Students' Agency in a Foreign Language Policy in Colombian Higher Education

El agenciamiento del estudiantado en una política lingüística de lengua extranjera en la educación superior colombiana

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This qualitative ethnographic study investigates students' agency of a language policy in a Colombian public university. Participants were 85 undergraduate students, and data collection involved document analysis, non-participatory observation, a questionnaire, and a portfolio. Three categories emerged from the analysis: acceptance, rejection, and ignoring. Regarding acceptance, the findings suggest that some students agreed with including English in the curriculum. Some other students expressed rejection related to the English class, the methodology, the evaluation proposal, and the course material. Other students ignored elements regarding their own role in the program, extra-class activities, and participation and attendance in class. Conclusions indicate that students are not passive recipients of language policies because they exercise agency differently at the micro level.

Keywords: agency, foreign language, higher education, language policy

Este estudio etnográfico cualitativo investigó el agenciamiento de los estudiantes en la política lingüística de una universidad pública colombiana. Participaron 85 estudiantes universitarios y la recolección de datos incluyó análisis documental, observación no participante, un cuestionario y un portafolio. Se identificaron tres categorías: aceptación, rechazo e ignorancia. Algunos estudiantes están conformes con la inclusión del inglés en el plan de estudios, mientras que otros manifiestan rechazo hacia la clase de inglés, la metodología, la propuesta de evaluación y el material del curso. Además, algunos desconocen los elementos relacionados con su papel en el programa, las actividades extraescolares y la participación y asistencia a clase. En conclusión, los estudiantes no son receptores pasivos de las políticas lingüísticas, pues ejercen agencia de diferentes maneras a nivel micro.

Palabras clave: agenciamiento, enseñanza superior, lengua extranjera, política lingüística

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Introduction

Johnson (2013) shows that language policy and language planning are closely related. However, the author sheds light on the concept of language policy and bases his reasoning on different studies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; McCarty, 2011; Schiffman, 1996; Spolsky, 2004; Tollefson, 1991). The first thing to consider is that language policy comes from top-down authorities as part of their language plan. The second element involves a social construct comprising administrative, judicial, constitutional, and other components, as well as a linguistic culture that deals with ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, and implicit interpretations, among others. Another element has to do with socio-cultural processes in which negotiations, human interaction, and production are mediated by power relations. This means that the language policy is negotiated among different agents involving human interaction. The last element involves a critical perspective as language policy is created to establish hegemony in language use (Bonilla Carvajal & Tejada-Sanchez, 2016). However, agents resist domination and take action to make social changes. This critical perspective also includes the notion of linguistic ecologies in which languages have to coexist and be valued and recognized (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). On the other hand, language policy includes both official regulations created by authorities and unofficial interpretations from the community. In fact, Johnson (2013) states that language policy impacts not only the structure or function of a language but also its use or acquisition. Official regulations, implicit mechanisms, processes, and discourses are involved in language policy.

Liddicoat (2014) highlights that research on language policy and planning has aimed at supporting the agency at various levels (macro, meso, and micro) and that governments, subgroups, and individuals are involved. The macro level frames the educational discourses usually given by the national government, whereas the meso level involves subnational agents. At the micro level, local practitioners are the most salient. Regarding the agency of language policy and planning at the micro level, Brown (2015) states that different scholars have investigated the role of the teacher. Still, little attention has been paid to the role of students. Thus, the author emphasizes the need to examine students' roles and activities to determine their agency in language policy.

Students' voices are important to analyze as they are agents that belong to the micro level, and this article contributes to visualizing them. Regarding agency, this has to do with the intention of human beings to act to make changes in their reality. Ahern (2001) gives a provisional definition that is still valid in our times: "Agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). The author highlights the importance of distinguishing between the actor and the agent. The former involves a rule-governed or rule-oriented person, whereas an agent refers to a person engaged in producing effects and reshaping the world. As different scholars have pointed out, it is vital to investigate the micro level in language policy (Fenton-Smith & Gurney, 2016; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012; Spolsky, 2004; Tao & Gao, 2017; Zhao & Baldauf, 2012) and take students as active agents to transcend top-down power.

