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DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I DE GERMANÍSTICA

**English Language Assistantship Programmes as
Municipal Public Policy: A Case Study**

Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA dissertation

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Abstract

Although the English Language Assistantship Programme (ELAP) is being implemented throughout all Spain in state-funded and private schools, its intrusion in the public policy arena at a local level is unprecedented. The present dissertation focuses on a case study of ELAP implemented by a local government in a small city in Catalonia. Following a public policy analysis, it studies the language ideologies framing the programme throughout the policy cycle. More specifically, it discusses (i) its incorporation into the political agenda; (ii) the design of the policy; and (iii) its implementation. The analysis reveals that ELAP responds to the English Fever present in our society, articulated through three reinforcing ideologies. These (English) language ideologies shaping ELAP correspond to English necessitation, self-deprecation and externalization. This paper provides new insight into the spread of ELAP into the local political arena and highlights the unskilled and undetermined nature of the job.

Keywords: language assistantship; language ideology; native speakers; public policy; language policy planning.

1. Introduction

The Language Assistantship Programme including Spain dates back to 1936, with the first bilateral agreement between Spain and the nowadays-British Council. According to the Spanish Ministry of Education the programme integrates “native speakers of the language” in state-funded schools to “improve students’ oral competence in the target language”.¹ In other words, it aims to boost English communication performance amongst students of English as an Additional Language (AL) incorporating native speakers as English Language Assistants (ELAs) in the English class as well as in Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) lessons. ELAs’ role is to help both teachers and students to improve their oral skills providing access to “true” native input and to an accurate pronunciation.

Due to the growing obsession with English as a booster of one’s professional career, private schools have recently started implementing similar conversational assistant programmes among others, as an education seal of quality, prestige and distinction (Codó & McDaid, 2019). English Language Assistantship Programmes (ELAPs) have not only spread from state-funded to private schools, but they have also moved beyond state language policy to make their way into the local arena. Even though language education policy is confined to state and regional governments, local governments have begun intervening in this field by subsidizing the implementation of ELAPs in state-funded and private schools. It is precisely these new developments that the present dissertation examines.

The literature about ELAs is scarce, and the existing studies focus on their role from a pedagogical approach. Recently, some research has brought to the fore the

¹ Information retrieved from the Language Assistant Guide written by the Spanish Ministry of Education. <http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:faa5069a-cb86-4369-aea2-9e5111091903/aacc-18-19-guia-en0.pdf> Last accessed 16th May 2019.

framing language ideologies of the programme and its “culturalists imagination” (Codó & McDaid, forthcoming). This dissertation intends to fill a gap in research on the implementation of ELAP as public policy at a local level, situating it within the framework of language policy planning, language instrumentalism and language ideologies. Departing from a “knowledge of policy” approach established by Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone and Hill (2007), and taking into account the cycle of a public policy, this paper revolves around three main issues: (i) understanding the nature of the demands that this public policy responds to; (ii) analysing its incorporation into the political agenda; and (iii) studying the design and implementation of the ELAP resulting from the public policy.

The present dissertation draws on a case study at a local level: the implementation of an ELAP in state-funded and private schools carried out by a local government of a small city in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The adequacy of the case chosen lies in two crucial facts: first, its ground-breaking nature, as it is one of the first local governments implementing this language policy; and secondly, the facility to gain access to both local actors and institutions. Nonetheless, two caveats are in place: the ongoing phase of the Language Assistantship Programme and the intertwined nature of a policy cycle. The former hinders the study since the Language Assistantship Programme lasts two years, and therefore, it will not have finished at the time the research is conducted. The latter is related to the difficulty of isolating and dividing public policy into different stages, as stages are connected and actors intervene throughout the process. The following section briefly introduces the main concepts related to the fields of public policy analysis and language policy and planning for a better understanding of the object and theoretical framing of this study.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Public policy

According to Knoepfel et al. (2007), public policy is the response to social problems deemed by society as unacceptable, and thus, lacking a political answer. From a pluralist approach, it is the interaction between public and private actors, ultimately structured as a political response to tackle social problems. A mapping of stakeholders will be used in this dissertation in order to identify the actors involved in the process, their interests and resources, and the tensions arising from their interactions (Silva, 2016). For the purpose of this study, and according to the typology by Knoepfel et al. (2007), resources will be broken down into political support, consensus, organization and personnel. The analysis will focus on how stakeholders mobilize the resources available – although unequally distributed - throughout the policy cycle to exert influence and make their interests prevail.

A previous step towards the mapping of stakeholders is to understand the configuration of the agenda-setting and to spot the underlying factors that turn social problems into public ones. According to Grusfield (1981), social problems become public by extension; they must be first problematized, then “thematicised”, to be finally included in the political agenda. Knoepfel et al. (2007:126), identify five ideal types of agenda setting: (i) thematisation through media coverage, that is, the media shapes the public opinion by placing a specific issue in the spotlight and pressuring political parties to take a stand on it; (ii) mobilisation, that is, when activists groups and social movements through articulated actions attract the attention of the public opinion, pressuring political actors to get involved; (iii) electoral competition, in this case the agenda setting is configured basically during electoral campaigns, political parties address certain issues to expand their electoral base by adding the prospect beneficiaries

of a given public policy; (iv) internal anticipation, where the emphasis is put on politico-administrative actors who identify existing social problems and design public policies to address them; and finally (v) silent corporatist action, i.e., the actions of lobby groups which aim to discreetly shape the political agenda and to influence decision-making processes to favour their own interests. After this introductory overview of stakeholders mapping as a tool for analysis and the configuration of the agenda setting, the next section draws on a brief review of language policy and planning and language ideology as a field of inquiry.

