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Monetary and Career based Motives at the Core of EFL Programs: Problems and Solutions[1]

Programas de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera Basados en Fundamentos Económicos y Profesionales: Problemas y Soluciones

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Abstract

In this paper, we discuss the dominant discourses that use monetary and career-based reasons to justify the learning and teaching of English in Costa Rica by drawing parallels to similar phenomena taking place in Japan, Korea, Canada, and Colombia. We argue that the propagation of these discourses has resulted in the commodification of EFL teaching and learning in Costa Rica, as programs are designed to meet narrow material-based interests and purposes. The reflection includes an analysis of publicity around EFL learning, a national initiative to improve EFL teaching/learning, a specific EFL program in a public Costa Rican university, and the opinions of students from this program. We demonstrate how the construction of English as the means by which professionalism, economic growth, and wealth can be accomplished has shaped EFL curricula in particular ways, thereby neglecting diverse motivations for EFL learning. We finish the paper by advocating for the creation of more democratic spaces in EFL classrooms where both teachers and learners can critique in constructive ways the impact that these dominant discourses have on themselves as individuals and on EFL curricular at large.

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Resumen

En este artículo discutimos los discursos dominantes que utilizan razones económicas para justificar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés en Costa Rica, estableciendo paralelos entre fenómenos que ocurren actualmente en Japón, Corea, Canadá y Colombia. La propagación de estos discursos ha dado como resultado la mercantilización de la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés en Costa Rica, impactando así el diseño curricular de los programas para satisfacer propósitos e intereses económicos. La reflexión incluye un análisis de la publicidad a nivel nacional en torno al aprendizaje del inglés, de algunas iniciativas nacionales orientadas al mejoramiento de esta área, de un programa de inglés como lengua extranjera ofertado en una universidad pública en Costa Rica, y de las opiniones de estudiantes de este programa. Se hace hincapié en cómo la construcción del inglés como medio para la movilidad social, riqueza y profesionalismo ha impactado los programas de inglés como lengua extranjera, causando que estos, en su mayoría, pasen por alto diversas motivaciones que los aprendices puedan tener para el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, debido a la prioridad que se le da a los intereses materiales y económicos del sector productivo. Por último, este artículo aboga por la creación de espacios democráticos en los cuales tanto profesores como estudiantes puedan criticar de forma constructiva el impacto que los discursos dominantes antes mencionados tienen sobre los individuos y el currículo en inglés como lengua extranjera en general.

Palabras clave: Comodificación del inglés, enseñanza del inglés orientada al sector productivo, discusiones críticas, la diversificación del currículo en inglés como lengua extranjera.

Resumo

Neste artigo discutimos os discursos dominantes que utilizam razões econômicas para justificar o ensino e a aprendizagem do inglês na Costa Rica, estabelecendo paralelos entre fenômenos que ocorrem atualmente no Japão, Coréia, Canadá e Colômbia. A propagação destes discursos deu como resultado a 'co-modificação' do ensino e aprendizagem do inglês na Costa Rica, impactando assim o desenho curricular dos programas para satisfazer os propósitos e interesses económicos. A reflexão inclui uma análise da publicidade ao nível nacional em torno à aprendizagem do inglês, de iniciativas nacionais orientadas ao melhoramento desta área, de um programa de inglês como língua estrangeira oferecida em uma universidade pública na Costa Rica, e as opiniões de estudantes deste programa. Enfatiza-se em como a construção do inglês promove a mobilidade social, riqueza e profissionalismo e como tem impactado os programas de inglês como língua estrangeira, que na sua maioria passam por cima diversas motivações que os aprendizes possam ter para a aprendizagem do inglês como língua estrangeira, devido à prioridade que se dá aos interesses

materiais e econômicos do setor produtivo. Finalmente, este artigo opta pela criação de espaços democráticos nos quais tanto professores como estudantes possam criticar de forma construtiva o impacto que os discursos dominantes antes mencionados têm sobre os indivíduos e o currículo em inglês como língua estrangeira em geral.

Palavras clave: Co-modificação do inglês, ensino do inglês orientado ao sector produtivo, discursões críticas, a diversificação do currículo em inglês como língua estrangeira.

Introduction

The learning and teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) has proliferated rapidly around the world, but even more so in regions attempting to actively participate in the so-called global economy, such is the case of Costa Rica. To respond to this ever-increasing demand for English, the number of EFL programs has also multiplied at all levels of education nationwide, creating a societal push that has positioned English as the only logical foreign language to learn and has granted it a mandatory status in K-16 (Álvarez, Valenzuela, & Villalobos, 2008). The rapid rise of EFL teaching/learning, however, requires an examination of the forces fueling the choice for EFL in the country and the pressures these forces exercise on EFL curricula in Costa Rica at the college level.