This article focuses on the agency of 85 undergraduate students—who belonged to the Medicine, Veterinary, Nursing, Hard Sciences, and Law schools—over an English language policy in a public university in Medellín, Colombia. So, our purpose in this paper is to visualize students' voices as agents that deserve to be heard. Since little research has been done in Colombia involving agents that belong to the micro level part of language policy, this article contributes to understanding how students relate to the language policy established in a public university. The question that leads our inquiry is how undergraduate students appropriate the foreign language policy in a public university.

Theoretical Framework

Language in Education Policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) suggest that language in education planning is related to the education measures required to develop the language proficiency of individuals or communities as part of the language ecology. In addition, they argue that the main goals of language in education policy are to establish the criteria for the different processes in the educational system to decide the language or languages that will be taught, to whom, for what latency, and what methodology, materials, and assessment procedures to use. Thus, Kaplan and Baldauf's goals may respond to the interests of individuals, societies, or institutions. In this regard, Liddicoat (2013) argues that these objectives correspond to dimensions of education, which are addressed in language policy, and language planning is the preparatory work for formulating a language policy. Kaplan and Baldauf add that planning involves materializing both policy and the methods and materials to assist the language development of individuals and communities.

Then, language in education policies frames the language issues that will be addressed in education and the linguistic resources to develop (Liddicoat, 2013). Although language policy is presented explicitly, its existence can be recognized in more covert forms beyond its texts. In other words, policy can be observed as linguistic actions and as a discourse at the level of interpretations and implementation processes. Furthermore, Liddicoat (2013), from a critical perspective, points out that these non-tangible forms of politics shape ideologies since they represent the political position of those who create them and have their own political intentions. Moreover, language in education policies relate to different language teaching and learning practices and are characterized according to their scope and emphasis.

Liddicoat (2013) frames language policy into four categories:

- **Official language education policies** refer to the official language chosen by most people. This means that the language in education policy deals with the acquisition of literacy by the people who use the official language.
- **Foreign language education policies** relate to teaching and learning an additional language, not generally spoken by the community, in the education system.
- **Minority language education policies** cover non-official languages, such as Indigenous and minority languages, which are included in education.
- **External language spread policies** involve the decisions of some governments to promote the teaching and learning of their official languages beyond their borders. In this case, the teaching and learning of a language is not part of the formal education system.

Finally, to understand language in education policy from a critical sociocultural perspective, Levinson et al. (2009) argue that policy can be understood as a social practice, more specifically, as a complex, ongoing social practice of power for democracy rather than a set of prescribed rules. Depending on how power elites are created and legitimized or how social groups have engaged in formulating policy, this exercise of power may be approximately democratic. Understanding policy as a practice of power means "the production of normative discourse for the reproduction of inequality, hegemony, and subordinated political subjects" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 774). In other words, from this critical perspective, the creation of a policy is permeated by the interests of the dominant groups.

Levinson et al. (2009) argue that top-down policy construction and implementation enact an ideology of governance controlled by elites. To mitigate this hegemonic bias, the authors propose a critical sociocultural language policy model that considers negotiation, appropriation, practice, and reification elements. Nego-

tiation should include groups with various positions and interests, which strive to make agendas of mutual understanding. In terms of appropriation, this favors the creative incorporation of language policy into particular agents' motivational schemes and interests. It also affects practice, in which individuals and society complement each other and seek negotiation and meaning. In this respect, practice takes a social turn, which leads to a critical paradigm. Finally, reification is about encounters of freedom where agents can act consciously and autonomously.

Given the focus of this study, it is important to highlight the notion of appropriation, as it refers "to the ways that creative agents interpret and take in elements of policy, thereby incorporating these discursive resources into their schemes of interest, motivation, and action, their own figured worlds" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 779). Johnson (2013) adds that appropriation involves different micro-level practices, such as re-crafting, ignoring, and resisting, in which power circulates. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (2015) indicate that agents can be positioned as arbiters or implementers in a language policy. They emphasize that an arbiter is any agent of the language policy who exerts excessive power in the way a policy is created, interpreted, or appropriated.