2.2 Language policy and planning

Language Policy and Planning (LPP) emerged as a field of inquiry during the 60s, when both concepts were distinguished as two different terms. Haugen (1966) in his seminar work *Linguistics and Language Planning* defined language planning as “all the conscious efforts that aim at changing the linguistic behaviour of a speech community”. In other words, Haugen argues that LPP are all the efforts carried out by a wide range of policy actors, irrespective of their governmental or non-governmental nature, to influence both the structure (corpus) and the function (status) of a language. In turn, language policy, although at times used as a synonym for language planning, was understood as the implementation of a set of political and social goals and as the execution of language planning processes (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971, cited in Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018:5).

According to Tollefson and Pérez-Milans, LPP emerged as "essentially pragmatic" (2018:6) focusing on the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of language policymaking and planning. However, this approach lacked a holistic understanding of the effects of such linguistic policies. It would not be until the emergence of a more critical and ethnographic approach that questions of paramount

importance such as power relations, (neoliberal) ideology and social inequality would be taken into account within the field of LPP. Recent research in the LPP of English as an AL has focused on the study of the hidden relations between English as an AL, language commodification and its impact on reproducing social and class inequalities at an intra and supranational level (Block, 2018).

Going back to the roots of LPP, Tauli (1974) claimed that the value of a language relied on its “usefulness”, stating that languages could be analysed with scientific quantitative methods in terms of efficiency and economy. Language planning was seen as “ideologically neutral” and removed from its political, historical and sociological context (Cassels & Ricento, 2013:8). Even though LPP has come a long way since then, and factors such as economy, power and ideology are now in the spotlight, languages are still perceived by the vast majority of citizens in terms of utility, as it is the case of English as a global language. This brings to the fore the relationship between political (neoliberal) economy, language ideologies and language practices. In this line, Ricento (2010) argues that English in non-English speaking countries is often associated with economic and social mobility. According to Ricento the current neoliberalisation of the economy, delocalization and globalization, together with the hegemony of the United States as a superpower, justify the promotion of English as a global language (Cassels & Ricento, 2013; Ricento, 2010).

Traditionally, language and ideology have been intrinsically linked to national identity; however, the notion of language as an instrument has moved beyond the border of the nation-state and it is now acting as a soft power tool for cultural and economic dominance. In a world where English is considered the global language, it is not anymore only an identity element but a tool for economic competitiveness and a “marketable asset” with increasingly high value (Park and Lo, 2012: 150). In an economy with growing industries such as tourism and ICT, English as the global

language is associated with better job opportunities and is considered a tool for socio-economic advancement; yet this common-sense assumption that English per se leads to better job opportunities and to social mobility has not been yet empirically verified (Block, 2018; Cassels & Ricento, 2013; Piller, 2015). These assumptions widely accepted as common sense are related to what scholars have defined as *language ideologies*. In Kroskrity's words, language ideologies are "diverse beliefs, (...) used by speakers of all types as models for constructing linguistic evaluations" (2004:497). According to Kroskrity (2004), language ideology is an articulated system of beliefs, which determines the perceptions of society about the use, and status of a language. In neoliberal economies, knowledge, skills and by extension languages, are considered commodities which individuals can accumulate (the more the better) in order to become successful citizens. The case of English as an AL is just an extension of it, in Block words:

In a job market which values English as a key skill and communicative resource, individuals must have what is considered a "good" command of English in order to be considered worthy of employment and, indeed, legitimised as successful citizens". (Block, 2018:12)

This language ideology fosters the idea of what Block defines as the "ideal neoliberal citizen" (2018:12). This ideal of the neoliberal citizen, based among other skills on proficient English command, is deeply rooted in society to the extent that assumptions such as "nowadays English is essential" have become common sense and are, in turn, unchallengeable. These assumptions are everything but casual; they are neoliberal constructs with specific "ideological demands of the global workforce" (Bacon & Kim, 2018:11). In other words, in a neoliberal context where individuals are held responsible for their failure or success, English learning is "internalized and naturalized" to such an extent that it becomes a "moral issue" (Gao & Park, 2015:87). Individuals, immersed in

a perpetual self-betterment process, have the moral obligation to acquire a proficient level of English, in order to become successful and socio-economic prospective citizens.

Bacon and Kim (2018) in their research about the status of English in South Korea, use the concept of “English Fever” to explain the increasing English learning demand. They argue that this concept is articulated through three “reinforcing ideologies”; necessitation, the perception of English as a necessity; self-deprecation, when individuals see themselves as bad speakers despite their efforts; and externalization, the feeling that English belongs to native speakers (2018:12). These concepts are relevant to the present research and they will be further analysed throughout the discussion section. On the one hand, the perception that English is a must leads middle-class families to pay for extracurricular English lessons for their kids, thus deepening existing class inequalities (Block, 2018). Furthermore, as the English fever keeps growing in Spain, policymakers are pressured to carry out reforms in LPP in education to increase the presence of English as a medium of instruction. On the other hand, externalization is linked to the idea that English belongs to certain communities of native speakers (NS), which takes us to the next section on the *native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992).

2.3. The native speaker fallacy

The dominant assumption in the world of ELT, and in public discourse in general, is that NS are the most proficient speakers of English and thus, better qualified to teach it. Teaching is primarily defined in linguistic considerations and English teachers in non-native speaker (NNS) countries are recruited according to their accent and pronunciation rather than by their teaching abilities and expertise (Canagarajah, 1999). At the heart of the NSs fallacy lies the distinction between the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle (Kachru, 1990). True Native English is understood as Anglo-American

English, and speakers of the Outer Circle, and the rest of World English(es), as mere varieties of the Inner Circle. A second distinction is done between "Standard English" and "Local/Regional Varieties", again "correct/appropriate" English is associated with "Standard English". These assumptions about English lead to a romanticised image of NSs, as speakers of Standard English, with specific cultural practices and a certain imagined ethnicity, social class, race and often also gender (white middle-class men) (Bacon & Kim 2018). Thus, the image of NSs is articulated around accent and pronunciation, geography, cultural practices and race. After briefly explaining the nature of public policy and the framing ideology behind LLP, it is time to move on to the methodological aspects of the research.

