronunciation/accents seem to be the cornerstone of discourses both in emphasizing the value of NS English (Kate and Isabella at FIS) and in downplaying it (as in the case of

all teachers at EP). But what are the features of this good/poor accent in English? We have some clues in Isabella's discourse. Rolling one's Rs is unacceptable because that is what a 'typical Spanish person would sound like' (line 13), that is, a typical Spanish person who speaks English. So, whereas at the state school, teachers' concern was getting students not to be afraid of English, at FIS the concern is not sounding like a 'typical Spanish person'.

One of the parents we interviewed (Gema) put this across very explicitly (see Extract 6). Gema holds a managerial position in a multinational, US-based IT company located close to FIS. She works almost exclusively in English. At the time of the interview, Gema's twin daughters were in their final year at FIS.

Extract 6 *G (Gema), mother; A (Andrea), researcher*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>01 G: y de repente resulta que:/ que hablan<br/>02 inglés\ (.) entonces claro tienen un<br/>03 acento/ que nosotros no tenemos\ (. )<br/>04 tienen una capacidad de entender/<br/>05 que lo pillan y yo no:./ [ . . ]<br/>06 gramaticalmente las oyes y algún<br/>07 gajaco hay pero:./ (.) pero vaya es un<br/>08 nivel de:./ de inglés que yo no tendré<br/>09 nunca no/</p> | <p>G: and suddently it turns out the:y/ they<br/>speak English (.) then of course they<br/>have an accent/ that we don't have\<br/>(.) they have an ability to understand/<br/>that they get it and I do::n't/ [ . . ]<br/>grammatically you listen to them and<br/>there are some mistakes bu::t/ (.) I<br/>mean it's a level o:f/ of English that I<br/>will never have right/</p> |
| <p>10 A: y cuando dices lo del acento/ (.) am:/<br/>11 (.) a qué te referies/</p>   | <p>A: and when you were talking about<br/>accent/ (.) e:rm/ (.) what were you<br/>referring to/</p>  |
| <p>12 G: yo no sé pronunciar/ las palabras que<br/>13 dicen ellas no/ por ejemplo:/ (.) yo<br/>14 que sé/ (.) una:./ (.) no te sé decir/<br/>15 ((laughs)) ninguna\ pero:./ (.) no lo<br/>16 decimos [igual</p>   | <p>G: I don't know pronouncing/ the<br/>words they say right/ for exa:mple/<br/>(.) I don't know (.) o:ne/ (.) I cannot<br/>think/ ((laughs)) of a word\ bu:t/ (.)<br/>we don't say them [the same way</p>   |
| <p>17 A: [pero qué es un buen acento<br/>18 para ti/</p>  | <p>A: [but what is a<br/>good accent for you/</p>  |
| <p>19 G: o sea no suena como cuando habla su<br/>20 padre/ (.) o como cuando hablo yo/<br/>21 que se nos nota que somos españoles/<br/>22 hablando en inglés\no/ (.) ellas/ (.) no<br/>23 sé/ (.) tampoco se llegan a parecer/<br/>24 inglesas del todo/ pero:./ (.) pero sí\ (.)<br/>hablan:/ (.) hablan así\ sabes /</p>  | <p>G: okay it does not sound like when his<br/>dad speaks/ (.) or when I speak/ that<br/>it's clear we are Spanish/ speaking in<br/>English\ right/ they/ (.) don't know (.)<br/>they don't sound completely English<br/>either/ bu:t/ (.) but yes\ (.) they speak<br/>like this\ you know/</p>  |

We see how Gema focalizes her daughters' pronunciation to begin with and then their listening abilities, and although she admits they make some grammatical mistakes (line 6), she concludes by saying they have a level of English she will never have. What defines her understanding of an 'excellent' level is not grammatical accuracy but advanced oral comprehension skills and a good pronunciation. When Andrea, the researcher, probes Gema's understanding of what a good accent means to her, Gema finds it difficult to pin it down, searches for examples of words but none come to her mind, and finally finds the answer to that difficult question: 'to have an accent that does not tell you're Spanish'. Her daughters do not sound totally 'English' but they do not sound Spanish either, like both her and her husband do; their English is 'non-localizable'.

Gema's daughters speak English fluently and with apparent ease, according to their mother. They embody the typical FIS student who is not afraid or embarrassed, but rather, embraces English. FIS students were constantly exposed to English and were encouraged to use it not just in academic activities but also in informal communication, for example in designated class spaces. Sometimes they wrote post-it messages in English (like 'go hard or go home', seen in one of the International Baccalaureate (IB) classrooms, Sunyol 2019). IB students created their particular slang, inner jokes and codes, which would very often be in English. Their use of swear words in English and slang that would make them sound authentically English was also evident in their Instagram stories. Students' playful (but 'correct') use of the English language indicated a certain mastery/confidence and desire for self-identification. Marta, one of the IB students we interviewed, explained what speaking good English meant for her. 'Speaking fluently, without too many grammar mistakes and having a good vocabulary'. When asked about accent, she replied, 'having a good accent for me is not to have a Spanish accent'. Exactly the same description Gema gave. This coincidence is not anecdotal.