Regarding investigations that involve language policy at the micro level, Alagozlu (2012) interviewed some teachers in Ankara about EFL teaching and found some problems that have to do with flaws in the educational system, inconsistency in foreign language education policy, learner and learning issues, different methodologies used, and obstacles in language teacher education. In another study, Fuentes (2019) used an ethnographic design and analyzed the appropriation of three undergraduate English students, and the results showed that the learners had to reposition themselves based on the policy. In Venezuela, Pereira Rojas (2013) analyzed the perceptions and positions of different agents, and the results indicate discrepancies between

them. In Colombia, many educational institutions have adopted the Common European Framework of Reference to standardize learners' ability in English, and different scholars have pointed out that this adoption has limited the expertise of both local and national teachers as this model aims at making teaching practices uniform (González, 2007; Usma Wilches, 2009). This model is universal and does not consider specific issues that involve students' needs, technological resources, teachers' qualifications, and the curriculum for each institution, among others (Cárdenas, 2006; González, 2007; Miranda & Echeverry, 2010). Also, adopting this model brings bilingualism plans, which means commercializing English programs that favor publishing houses and international agencies (González, 2007; Usma Wilches, 2009). Finally, Torrente Paternina (2013) states that, in the Colombian context, the construction of public policies on the teaching of a foreign language such as English has lacked strategies for citizen participation; therefore, the voices of the different agents have not been heard in policies such as the National Bilingual Program.

Language Policy in Higher Education

Liddicoat (2018) argues that universities have moved to establish more explicit language policies in response to changes related to the language context. The author notes that these policies seek to respond not only to how the academy uses languages for teaching and learning but also to creating and disseminating knowledge through research and administration. The author further argues that contemporary universities are characterized by a strong focus on internationalization, which has permeated the profile of their students and faculty, the curriculum, as well as the academic and educational experiences that institutions offer their students.

Along the same lines, universities have taken on the challenge of globalization, seeking to prepare their students to interact academically with their peers in

different areas of knowledge. In this regard, Vila (2015) argues that universities have adopted various strategies to guide students toward internationalization processes and take on the challenges of globalization. To this end, applied linguistics has played a significant role in the education of the university population, and content-based courses have been created or designed. Different universities have also included bilingual education and compulsory or optional language programs or courses in many areas of knowledge.

Vila (2015) also indicates that, since the last decade of the 20th century, the internationalization of universities has resulted in a significant increase in the teaching of English, making it the predominant language in higher education and limiting language policies. In this respect, almost three decades ago, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) already regarded English as the most dominant language in the contemporary world, and they pointed out that the expansion of this language is not a neutral issue because of the ideologies that underpin it and the consequences of such expansion for other languages and cultures. In the same vein, Haberlan and Mortensen (2011, as cited in Vila, 2015) question the choice of English solely on the assumption that it is the most widely spoken language in the world. The authors argue that, in the real world, instruction in higher education is conducted in dozens of languages other than English. Moreover, thousands of university professors and researchers conduct their professional lives and contribute to generating new knowledge in their own language. Likewise, Blommaert (2010) suggests that, within globalization, other languages must be considered without restrictions in international academic dialogs. In fact, some voices question the biased perspective of considering English as the language of science and knowledge, as well as its selection in policies, as this ends up making other languages invisible (Gazzola, 2012; Hamel, 2013; Haugen, 1971; Vila, 2015; Vivanco Cervero, 2010).

By the same token, Liddicoat (2018) indicates that, in the case of policies on foreign language learning and its inclusion in the curriculum of programs, English is the only language studied by most students in higher education in many countries, and this has led to the marginalization of other languages from university curricula. The author questions whether the ideology that permeates internationalization in universities is not exactly the one that promotes multilingualism. This has, therefore, been reflected in language policies that are reduced to a form of bilingualism (i.e., focusing on the national language and English), leaving other languages on the periphery in many institutions. Finally, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (2018) argue that policies promoting multilingual education ensure a healthy balance between local and dominant languages. Therefore, they call for the inclusion of multilingualism in different contexts as a goal in education since policies that promote the expansion of a single language, such as English, end up generating linguistic genocide. Similarly, to challenge English's predominance, Le Lièvre et al. (2015) demand that the linguistic diversity of the regions be acknowledged and that higher education be encouraged to be pluralistic and intercultural.