3. Methodology

The object of this study is the ELAP recently implemented by a local government in a small city in Catalonia. The participants of the programme are 7 state-funded schools (both publicly and privately run), involving a total amount of 7 English Language Assistants (ELAs), one per centre. The number of hours taught by ELAs in each school depends on the number of students, ranging from 9 to 18 hours. The main stakeholders involved are the Education Councillor (*Regidora d'Ensenyament*), the civil servant responsible for project design and implementation (*Tècnica d'Educació*), school heads and ELAs. Other actors are AMPAS (parents' organizations), the English coordinator in each school and the company in charge of implementing the programme. The anonymity of the town has been preserved due to a privacy request and so have been the names of all stakeholders involved. The research has been conducted throughout semi-instructed interviews with the main actors in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the policy. Data has been collected through a thorough study of administrative documents resulting from the creation and implementation of

the programme, documents handed in by schools and the information extracted from local newspapers and social networks.

For the purpose of this study, 3 semi-structured interviews have been carried out in the following order: an interview with the education councillor and the civil servant, another one with a school head and the last one with an ELA. Even though the ideal situation would have been to carry out semi-structured interviews with the rest of ELAs and school heads, as well as with AMPAS and English coordinators of each centre, due to the limitation of time and resources available it was impossible to do so. Thus, the selection of the participants aimed to be, to the extent possible, representative of the main actors involved throughout the process. The recording of the interviews lasted 1 hour in the case of the policy makers, 40 minutes in the case of the school head and 46 minutes in the case of the ELA. In order to analyse the content of the interviews, the recordings were afterwards transcribed (amounting to a total of 146 minutes). A content analysis has been carried out to identify the similarities, tensions and contradictions arising from their discourses and the English language ideologies underneath. The data gathered from the interviews, the information on the media and the administrative documents will be structured according to the policy cycle analysis to determine the three main aims of the present dissertation: (i) the nature of the demand and the process of incorporation of the ELAP into the political agenda at a local level; (ii); the design; and (iii) the implementation of the ELAP, which we now turn to.

4. Data analysis

4.1 Agenda setting process

In May 2015, local elections were about to be held throughout Spain. On May 15, the ruling party of the town posted on its Facebook account its electoral program stating:

Extract 1

We are the guarantee of progress. We will make an effort to improve equal opportunities through education. We will promote the programme English for everyone, offering 2 additional hours of English per week to schools, to 5th and 6th grade, in collaboration with the education community.

This statement illustrates two key concepts in relation to the nature of the policy, namely the conceptualization of English as a tool for social progress and as an unequally distributed resource. English is assumed to function as a professional booster and as a social ladder, granting “equal opportunities”. The slogan “English for everyone”, that could as well belong to a private language school, pinpoints the idea of English democratization, turning English from an “elite language” to a “democratic one” (Phillipson, 1992: 206). This perception takes us back to the ideology of English as a necessity (Bacon & Kim, 2018), in which possessing a proficient English command is a must. If English is perceived as a necessity, it is also likely to be seen as a right, prompting political parties to implement measures (by all means necessary) to increase the amount of English exposure and instruction in order to presumably reduce social inequality.

The growing concern for proficient English amongst society in general, and children and young people more specifically, is a key element to understand the inclusion of English instruction in the political agenda at a local level. This electoral promise, built upon Spain’s “English fever” (Bacon & Kim, 2018: 12) is illustrative of the abovementioned electoral competition as an agenda-setting process. Knoepfel et al.

state that “the policy agenda is constituted on the basis of the topics selected by the main competing parties in their programmes and during campaigns” (2007:143). In the present case, the ruling political party is the initiator of the process during the local electoral campaign, bringing to the front a public problem, which had not been previously articulated as a social demand. In terms of partisan exploitation, the promise of "English for everyone" is highly appealing to public opinion, families and the teaching community since it matches the commonsensical assumptions about English. Thus, the proposal in the electoral programme aims to expand the party's electoral base by attracting the beneficiaries of the policy.

Another possible explanation for the incorporation of English instruction in the political agenda is internal anticipation, also initiated by politico-administrative actors. In this case, these actors have at their disposal internal information that allows them to anticipate the problem and address it by means of public policies (Knoepfel et al., 2007). When asked about the nature of the policy the Councillor of Education answered the following:

Extract 2 (C: Councillor, I: Interviewer, CS: Civil Servant)

01	C:	hi havia la preocupació dels nivells dels	01	C:	there was the concern that children
02		nanos que estaven sortint dels centres	02		finishing their studies at school
03		educatius que tenien un nivell baix vull	03		had a low level of English
04		dir i això sortia constantment publicat	04		I mean and this was constantly published
05	CS:	[no estem tampoc per sota de la mitjana	05	CS:	[well we are not below the
06		de Catalunya]	06		average in catalunya]
07	C:	no-no però era una notícia que sortia en	07	C:	no – no – but it was it was a piece
08		aquells moments bastant si en algun diari	08		of news that appeared quite a lot
09		si si a diaris	09		back then well yes in the newspapers yes
10		a diaris o algun informe pisa	10	I:	in newspapers or in a Pisa report
11		en general no castellar eh vull	11		in general not only in our town hm::
12		dir que de les competències	12		I mean that in general in the
13		bàsiques l'anglès es la que es mes	13		“basic skills exams” the lowest is
14		fluixa a nivell de Catalunya	14		English in general in catalunya

The decision of including English instruction in the political agenda was not based on a specific report or evaluation at a local level and the sources mentioned did not provide supporting evidence about the need of increasing English instruction at schools in their town. Both the councillor and the public servant mention the “Basic Skill Exam”

(*Examen de Competències Bàsiques*), acknowledging that the English level of the children in their town is not below the Catalan average. The answer provided by the Head of School when asked about the nature of the policy (see extract below) also supports the electoral competition approach and leaves the rest of the stakeholders out of the picture in the configuration of the public problem:

Extract 3 (SH: School Head)

01	CS:	l'ajuntament en aquest cas doncs els – els	01	CS:	And the major in this case well the - the
02		que estan ara governant van dir que tenien	02		ones now ruling said that they had a
03		una partida de pressupost que volien	03		budget line that they wanted to give to
04		destinar a totes les escoltes dins l'horari	04		all schools within school hours as an
05		lectiu per donar dins de les extraescolars	05		[English] extracurricular activity
06		pagades doncs per part de l'ajuntament	06		paid by the local government.