In the interview we conducted with Lluïsa (see Extract 7), a long-time Catalan teacher of English and the head of department, she mentioned that her students were 'highly skilled at imitating accents' and that this was due to the fact that the school had 'educated their ear'. The school's focus on developing students' awareness of different accents of English, as well as the regular in-class discussions around them, can be seen in Extract 7 (see lines 08–09), where Lluïsa recalls a particularly hurting comment made by the student representatives at the graduation ceremony.

Extract 7 L (*Lluïsa*, English teacher; A (*Andrea*), researcher

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>01 L: =vale/ (.) o sigui de fet/ (.) crec que a<br/> 02 vegades quan em van a mi/ el el dia de<br/> 03 la graduació/ ens van fer una brometa<br/> 04 que ens va tocar una mica el dallonsis/<br/> 05 (.) perquè les les les delegades van<br/> 06 fer un discurs/ (.) i feien una mica de<br/> 07 broma amb tothom\ (.) i a nosaltres<br/> 08 ens van dir/ "us ah; trobarem a faltar<br/> 09 els listenings d'anglès amb els diferents<br/> 10 accents/" perquè jo sempre insisteixo<br/> 11 si això és/ "look it is Scottish/" o és no<br/> 12 sé què\ (.) diu "però ens quedem amb<br/> 13 el de les nostres professores/ (.) tot i<br/> 14 que/ reconeixeu-ho/ (.) cap de les dues<br/> 15 és anglesa\ (.) daf/ (.) daf és una cosa<br/> 16 que diu el Miquel que vol dir/ directo al<br/> 17 fracaso\ (.)</p> | <p>L: =okay/ (.) I mean in fact/ (.) I think<br/> sometimes when they did that to<br/> me/ on on graduation day/ they<br/> played a joke on us that really<br/> peevd me off/ (.) because the the<br/> the delegates gave a speech/ (.)<br/> and were taking the mickey out of<br/> everyone\ (.) and when it came to us<br/> they said/ 'we'll er miss you and the<br/> English listenings with the different<br/> accents/' because I'm always like<br/> this is/ 'look this is Scottish' or<br/> whatever\ they said 'we prefer our<br/> teachers'/ (.) even though/ you<br/> must admit it/ (.) neither of you are<br/> English\ (.) dtf/ (.) dtf is something<br/> Miquel always says that means/<br/> doomed to fail\</p> |
| <p>18 A: =ja:\</p>   | <p>A: =uhu:\</p>  |

This extract takes us back to the question of what kinds of teachers can ensure that 'good English' is acquired at FIS. Despite the head teacher's vindication of the 'international' teacher, we see how in actual practice NN staff (Spaniards in particular) are always walking a tightrope. Even though Lluïsa was aware of the light-heartedness of her

students' comments, she reports feeling slightly upset by them (line 04). And she had good reasons for that. The school head allegedly went pale when hearing the students' public remarks. His next decision was to oust Lluïsa as department head and hire a 'newly-arrived' NS, as Lluïsa reported. Her and her colleagues' longer experience, and in some cases credentials (like Judit's accredited IB examiner status), were superseded by the new head's nativeness. This excerpt and ensuing actions prove how vulnerable NNS teachers felt, and how sensitive the issue of (non)-nativeness was, traversed by numerous tensions and institutional politics at FIS.

## VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In his 2011 paper, Park (2011) discusses the recalibration of value to which the TOEIC English exam was subject in South Korean recruitment processes. Echoing *Queen's* lyrics, he concludes that "distinction must go on" (453). This is also what I have tried to show in this chapter. The attempts at democratizing English in Catalonia/Spain through its introduction as a vehicular language in state schooling will only partially reach its objectives. Yes, indeed, English will be made more widely available than in the past, and in that sense, the gap between the English haves and the English have-nots will become narrower; however, new forms of linguistic hierarchization seem already underway.

As ideological sites, the two educational institutions analysed not only have dissimilar objectives in relation to expected linguistic outcomes, but also different ideas about what constitutes 'good English'. Ideologies are always situated in speakers' experiences and imagined possibilities. In that sense, the ideology of English-as-communication that we identified at EP has to be understood in relation to the perceived point of departure and the characteristics of the student and teacher bodies. The objective of EP staff was to bring English into their students' academic worlds. In the social class and educational milieu of EP, that meant ameliorating students' communicative abilities, that is, turning passive knowledge into active linguistic competence, emphasizing fluency and de-problematizing accentedness, as this was recurrently identified as the source of students' 'fear'. The ideology of English-as-communication, which incidentally reproduces long-standing beliefs in language teaching and is in line with CLIL policymakers and researchers' discourse, was also a way of, ideologically, granting linguistic authority to the EP CLIL teachers. The ideology of English-as-communication served to get them on board the schoolwide CLIL/GEP project, and legitimize their practice.