Method

This study is an ethnography of language policy in an English program and follows the principles of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ethnography evidences how different actors participate in the stages that shape language policies, from their creative phase to implementation, reflecting in turn on processes of appropriation and interpretation (Canagarajah, 2006; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007, 2011; Johnson, 2013; McCarty, 2011, 2015). Johnson and Johnson (2015) point out that the ethnography of a language policy allows for analyzing the relationship between a macro policy and educational practices. For Hornberger and Johnson (2007, 2011), ethnographic research on language policy is a means to explore how diverse local interpretations,

implementations, negotiations, and possibly resistances can promote open spaces for multilingual education.

Context and Participants

This ethnography of language policy was conducted at a public university in Medellín, Colombia. To provide a comprehensive education to undergraduate students, the university establishes a foreign language policy in which English is the mandatory language for all programs. The choice of English is supported because it is the most widely used language in the academic and scientific fields in the contemporary world. Also, the policy aims to facilitate students' interaction with academia, strengthen their chances of access to the labor market, and achieve greater competitiveness. The policy requires five mandatory levels of English in the undergraduate curricula (each level represents two credits). At the end of the five levels of English, students are expected to reach level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It is important to mention that although English is the mandatory language to be studied in the undergraduate programs, the institutional policy also offers the opportunity to study other foreign and indigenous languages (Portuguese, French, Italian, German, Japanese, Chinese, Kriol, Minika, and Ẽbẽra Chamí) on an optional basis, but they are not included into the curricula.

Task-based language teaching is the methodology used, and students are expected to develop the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The program is offered in face-to-face and virtual modalities; when this research was carried out, most of the courses were face-to-face, so this modality was the focus of the research. The university comprises three main academic areas: Hard Sciences, Humanities, and Health. The Medicine, Veterinary, Nursing, Hard Sciences, and Law schools (which includes Political Sciences) were selected as a way to represent each area. The participants were 85 undergraduate students who were taking English courses in the foreign language

program and who were enrolled in English I, II, or III. This would allow us to get closer to the participants' experiences in relation to the language policy from the beginning of the learning experience, and also because in the first semesters, the groups have larger numbers of students. Table 1 depicts the information of participants and the academic area they belong to.

Table 1. Information of Participants (*N* = 85)

Area	*n*	%
Medicine	11	12.9
Nursing	15	17.6
Veterinary	13	15.2
Hard Sciences	31	36.4
Law	9	10.5
Political Sciences	6	7

Data Collection

Data collection involved document analysis (Heck, 2004; Merriam, 1998), non-participatory observation (Angrosino, 2015), a questionnaire (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2008), and some students' portfolios (Merriam, 1998). First, we analyzed official documents of the English program, such as the master document of the university language policy and the course syllabi for English I, II, and III. Then, we observed the classes of the teachers who agreed to participate in the research. Approximately 50% of the classes (32 hours) of each of the three English levels were observed during the first semester of 2019. These observations examined the appropriation processes that occurred in the classroom on the part of the students. After the observations, we administered a questionnaire with open- and closed-ended questions to gather the students' interpretations, perceptions, and feelings about language policy in the institution. We also asked 16 students to share their portfolios with us to check their appropriation. Finally, the analysis of

the information was based on the inductive process (Coffee & Atkinson, 1996/2003) to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants (i.e., the *emic* perspective; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We codified the possible categories or themes to seek answers to the interpretations and how the students have appropriated the university's language policy. Regarding the validity of the study, this was based on the triangulation of multiple methods of data collection (Flick, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) since document analysis, a questionnaire, class observations, and portfolios were used in the data-gathering process. On the other hand, this research was reviewed and approved by the university's research committee. Likewise, we abide by the ethical considerations established in the institutional code of ethics.

Results

Based on the analysis of the four data collection instruments, three main categories emerged: acceptance, rejection, and ignoring.