The extract shows that the inclusion of the issue in the political agenda did not respond to a social demand previously articulated through schools or Parents Associations (AMPAS). While the perception of the school head about English necessitation is aligned with that of the Councillor of Education and the civil servant, they differ in terms of priority:

Extract 4 (SH: School Head)

01	SH:	per exemple nosaltres som una escola amb	01	CS:	for example we are a school with
02		un cie que hi ha nens amb necessitats	02		children with special educational
03		educatives especials (...) i vam dir pues	03		needs (...) and well we said maybe
04		a lo millor hi ha centres que que aquests	04		there are school centres that that this
05		diners en lloc de fer anglès pos realment	05		money instead of English well so we
06		tenim una altre necessitat més urgent (.)	06		really have more urgent needs (.)
07		sense deixar de banda la importància de	07		without putting aside the importance
08		l'anglès.	08		of English

It is worth noting that the head of school manifests her concern for the lack of human resources to deal with students with special educational needs, whereas she does not problematize the level of English. Lefstein (2013) coined the term “accountability theatre” to explain that when it comes to education policy it is economically “less expensive” to carry out symbolic actions than to address the problem(s) and the sources of inequality (Lefstein, cited in Jaspers, 2018:3). In this line, investing in an English

programme for schools might as well be economically “less expensive” and politically more profitable than addressing actual education problems.

So far we have pointed at the instrumentalization of English and the ideology of necessitation as language ideological constructs beneath the initiative of the policy, now we turn to that of self-deprecation (Park, 2009). Throughout the interview both the Councillor of Education and the civil servant manifested that children were taking extra-curricular activities because they “have to improve” their English skills. They stated that it was all over the news the fact that children did not have “a good English level” and expressed their surprise about countries such as Portugal which “has a higher English level and [its citizens] speak it better than us”. Her astonishment was due to the fact that a poorer country, such as Portugal, had a higher level of English than a more economically developed country like Spain. This statement illustrates the relation established between the English level and economic development. The civil servant associates proficiency English command to economic development, a condition usually attributed to northern European countries. Southern European countries such as Portugal (or Spain for that matter) are conceived as less economically developed and consequently, with poorer English command leading to self-deprecation. This perception of children, and Spanish speakers in general, as being “bad” English speakers contrasts with the data provided by the Evaluation Education Council (*Consell d’Avaluació Educatiu*), which evaluates the language skills of 6th-grade students in Catalonia. This data is significant in the sense that it questions the stereotype of Spanish children as being bad at English. It shows that English language skills evaluation (74.5) stands at the same level as Catalan (74.5) and Spanish (75.7) evaluations.² The

² Information retrieved from the biannual report of *Consell d’Avaluació Educatiu*, which evaluates the Language competence of 6th grade students from Catalonia.
http://csda.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/consell_superior_d_avalua/pdf_i_altres/static_file/quaderns32.pdf Last accessed 16th May 2019

Councillor of Education and the Civil Servant viewed Catalan speakers (and Spanish for that matter) as incompetent at English, whereas they did not express concern for the other two languages despite being at the same level. The interviewees' perception that Spaniards are poor English speakers is related to self-deprecation in the sense that, it is still associated to a "cultural" way of doing, as something inherited or even biological and hard to change.

4.2 Designing the ELAP

The ELAP started out in 2015 as a 2 hours extra-curricular activity to finally turn into 9-18 hours English programme. This section aims to (i) analyse the interactions between the stakeholders intervening throughout the process and the tensions that arose; and (ii) the language ideologies influencing the design of the policy.

It is important to keep in mind that language education competence, in this case, is within the domain of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, and therefore, it is not within municipal competence to implement any kind of language policy during school hours. Taking into account the complexity of institutional rules, it is worth exploring the factors that led the city council to create a framework programme (*programa marc*) empowering the ruling party to implement the ELAP. As previously mentioned, a mapping of stakeholders comes in handy to identify the main actors involved, their interests and their resources. For the purpose of this section, three main actors are identified in relation to the design of the policy: the education community represented by School Heads, AMPAS (Parents Associations), one opposing political party and policymakers, comprised of the Councillor of Education and the civil servant (the administrative head of the project).

In October 2015, one of the parties in the opposition presented a motion addressed to the ruling party. They urged the council to start a debate with the education

community to define the project with the maximum consensus possible and to ensure the flexibility of the program, respecting the will of each centre regarding its application and organization. They argued that the idea of 2 hours of extra-curricular English had proved to be “unfeasible” due to “technical difficulties”. Such “technical difficulties” made reference to AMPAS and schools’ discontent and unwillingness to implement the policy. They did not first welcome the proposal since they had already hired the companies providing extra-curricular activities. AMPAS and schools’ unwillingness to cooperate, together with the pressure of the opposing political parties, led the ruling party to put forth a new proposal for implementing a Language Assistantship Programme. AMPA's ability to influence the municipal government throughout the process was possible due to their organizational and personnel resources, since they are the ones in charge of extra-curricular activities.