Elite institutions like FIS, by contrast, attended by the children of the (upper)-middle classes, have a different agenda. They sell 'good English' as their distinctive educational offer. This is already an ideologizing move. But their ideologizing work does not stop there. FIS built value for its English through a distinct conceptualization of what 'good English' meant. 'Good English' was imagined as monolingual, fairly accurate grammatically, fluent and, crucially, non-Spanish-accented. I claim that this was not so much a practical outcome as a new classed, generation-defining, aspirational kind of English. Interestingly, this ideological process drew close attention to pronunciation, unlike in state schooling. FIS practices of distinction echoed wider discourses in Spain that construe accent as the new linguistic frontier (see García 2019). However, contrary to what is often assumed, FIS students did not aim to sound like NSs.

We have shown how FIS was a space saturated with ideologies in tension. Despite the head teacher's efforts at enthroning the 'international teacher', lay ideologies of nativeness prevailed among (some) families and students. This was not surprising given that in Spain, as in many other places, NS ideologies have typically underpinned (and still do, see Relaño-Pastor and Fernández-Barrera 2019) ideas about linguistic authority and language quality – the ideology of self-deprecation undoubtedly playing a significant role in that respect. The FIS head teacher had, thus, to reconcile regular demands for NS English with his commitment to high-quality education (difficult to achieve with a body of native teachers-on-the-go). The tension between NNS and NS teachers – as quality emblems – surfaced periodically in myriad situations, tipping the scales in favour of one or the other group depending on various intersecting circumstances. However, even if the ideology of native speakerism was present (although disputed) in relation to FIS teacher selection, I want to argue that we should not transpose this into student aspirational models, as it is often done in the literature (see e.g., Cenoz and Gorter 2015: 3).

I did not find in the data evidence that the ideal FIS student was modelled after NS performance. Although evidence is not conclusive, there were signs that FIS students (and their families) aimed to become 'non-localizable' speakers of English. I understand this new category (and its paired contrast, 'localized English') as an iteration of the old ideology of standard and dialect. Gal (2012) claimed that the new linguistic regime endorsed by EU institutions was already a recursion of that ideology. The new 'standard', in Gal's words, was being proficient in at least one global lingua franca – in particular English; the new 'dialect' was the mastering of only one's national language. Gal exhorted researchers to identify what new hierarchies were being created under this new iteration (2012: 35). I argue that the dichotomy 'non-localizable' versus 'localizable' English may be one such ideological hierarchy.

When more and more young people become competent in English under democratization schemes such as CLIL, elite institutions fight hard to distinguish themselves. They do this not only through enabling their students access to 'more' English, that is, higher degree of exposure, but, crucially, through engaging in intense ideologizing work centred on the importance of accent. While in the state school Spanish-sounding English was de-problematized, in the elite school it was construed as the source of all ills. The type of English acquired in schools like EP was problematized and stereotyped as sounding too 'placed', both socially and geographically, and as indexing particular (national) programmes and teachers; by contrast, FIS English indexed 'international' spaces of acquisition, global mobility and cosmopolitanism. Interestingly, although the NS teacher was still an influential category as the 'source' of authentic and distinctive quality English, the aspirational English of FIS students (and their families) was not NS English, but a 'neutral' (Rindal and Piercy 2013) and 'untraceable' English that softened their most salient L1 pronunciation features.

The practical distinction, that is, higher convertibility, of this type of linguistic capital (as opposed to 'localizable English') is to be tested empirically; similarly, the (differential or equal) market value of native-sounding English in relation to non-localizable English is to be determined through the study of processes of gatekeeping (English accreditation, job selection, school admission, etc.). More ethnographic research is needed not only to establish the relevance of the ideological contrast identified in this study, but also to understand how value (present and future) is grounded in ideologizing processes of distinction such as the ones described in this chapter.



*Symbols Used in Transcripts*


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(.)	short pause (up to 1.0 second)	-	self interruption
(1.5)	timed pause	=	latching
( )	incomprehensible fragment	\	falling intonation
(guess)	best guess	/	rising intonation
AA	louder than surrounding talk	(( ))	paralinguistic or non-linguistic behaviour
a::	lengthening of sound	[. . .]	omitted talk
[	beginning of overlap		

## NOTES

1. Very few migrant children were schooled in private schools subsidized with public funds (*escuelas concertadas*).
2. To give an example: when only the working population is considered (under sixty-four), figures of declared knowledge rise to over 40 per cent (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2017).
3. These two ethnographies were carried out as part of the APINGLO-Cat project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICCIN, ref. FFI2014-54179-C2-1-P), of which I was principal investigator. I would like to acknowledge here the support of Iris Milán and Dani Pujol with data transcription. I would also dearly thank Jessica McDaid and two anonymous reviewers for their perceptive comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. They have helped me refine my arguments significantly. To the three of them, many thanks. My thinking around accent in the field of EFL has continued to develop framed by my current participation in the ENIFALPO I+D project (ref. PID2019-106710GB-I00).
4. In previous publications, we have referred to this school as Pinetree Secondary.
5. GEP stands for *Grup d'Experimentació per al Plurilingüisme* (Group for Experimenting Toward Plurilingualism).
6. I am most indebted to Andrea Sunyol for allowing me access to her data, and for sharing with me insights about the school and the data.

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