Aspects That Show Acceptance of the Institutional Language Policy

The university's language policy document states that English is the most widely used language in academics. English is also a language of scientific as well as work dialog. These statements were asked in a questionnaire, and almost all undergraduate students agreed with them (see Table 2). Student 30 (S30) commented that "the objective of this program is to generate language competencies for academic exchanges." S56 also mentioned that the English program is a free academic opportunity: "The language program is a great opportunity to learn English, and it is free!" Table 2 displays the high level of students' agreement on the choice of English and its importance (5 = *strongly agree*, 1 = *totally disagree*).

Table 2 illustrates that 95% of the students agree with the choice of English and the elements that support it.

This reveals the students' ideologies towards English, as stated by Ricento (2001). Additionally, this university's language policy supports a form of bilingualism: Spanish as the mother tongue and English as the foreign language (Liddicoat, 2018).

Table 2. Perceived Importance of English for the Participants (*N* = 85)

Value	*N*	%
1 (totally disagree)	2	2
2	1	1
3	1	1
4	41	48
5 (strongly agree)	40	47

Another element that illustrates acceptance is the participants' learning experience in the English program. Most students (91%) mentioned that their learning process has been interesting, motivating, and enriching. S80 described that "it has been a great and enriching experience as the evaluation system is different from the traditional one, and it guides and helps the students." Some students also mentioned that they have learned with the English program: "My learning process has been quite positive, and I have learned very much" (S69). Similarly, 89% of students reported that the methodology used in the program has been motivating and useful. Different students opined that it is organized (S55), functional (S13), didactic (S44), self-directed (S57), effective (S60), challenging (S72), and innovative (S83).

In an equivalent manner, the general analysis of some students' portfolios (90%) indicated that participants demonstrate their learning experiences by not only annexing evidence of their activities and tasks but also reflecting on their process. This may show that students have valuable experience during the program. In fact, one of the students described that "completing the portfolio . . . has been a nice experience because I

did it not only for the idea of grading but as a matter of personal growth in language learning" (S21).

Finally, the analysis of the class observations supported that students almost always attended the classes (85%), did the assigned activities (92%), participated in class (88%), and submitted the tasks on time (90%). However, the English courses are designed in their curricula and have two credits each, which may lead to extrinsic motivation. It means that they attend English courses to avoid academic punishment (Arnold, 2000).

Aspects That Involve Rejection of the Institutional Language Policy

In the questionnaire, we asked students about their learning process, and a few students (7%) showed rejection to appropriate their language learning experience, especially those who belong to Political Sciences.

The participants' rejection included complaints about the structure of the English program, the evaluation system, and the material. They also used words such as boring (S2), stressful (S5), and unproductive (S3, S4). Regarding the methodology, S1 commented that "it is monotonous, and it requires a lot of effort as it involves work and time. However, you do not feel you are rewarded the same in learning. Academic coordinators should look for a more efficient and dynamic methodology." Another aspect that supports students' rejection is their disposition in class. Political sciences students arrived late to class or did not attend some sessions. Their portfolios (30%) included neither extra class activities nor systematic reports of classroom activities. Moreover, when students were asked about their experiences completing their portfolios, they reported feeling stressed and confused and did not have time to complete them. It is worth mentioning that the English program uses electronic material, and observers noted that the teacher almost always had trouble with computer connectivity and could not use it in the classroom. Nonetheless, the analysis of the observations indicates that the teacher used different

activities in class (songs, games, or reading exercises) and congratulated students for their participation as a reward. In sum, explicit rejection (Johnson, 2013) was evident.

Some Veterinary students (30%) also showed rejection. In fact, during classroom observations, we noticed that students frequently missed class or arrived late. In addition, it was evident that only some students brought the class materials and did not do the assigned homework activities. However, this fact contradicted what the Veterinary students reported in the questionnaire, where they agreed with the program. In this regard, 85% of the Veterinary students agreed with including English in the curriculum. Finally, we could say that an implicit rejection (Johnson, 2013) was evident since their actions showed little interest in learning the foreign language in the English course.