The idea of including an ELA in the classroom was not something new. The presence of native English Language Assistants (ELAs) has become very popular throughout the last decade in Spain (Codó and McDaid, 2019). In the case of state-funded schools, ELAs are sent by the Ministry of Education as part of its long-standing bilateral scheme with various countries; in private schools, ELAs are present through programmes paid by schools as a sign of prestige and quality. In both cases, the programme is carried out by native English Speakers to improve students’ oral skills and to “correct their pronunciation”.³

The new municipal proposal, under scrutiny here, followed the same model, looking for NSs to fill in the role of ELAs. The decision to hire a NS, even though unnoticed, was influenced by the abovementioned language ideologies and it can be explained in terms of what Philipson named the *native speaker fallacy* (1992). This

³ Information retrieved from the Language Assistant Guide written by the Spanish Ministry of Education. <http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:faa5069a-cb86-4369-aea2-9e5111091903/aacc-18-19-guia-en0.pdf> Last accessed 16th May 2019.

tenet is based on the idea that native speakers are “the best embodiment of the target and norm for learners” (Phillipson, 1992:194), an assumption illustrated in the following extract:

Extract 5 (I: Interviewer, CS: Civil Servant)					
01	I:	(...) i el criteri perquè fos algú natiu i no	01	I:	(...) what about the criteria to choose
02		algú amb -amb- filologia o amb un nivell	02		a native instead of an English philologist
03		alt	03		or with a high English level
04	CS:	=Perquè vam pensar que el que havia el	04	CS:	=because we thought that it was about
05		que es tractava era de reforçar	05		improving speaking skills e:::hm well
06		bàsicament la parla amb::: sí que –que-	06		so::: well it was more logic right
07		era més una mica més lògic no que	07		because may be you have studied
08		–que- a vegades tu que pots fer filologia	08		English philology but you may have
09		anglesa però potser no has trepitjat	09		never been to England or you may
10		Anglaterra o no has nat a -a- -a-a- -a- fora	10		have never been abroad and well
11		i -i- possiblement pots parlar molt be	11		maybe you will speak English fluently
12		l'anglès però possiblement l'accent	12		but it is likely that you will
13		no el tindràs perquè el català	13		not have the accent because
14		es la llengua materna	14		Catalan is your mother tongue

In the extract, the Civil Servant distinguishes between Native Speakers (NSs) and Non-Native Speakers (NNSs) establishing the former as the true owners of the language and the latter as "the Other" (Norton, 2017:3). This distinction further implies that there is "good" and "bad" English, the "good" understood as the Standard English embodied by NSs and usually associated to Received Pronunciation (RP), as inferred in the case of the Civil Servant who relates English to England. The image of the NNSs as the “Other” is constructed by opposition depicting NNSs as inferior and as perpetual learners.

Schools also participated in the design of the policy presenting a proposal justifying the project, establishing its goals and defining ELAs’ tasks. The aim of the project in the proposal presented by one of the schools was also aligned with that of the policymakers. They asked for a native speaker stating that ELAs task was “to provide a correct model of pronunciation and intonation”. When implementing the policy the problem encountered was that no native speakers applied for the job, policy makers stated that it was because ELAs wanted to be near Barcelona and “the city was far from Barcelona and not well connected”. It was decided then that NNS with a C1 would also

be eligible for the job. NNS' candidates, although implicitly, were expected to sound "native-like", with an appropriate pronunciation that fitted their imaginary of the NS. The following extract shows the abovementioned tensions between NSs and NNSs pronunciation:

Extract 6 (C: Councillor, I: Interviewer)

01	CS:	algun cole sí que s'ha queixat alguna	01	CS:	some schools have complain
02		vegada de:::: de que el nivell de la	02		sometimes about the level of
03		pronúncia no::: era prou bo um:: (1)	03		pronunciation was not good enough (1)
04		una vegada vam tenir una persona que era	04		once we had one person who was
05		sud-americana per exemple i parlava be	05		Latin-American for instance and she
06		l'anglès però tenia un deix (2)	06		spoke English well but with an accent (2)
07	CE:	[sud-amicà]	07	CE:	[Latin-American]
08	CS:	sud-amicà:: a l'hora de parlar l'anglès	08	CS:	Latin-American when she spoke English
09		i això dificulta el centre no ho veia be	09		and this makes it difficult the school
10		perquè no:: la finalitat no era aquesta (...)	10		complained because this wasn't the aim
11	I:	[hm clar els centres no van	11		[the centres did not completely
12		acabar d'estar conformes]	12	I:	agree]
13	CS:	teníem en un concret que ens va di::r	13	CS:	there was centre specifically which told us
14		cla:::r es que clar és que te un accent	14		the thing is that she is got an accent that
15		que -no- (1) és que ens fa més mal que bé	15		well – it's doing more harm than good

Schools' expectations revolving around ELAs were related to Standard English pronunciation, her accent was not accepted as a legitimate role model for students. The school complained that she had a very strong Latin-American accent, which in fact meant that she did not fit the construct of the Native Speaker with a Standard English pronunciation. This fact is relevant because none of the ELAs was a native speaker, yet no complaints were made about their accent, probably because they somehow fitted the imagination of the Native Speaker (not only in terms or pronunciation but also in terms of physical appearance). Finally, despite being proficient in English she was fired because her pronunciation was perceived as not being appropriate, doing students more "harm" than "good". These beliefs reinforce Phillipson's argument of NSs being perceived as "the embodiment" of the "desirable" English for learners and as "role models" that NNSs should aim to become. It presents a monocentric vision of English as belonging to what Kachru (1990) defines the "inner circle" undermining the rest of World English(es). This vision of English belonging to countries of the "inner circle" is further developed in the definition of ELAs role as "cultural ambassadors" (Codó &

McDaid, 2019) presented in ELAs' tasks proposed by schools. ELAs were expected to explain traditional songs, games, anecdotes, curiosities, history aspects, etc., with the aim "to promote students' interest and motivation for the language and culture of Anglophone countries in general".⁴ The figure of the ELA is seen as embodying "English culture". This association illustrates the fact that English Language Teaching (ELT) is assumed to teach learners "the culture that English originates from" (Phillipson, 1992:195). The Native Speaker Fallacy together with this monocentric vision of English marginalizes World Englishes and perpetuates a romanticised and exotic image of Native-English speakers associated to Standard English, specific cultural practices and (white) skin colour (Canagarajah 1999).