In this paper, we discuss the circulating discourses portraying EFL learning as a desirable/inevitable pursuit connected to monetary gain and career advancement, and argue that these may be not only drawing the attention of individuals but also shaping EFL curricula in Costa Rica in particular ways. To this end, we examine how the discourses disseminated by EFL advertisements, combined with the pressures exercised by a national government-supported foundation, have caused the EFL program in a public Costa Rican university to be reduced to business/career advancement ideals. Our claim is that programs such as this one fail to consider the wide range of motivations driving learners to engage in EFL learning. To demonstrate this, we analyze the multiple reasons that 30 students in the program provide for their EFL endeavor. Based on this analysis, we advocate for democratic/constructivist spaces, where both teachers and learners can examine diverse motivations for EFL learning and the extent to which learning English truly serves the promises disseminated by the discourses connecting English to monetary gain and career advancement.

Literature Review

This paper deals with the *discourses* that connect EFL teaching and learning to monetary gain and career advancement in the business sense, and the impact these have had on individuals' choices for what foreign languages to learn and on EFL curricula in Costa Rica at large. According to Mayr (2008), "Discourse is a difficult and fuzzy concept as it is used by social theorists (e.g. Foucault, 1972, 1977), critical linguists (e.g. Fowler et al., 1979) and finally, critical discourse analysts (e.g. van Dijk, 1990), all of whom define discourse slightly differently and from their various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints" (p. 7). Our

use of the term 'discourse', however, does not refer to the structuralist paradigm that looks at language as separate from the social use it is given and the social context in which it originates. Instead, we endorse a more functionalist view in that we take discourse to be any instance of language-in-use that rationalizes social practices and thus constructs a version of reality. That is, we understand discourse to, "...deal with meaning in social, cultural, and political terms, a broader approach to meaning than is common in much mainstream linguistics" (Gee, 2011: ix).

Our argument is that a barrage of discourses has legitimized particular social constructions of English. The ideologies (ideascapes) contained in such discourses, which position English as an inevitable/desirable endeavor and call for a link between EFL and the corporate sector to be established, have become undeniable truths, fueled by advertisements and nationwide polices (mediascapes) (Appadurai, 1996). As the ideascapes that English is the only logical foreign language to learn and that EFL programs must respond to the corporate sector gain more force, these ideologies become regimes that teachers, administrators, and learners of EFL programs agree to believe in and act upon.

In various countries, but especially in Costa Rica, dominant discourses circulate, which construct EFL learning as an indispensable tool that guarantees material and monetary gains and position EFL learning as a non-negotiable, inevitable task that must meet the needs and demands of the corporate sector. As Motha and Lin (2014) put it, the present EFL landscape is filled with discourses connecting the lack of English proficiency to a disconnection from an imagined international community and an exclusion from access to economic gain and professionalism, thus compelling individuals to regard English as worthy of pursuit and EFL program administrators and curriculum writers to reshape such programs in ways that serve the business sector.

One illustrative example of how English has become a sought-after foreign language is Park's (2010) study of success stories published in the press in Korea at the same time that an 'English frenzy' was developing as a result of the government and the business sector joining efforts to position English as an indispensable asset in the global economy. These stories, normally written from the perspective of a journalist, but at times composed as self-reports, consisted of accounts portraying individuals who succeeded at learning English as "… character[s] whose achievements in language learning attest to [their] grand potential for endless self-development and self-improvement celebrated in the new economy" (p. 23). The publication of these

success stories was coupled with the upgrading of the English curricula to emphasize communicative competence, the creation of immersion programs, and more aggressive competition among universities to offer courses taught in English. All in all, these stories contributed to the transformation of English in Korea from "…mere preparedness for employment" to being "… about living up to the vision of what constitutes the ideal human subject in the neoliberal world" (p. 27).

Another example of the push for English is found in Kubota's study (2011) of the discourses propelling the EFL industry in Japan. In her study, she explains that the current linguistic instrumentalism, taking place in Japan, is rooted in the assumptions that EFL competence is necessary to participate in a global economy and that English proficiency enhances economic gain for both nations and individuals. Kubota argues that the language education policies and the language teaching and testing industries in Japan have perpetuated these discourses of linguistic instrumentalism and although there is a general consensus that the entire population is to acquire basic skills in English, the business sector has made it practically mandatory for Japanese professionals to develop EFL proficiency to meet corporate demands. As the EFL testing industry further institutionalizes the ideology that English is a requirement in the present labor market, more individuals resolve to engage in EFL learning and EFL programs adopt a business- and work-skills orientation.