Aspects That Involve Ignoring the Institutional Language Policy

The students' responses in the questionnaire support that they omit or do not agree with some principles of the language program, specifically autonomy in their learning process. The official program document states that students should play an independent and autonomous role in their learning process, and 12 students (13%) expressed their disagreement regarding this principle.

In fact, reviewing, doing homework, paying attention in class, tracking activities, and reflecting on the portfolio are some of the students' actions expected to be completed during the learning process. However, in the questionnaire, students self-assessed their learning process in the language courses and mentioned negative issues such as not paying attention in class (S77), lack of practice outside the classroom (S12, S25, S28, S31, S39, S44, S45, S50, S55), not doing the activities because participants found them demotivating (S15, S23, S40, S41, S58, S83), and lack of dedication (S1, S81, S82). The analysis of class observations also supports

some students' ignoring effect on the English program. In short, it could be argued that the way students relate to the program supports their agency. In this regard, Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech (2021) indicate that the different actors exercise their agency to shape the final form of the policy. Lastly, the previous findings may also contradict the students' perception of the importance of learning a language, as some did not put effort into it. This lack of action may have led to demotivation in some students.

Such demotivation somehow evidences the participants' neglect of the proposed policies and strategies. In the analysis of the observations, we noted that some students did not complete all the activities proposed in the course (8%), lacked interest in classes (11%), and did not practice outside the classroom (8%). Some students were even absent for 2 or 3 sessions (11%) because they were studying for mid-term tests in their specific areas. Another element influencing demotivation was using cell phones in classrooms (18%). We noted that, at the beginning of the classes, few students (7%) used their cell phones in class for personal reasons, but the use of cell phones increased, and more students did it during the academic period. Lastly, some students (12%) did not add evidence about their extra practice in English in their portfolios. In summary, it could be argued that the way students relate to the program supports their omission of different program elements.

Conclusions

From a critical perspective, language policy and planning are not only the domain of governments and institutional actors since it is an issue that has to do directly with society and recognition (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). Then, power is exercised by different agents in one way or another at diverse levels of the policy (i.e., macro, meso, and micro). According to Johnson and Johnson (2015), policies are interpreted by those who created them and those who are expected to appropriate them. In the process of appropriation,

different actors also exert agency when making decisions related to the policy. This study focused on how undergraduate students at a public university appropriated the foreign language policy of the institution. Thus, we reported the agentive role of the students in three categories, as shown above: acceptance, rejection, and ignoring of the mandatory English program at the university.

Regarding acceptance, students acknowledge the inclusion of English in the curriculum, the learning experience in the program, and the portfolio as a strategy to promote formative assessment. For the latter, Pujolà (2019) points out that portfolios are a tool with immense potential for the formative assessment of students. They help students foster an active role in learning and develop metacognitive learning strategies, allowing students to control their learning process. As for the choice of EFL in public universities, students value this decision because they agree that it is the language of academia, science, and internationalization.

However, it is important to consider that the choice of English at the institution and the students' level of agreement reflect the prevailing ideologies regarding this foreign language. Thus, the decision to promote English in our public university perpetuates the hegemonic discourse that places English as the only language of science. This is striking because this public university follows critical perspectives in its principles, and we posit that decisions about the foreign language for undergraduate students respond more to neoliberal agendas than to the principles of the ecological paradigm of language policy, as supported by Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996). In other words, the institution's current emphasis on English does not promote multilingualism or linguistic equality. Scholars from different contexts have called attention to this issue. From the European context, Vila (2015) supports the idea that, in the real world, thousands of university professors develop their professional lives in other languages, and thousands of researchers

conduct research studies and generate new knowledge in languages other than English. Pinto (2016) also points out that focusing language policies on English is an extremely limited perspective of internationalization and suggests the need for more pluralistic policies in higher education. As a result, many universities have a biased perception of English as the only language for academic dialog (Pinto & Araújo e Sá, 2020). In South America, Mourão Guimarães and Machado Pereira (2021) propose resignifying policies based on plurality and the problematization of English as the language of science. Finally, Dandrea and Lizabe (2020) raise concerns about the Latin American academy increasingly expanding English and displacing other languages, such as Spanish and Portuguese, in higher education. Based on prior researchers' voices, our study confirms that English displaces other languages and is the language of hegemonic use.