All stakeholders agreed on the native speakers' profile of ELAs as being the best candidates to provide a correct pronunciation model and to awake children's curiosity for "English culture". This consensus was not extended to ELAs teaching profile and tensions arose revolving around the demands and expectations of the teaching community and those of the policy makers:

Extract 7 (CS: Civil Servant)

01	CS:	hi havia tota una sèrie de items que ens	01	CS:	there were several things that schools
02		van remarcar moltíssim que:: les persones	02		asked for and stressed that auxiliaries
03		que hi anessin tinguessin formació	03		going to schools had teaching training
04		pedagògica per exemple ells això ho deien	04		for example they repeated that a lot
05		molt que - que:: (...) coneguessin el mon	05		that that (...) ELAs knew the teaching
06		de la docència però clar els vam dir	06		world but of course we told them sorry
07		perdoneu-me però es que estem parlant	07		but we are talking about conversation
08		d'auxiliars de conversa.	08		assistants.

Eventually, it was established that teaching training would not be a requirement criterion for the job due to the difficulty of finding a matching profile. The unskilled nature of the job (Codó & McDaid, 2019:03) will be further explored through the experience of ELAs in the following section. For the purpose of this section, the focus will be placed on this assumption as part of the native speakers' fallacy.

⁴ Information retrieved from the proposal of one of the schools submitted to the local government.

The native speaker fallacy does not take into account teaching skills as a key tool to interact with students and to “assist” them in their learning process. Being able to speak a language and to teach it are two different things, as Phillipson argues “untrained or unqualified” native speakers teachers are a “menace” since they do not necessarily know the language usage and structure (1992:195) nor how to teach it.

It is worth noting that schools saw ELAs’ role quite differently. Even though they embraced the figure of the NS, they also highlighted the importance of teaching skills. They argued that despite their role was to “assist”, teaching training was needed to interact with children and to prompt them to participate in speaking activities. Despite this misalignment about teacher training, neither policy makers nor the school head considered the possibility of hiring NNSs to fill the job position. Their image of the ideal ELA profile completely differs from Phillipson’s definition of the ideal Foreign Language (FL) teacher:

The ideal teacher has near-native-speaker proficiency in the foreign language and comes from the same linguistic and cultural background as the learners (...) non-native teachers may, in fact, be better qualified than native speakers if they have gone through the laborious process of acquiring English as a second language. (1992: 195)

In this case, having been through a similar language learning process was not considered a valuable teaching asset nor was sharing the same language background. Actually, having the same language background was negatively seen, which illustrates the monolingual learning approach of the policy actors. This brings us to the next section, the monolingual fallacy, further explored within the implementation stage.

4.3 Implementing the ELAP

One of the main challenges faced throughout the implementation stage was that no NSs applied for the job. This problem was easily solved; from then on, NNS with a C1 English level were suitable candidates for the job. The unresolved remaining problem was then in terms of the discourse, how to legitimize NNS as appropriate candidates for the job without contradicting the founding principles of the policy. This new legitimizing discourse had two axes intrinsically linked: *passing* (Piller, 2002), that is, the adoption of a new identity trying to “pass” as a Native Speaker, and its underlying monolingual fallacy (Phillipson, 1992).

The head of the school explained how ELAs were invited to create a fake identity as NS, to change their name and to invent a new country of origin. ELAs chose to adapt their name into an English equivalent version and some related their new identity to past experience, whereas some others chose an Anglophone region randomly:

Extract 8 (SH: School Head)

01	SH:	la idea era que – que havien de ser de fora	01	SH:	the idea was that [auxiliaries] they had to
02		que ens passava que els que trobàvem de	02		be native but the problem was that they
03		eren de Barcelona i per venir fins aquí	03		were from Barcelona and it was very
04		era molt complicat i vam veure que això	04		difficult to get here and we realized that it
05		era inviable (...) i la Rose ella es diu rosa	05		was not possible (...) Rose’s name is
06		i:: el missatge era que-que no dèiem als	06		actually Rosa but the message was not to
07		nens pues que es d’aquí.	07		tell children that she is not native.

Passing amongst L2 users has been related to a contextual performance aiming at testing their own language competence rather than faking an identity (Piller, 2002). In the case of NNS ELAs, it was quite the opposite; their performance was not linguistic but “identity-related”. Their aim was to deceive their audience by hiding their true identity and adopting a NS one (Piller, 2002). ELAs were presented in isolation, objectified (Codó & McDaid, 2019: 18) and detached from the linguistic context they were immersed in. Passing was seen by both policymakers and schools as a way to solve the

problem of not having NSs. They argued that if ELAs were presented as NS, children would have to "make an effort" and use English to communicate with them. This idea stems from the assumption that English is better taught and learnt monolingually as the sole medium of instruction, considering children's L1 a "hindrance" in AL acquisition (Phillipson, 1992: 187). This message conveys the idea that there is no need for NSs to learn children's L1. It is worth noting the existing contradiction; it fosters a monolingual vision within a multilingual society. This monolingual vision of the programme was only challenged by Lea, one of the ELAs:

Extract 9 (L: Lea)

01	L:	(...) el problema jo crec és que hi ha	01	CS:	(...) the problem in my opinion is that
02		moltes tutores que (...) s'haurien de	02		a lot of teachers should try to (2) for
03		llançar (2) a per exemple encara que	03		example even though the class is given
04		estiguis fent català però les instruccions	04		in Catalan the instructions and the
05		i els exercicis els hi encasquetes en anglès	05		exercises you tell them in English
06		aquest es per mi el bilingüisme real no	06		this is for me the real bilingualism right
07		tu pots fer un exercici en català i les	07		you can do an exercise in Catalan but
08		instruccions els hi dones en anglès	08		giving the instructions in English

Lea's opinion about "real bilingualism" is supported by Phillipsons' argument about FL acquisition and the negative effects of excluding the mother tongue from the classroom. Phillipson argues that depriving students of their own identity does not allow them to retrieve knowledge from their own experiences, which eventually may lead to students' alienation. Teaching monolingually means to impose a single "lens" of the world, which leads to "acculturation" rather to an improvement of the "intercultural communicative skills" (Phillipson, 1999:193).

It is necessary to point out that Lea's profile was not representative of the rest of ELAs, since she had a teaching degree with an extensive professional career as an English teacher. This brings us to the last section, that is, the role of ELAs and the unskilled nature of the job. In the previous section, it was mentioned that one of the premises of the programme was its "flexibility" so that each school would be able to adapt it to their own necessities. This means that expectations, perceptions and

objectives of the different stakeholders were not necessarily aligned (Codó & McDaid, 2019). ELAs performance depends to a large extent on their non-mandatory teaching experience and on the implication and guidance of the school, which may vary significantly from school to school. Turning again to Lea's case, she was working at two different schools, one where she was given a very detailed programme to implement and another one with no instructions at all. Lea explained that in the first school she was considered a member of the teaching staff and her tasks were those of a teacher, ranging from co-teaching with the main teacher, attending evaluation meetings to grading students. This stood in opposition to her experience in the other school, where she had to improvise speaking activities and most of the time had the feeling that teachers did not really know "what to do with her". Lea's experience illustrates one of the most significant problems of ELAs job, and by extension, of the ELA programme: teaching training is not required whereas ELAs are expected to perform teaching roles. The unrecognized teaching nature of the job is seen in Lea's answer when talking about her role as an ELA:

Extract 10 (LA: Language Assistant)

01	LA:	en el meu cas jo veig que a mi m'és	01	LA:	in my case I see that I can easily
02		molt fàcil connectar amb els	02		get on well with students
03		nanos perquè soc mestre (...) que	03		because I am a teacher (...)
04		sigui una persona que no es mestre	04		if it is a person who is not a teacher
05		o que no està acostumada a treballar	05		or who is not used to working with
06		amb nanos es que no en traurà partit	06		children neither the he/she nor
07		ni la pròpia persona ni els nanos.	07		children will make the most of it.

The fact that they are not considered teachers as such leads to evaluate their performance in terms of "personal skills, enthusiasm and positive attitudes", as stated both by policymakers and the school head, which eventually can lead to frustration by all sides. On a particular occasion, one of the ELAs was fired after a short period of time, the civil servant explained that even though he had a proficiency level he did not have "the skills needed and did not connect with children". This incident proves an

existing disconnection between the design of the programme and its implementation in terms of explicit duties and implicit expectations (Codó & McDaid, 2019:16). On paper and throughout the design of the policy, ELAs are presented as pronunciation role models and their explicit duties are to implement simple speaking activities with no teaching requirements at all, in practice, they are implicitly expected to think, anticipate and related to students as teachers. All policy actors concluded that ELAP was being a success and that they were very lucky because most ELAs were either teachers or had teaching experience. Contrary to the policy design, the success or failure of the programme relies on finding qualified teachers to perform the role of ELAs, teachers who can fulfil these implicit expectations while the teaching nature of the job remains unnoticed.

5. Conclusions

The main aim of the dissertation has been to illustrate the reasons behind the incorporation of English Language Assistantship Programme as public policy at a local level, as well as identifying the (English) language ideologies influencing it. In order to do so, the analysis has been carried out following the policy cycle by Knoepfel et al. (2007) and putting into dialogue the discourse of the main stakeholders. In this sense, the analysis has shown that from the very beginning the incorporation of the ELAP into the political agenda signalled and was responsive to the “English fever” present in our society. The growing concern for English is such that politicians do not question whether English should be an educational priority; only school heads argued that they faced much more urgent needs which required public investment. Families and AMPAS welcomed the ELAP, which in a small town implies a high political return. In this sense, the first step towards the incorporation of ELAP into the political agenda was already determined by the ideology of English necessitation.

During the analysis of the design and the implementation of the programme, several inconsistencies appeared. The whole policy was built upon the native speaker fallacy discourse, losing its *raison d'être* when no native speakers were found for the job. A new discourse and the deployment of passing strategies were set in order to legitimize the continuity of the programme, contradicting the fundamental pillars of the policy. Another inconsistency was the so-called “flexibility” of the programme. While it served the purpose to accommodate schools’ needs it resulted in the absence of a structured programme. In most cases, ELAs were not given specific instructions or material to use, they relied on their personal resources to design and implement speaking activities. This takes us to the last inconsistency. The success or failure of the problem relied to a great extent on the teaching experience of ELAs, yet teaching training or experience was not a requirement. This is in line with the findings by Codó and McDaid, (2019). In general terms, ELAP was based on commonsensical assumptions and personal perceptions about English rather than on empirical evidence. ELAP are becoming more and more popular, yet the role of ELAs is not carefully designed nor has the effectiveness of the programme been evaluated.

The last paragraph of the present dissertation is addressed to encourage further research on the topic. As stated in the introduction, the last part of the policy analysis has been omitted: the evaluation of the policy. Currently, there are no indicators available to measure the impact of the policy. The evaluation is based exclusively on the perception of the school. Finding qualitative indicators or carrying out ethnographic research to analyse its impact would help to determine the effectiveness of the programme and whether or not it is worthy of public investment.

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Appendix

Appendix I – Informed Consent

Appendix II- Interview Outline (Councillor of Education and Civil Servant)

Appendix III- Interview Outline (School Head)

Appendix IV- Interview Outline (English Language Assistant)

Appendix V- A CD file containing 49 pages of interview transcriptions.

Appendix I – Informed Consent

CONSENTIMENT INFORMAT PARTICIPACIÓ EN UN TREBALL DE FI DE GRAU

Títol del Treball: *English Language Assistantship as Public Policy: A Case Study*.