In implementing linguistic policies, rejection can occur in the appropriation process. In this study, the students' words and disposition in class showed explicit rejection (Johnson, 2013). This was more evident in the Political Sciences and Veterinary schools. In particular, the Political Science students expressed their lack of motivation in the English class and questioned the methodology, evaluation proposal, and course material. They also missed class frequently, arrived late, and refused to follow the portfolio guidelines. In addition, the lack of internet connectivity in the classroom also affected the class dynamics. Ekiz and Kulmetov (2016) pointed out that when teachers do not use technological resources during instruction, students may lack motivation. Also, these students are critical and delve into the reasoning behind policies and criticize processes, methodology, and materials, among others. The way they interpret and relate to the language policy installed in this public university may cause their rejection. In this sense, it is important to mention that students exercise their agency and play the role of critics and receivers at the same time (Ball et

al., 2011) in the institutional language policy. They are receivers of the policy because they depend on others, such as teachers, for its interpretation and implementation. However, simultaneously, they are critics because they resist policy elements, expressing a discourse of opposition. In other words, apart from being implementers or receivers of the university language policy, students exercise agency by taking a position about the foreign language program established at the university. Thus, the students' agency also places them as arbiters (Johnson, 2013) of the institutional linguistic policy.

Agency involves not only acting to influence others but also considering the actors participating in the process (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). Regarding the role of students, we found that they disregard or ignore some elements of the English program. This form of student agency indicates how students have appropriated the language policy.

Dörnyei (1997) describes demotivation as specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of an ongoing action, which in this case involved an English program. In the analysis of the observations, we concluded that some students did not have an active role during their learning process. Another element to consider is the role of some students who influence their peers (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016). If some students' negative attitude is perceived in the classroom, other students may adopt it. This is especially the case with the use of cell phones, as few students did it at the beginning of the academic period, but this increased during the academic semester. Thus, these external forces may give rise to demotivation.

To conclude, it is vital to highlight this public university's efforts to offer students the opportunity to learn a foreign language, which is undoubtedly an essential element in the academic training of new generations. Still, it is important to rethink the monolingual policy perpetuating English's supremacy in this university. Although students have the option to take other foreign and Indigenous languages (Portuguese, French, Italian,

German, Japanese, Chinese, Kriol, Mɨnɨka, and Ẽbẽra Chamí) in this public university, they are not recognized with credits in their curricula. In addition, it would be necessary to promote a more democratic policy in which students could be given the possibility to learn a foreign language according to their needs and interests. For Bunce et al. (2016), multilingualism is widespread across the globe and is even more necessary in the modern world. Including different languages strengthens one's insight into the diversity of cultures and the capacity to act with intercultural sensitivity. Thus, we suggest that agents of all levels consider a multilingual language policy at this and other universities to heighten cultural and linguistic awareness in the educational community as well as to promote social justice.

Limitations and Implications

This study has presented the voices of agents at the micro level of language policy but presents some limitations. First, the participants come from public and private secondary education institutions, and this study did not analyze whether there is a difference in how private and public education students relate to the institutional language policy. Likewise, the present study did not address the experience of Indigenous students in the English program since they speak their ancestral language, learn Spanish, and must also take English courses.

For future research, it is necessary to include other agents that belong to different racial and ethnic groups, universities, and countries. Vila (2015) highlights that universities have adopted English as the language of academic dialog, which has limited language policies. Our study has also confirmed the acceptance of the assumptions underpinning the choice of English in a university context in Colombia. However, the university also offers undergraduate students other foreign languages, and it would be interesting to investigate how these languages impact the academic life of undergraduate students. With the results of the investigations

at the micro level, language policymakers might have a more holistic view and include other languages into the language policy in the students' curricula to promote multilingualism in higher education. Finally, it is crucial to highlight the importance of considering the students' involvement in language policies, even if their voices have not been heard during the creation process. They are not passive agents of policies. On the contrary, they exercise their agency in diverse ways at the micro level.

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