Estudiant: Glòria Jurado Gómez (gloria.juradog@uab.cat)

Supervisora: Eva Codó Olsina (eva.codo@uab.cat)

Departament: Filologia Anglesa i Germanística

Jo, el Sr./la Sra. _____,

He rebut informació escrita i/o verbal sobre el Treball de Fi de Grau <<*English Language Assistantship as Public Policy: A Case Study*>>. Dono el meu consentiment per recollir dades d'àudio, les quals seran transcrites i utilitzades dins del projecte i únicament amb finalitats acadèmiques. Dono el meu consentiment perquè parts d'aquesta gravació i/o transcripció siguin utilitzades per publicacions i presentacions. He estat informat/da que tota la informació susceptible d'identificar-me a mi o a terceres persones a les quals es faci referència durant l'entrevista serà utilitzada de manera anònima.

Per últim, entenc que el meu consentiment serà en tot moment revocable.

Signatura del participant:

Signatura de la investigadora:

Lloc, data:

Appendix II- Interview Outline (Councillor of Education and Civil Servant)

Preguntes

[1^a/2^a Fase: Sorgiment i inclusió en l'Agenda Política] = AGENDA SETTING

1. Com es detecta la necessitat de dur a terme un programa d'auxiliars de conversa? (=com es pren consciència del problema?)
2. D'on sorgeix la proposta d'implementar un programa d'auxiliars de conversa? Hi ha consens entre les diferents forces polítiques i actors socials/institucionals (escoles, AMPES, etc.)?
3. Quins són els factors que porten a l'Ajuntament a actuar davant d'aquesta demanda/necessitat?
4. Hi ha una demanda prèvia des d'escoles, AMPES, etc.?
5. Participació/posicionament d'altres partits polítics? (preguntar per la moció d'ERC)

[3^a Fase: Formulació i decisió del programa de la política] = POLICY PLANNING

6. Quines són les solucions proposades i acceptades per part del Govern (PSC) i les diferents forces polítiques/actors socials/institucions?
7. Quin és el procés que es segueix per formular aquests programa/pla director?
8. Quin és l'objectiu del programa? Quina és la durada?
9. A qui va dirigit el programa, escoles públiques/concertades?(quina lògica hi ha al darrera?)
10. S'estableixen criteris per poder participar en aquest programa?

[4^a Fase: Implementació] = POLICY MAKING

11. Com es distribueixen les hores d'auxiliars de conversa? (alguns centres tenen 9h, d'altres 12h, 17h, 19h, etc.)
1. Com s'implementa aquest programa? (concurs públic i externalització)
2. Es dissenya un itinerari/activitats a fer a l'aula? Qui ho coordina?
3. Criteris per contractar els auxiliars? Han de ser nadius? Nivell d'anglès? Experiència/formació en l'àmbit educatiu?
4. Quina és la relació entre: escola, ajuntament, auxiliars, empresa externa? Com es fa el seguiment del programa?

[5^a Fase: Avaluació de la política] = EVALUATION

5. Com s'avalua/es valora l'impacte del programa?

Appendix III- Interview Outline (School Head)

Preguntes

[1^a/2^a Fase: Sorgiment i inclusió en l'Agenda Política] = AGENDA SETTING

1. El programa de LA és una proposta per part de les escoles?
2. A quines necessitats respon?

[3^a Fase: Formulació i decisió del programa de la política] = POLICY PLANNING

3. Vau participar en alguna taula sobre com dissenyar i implementar el programa?
4. Es va fer conjuntament amb altres institucions? Qui va participar en el procés?
5. Quin és l'objectiu del programa d'auxiliars de conversa?

[4^a Fase: Implementació] = POLICY MAKING

6. Quins criteris es segueixen per adjudicar els auxiliars de conversa als centres?
De què depèn el número d'hores que se li assigna a cada centre?
7. Els auxiliars són nadius? Aleshores els estudiants saben que els auxiliars són d'aquí?
8. Quines són les funcions dels auxiliars? Tenen algun pla dissenyat sobre les seves tasques, etc.?

[5^a Fase: Avaluació de la política] = EVALUATION

9. S'avalua la tasca dels auxiliars de conversa? Com?
10. Hi ha indicadors per avaluar l'impacte dels LA? I per avaluar el programa en general?

Appendix IV- Interview Outline (English Language Assistant)

Preguntes

[1^a/2^a Fase: Sorgiment i inclusió en l'Agenda Política] = AGENDA SETTING

--

[3^a Fase: Formulació i decisió del programa de la política] = POLICY PLANNING

--

[4^a Fase: Implementació] = POLICY MAKING

1. Per començar m'agradaria que m'expliquessis en què consisteix la feina d'un auxiliar de conversa?
2. Quins són els requisits per treballar com a auxiliar de conversa? (Bachelor's degree? English certificate? Being native?)
3. Vas rebre algun tipus de formació prèvia a l'inici de la teva feina?
4. Com va ser el teu primer dia a l'escola (com el/la van presentar, quina va ser la reacció dels estudiants (aquesta pregunta inclouria la 4 i la 5), etc.)
5. Quines són les principals tasques d'un auxiliar de conversa dins de l'aula? I fora?
6. Tens alguna guia sobre les tasques que has de realitzar?
7. Entenc que la teva relació és, sobretot, amb el professorat d'anglès. És així? Com trebal·leu? (per entendre si treballen conjuntament, si es una relació més jeràrquica...) I tens relació amb la resta de professorat? (per entendre si la veuen com a membre del professorat/companya o com una estudiant o com la veuen?)
8. Tens algun acompanyament/seguiment per part d'algun coordinador/a o tutor/a?
9. T'has trobat amb alguna dificultat a l'hora de fer la teva feina?
10. Quina valoració global fas de l'experiència?
11. Recomanaries aquesta feina a un amic? Per què (sí o no)?

[5^a Fase: Avaluació de la política] = EVALUATION

12. Com s'avalua l'evolució dels estudiants en la millora de les seves competències orals?
13. Com es fa l'avaluació del programa en general?