Yet another example is Heller's study (2002) of the transformation in the ideology and practice of English-French bilingualism in Canada unfolding over the last four decades, which she claims is filled with contradictions between language as a mark of belonging and language as a marketable commodity. She discusses that in Canada "… young people expect their bilingualism to translate into privileged access to jobs in the service and information sectors," (p. 59). Although Heller's study focuses on the push for French as a second language, she clearly illustrates how monetary- and career-based discourses manage to spread the need for foreign/second language learning as connected to the corporate sector, under the promise of access to wealth and professional advancement. This, in turn, points to the fact that not only English is subject to commodification, but that other languages with symbolic power may be undergoing similar processes of instrumentalism.

Even closer to the context under scrutiny, Guerrero's study (2010) around the force that English is gaining in the 'expanding circle' countries where English has no official status but where it is largely used as a foreign language, also serves to illuminate the point we wish to

make. In her study, she examines the Colombian National Bilingualism Project and claims that the initiative serves to perpetuate the symbolic power of English by constructing it as a necessary tool for academic and economic success. She assesses how this project constructs English "… as the magic formula that will solve [their] economic, social, cultural, and political problems…" (p. 305). To this, however, she adds that, "in such a complex, competitive, rich, plurilingual, pluricultural world like the one we live in, it is very narcissist and egocentric to think that speaking an important language like English is the key to solve all our problems" (p. 306).

While the alignment between EFL programs and the demands of the commercial sector is not necessarily in itself ethically or even pedagogically wrong, the reduction of EFL programs to focus only on monetary gain and corporate professionalism runs the risk of neglecting other motivations for EFL learning. Although not necessarily present in public discourses about English learning, individuals are likely to have a wide range of reasons for choosing a foreign language. While some learners may be driven by an interest in cultures and people, a desire to broaden their view and avoid provincialism, a desire for new stimuli and challenges, a need for achievement, or a desire to integrate into a new community (Dörnyei, 1990), others may do so fueled by a desire for travel, knowledge, and friendship (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983). And still others may simply have the goal of speaking a difficult or exclusive language (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), or relating to the international community (Yashima, 2009) by going abroad, associating with members of other cultural/linguistic groups, and engaging in foreign affairs.

In EFL programs driven by the profit-based and career-advancement mentality, learners' diverse motivations can easily be overlooked, as the priority becomes "... to be the provider of human capital and the engine for economic growth" (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012, p. 7), which inevitably leads to the exclusion of alternative purposes for learning English. Higher education institutions are particularly pressured to provide individuals with the skills required in a highly capitalist economy (Holborow, 2012, pp. 14-32). As Mayr (2008) puts it, "...there has been a tendency to run universities like commercial businesses, with students being their customers. This development in turn has been promoted by the government's pro-managerial discourses and policies, which espouse an entrepreneurial culture and educational system" (p. 3). In other words, universities have undergone changes in the direction of adopting a free-market and corporate business viewpoint, which have implications for EFL programs.

As a matter of fact, for universities in Costa Rica, the dominant circulating discourses mentioned above have gradually allocated the learning of English a mandatory status. But not only that, these discourses have also led to the re-structuring of EFL programs so that they meet the narrow needs and interests of the productive corporate sector, which necessitates workers to possess only technical, business, job-related, and managerial skills. The status of English as the mandatory foreign language to learn and the practice of shaping EFL programs in ways that respond to corporate demands in turn has resulted in limiting learners' choices as to what foreign languages to learn and what purposes to learn them for. In the next section, we explain the approaches we used to demonstrate that the Costa Rican EFL landscape, specifically at the university level, resembles the phenomena currently taking place in Japan, Korea, Canada, and Colombia.

Pressures Shaping EFL Programs in Costa Rica

Devoid of any contextual knowledge, one cannot understand the forces fueling the choice for EFL in Costa Rica and the pressures these forces exercise on EFL curricula in Costa Rica at the college level. For this reason, we present examples of language learning advertisements found in flyers, billboards, magazines, and newspapers that are publicly displayed and illustrative of dominant public discourses in Costa Rica. In other words, we provide a glimpse into Costa Rican ideascapes/ mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996) around EFL. As we reflect upon these advertisements, we also draw connections to the pressures applied by a foundation in Costa Rican on EFL programs nationwide, as well as the structure and institutional status of one particular EFL program in a public university in the country, with an emphasis on an analysis of its textbooks and testing practices.

Zooming in from the broader societal context of Costa Rican ideascapes and mediascapes and the local environment of the target EFL program, we also present and examine data collected by means of a survey of 30 students in the EFL program under scrutiny, here and after called *Inglés para Todos* (English for All), regarding their motivations for engaging in EFL learning. The participants, taking the third level of the program, were in majors such as economics, environmental management, international affairs, administration, history, visual arts, topography, gender studies, and biology. At the time of this study, there were only three level-three courses, and so the participants were randomly selected from out of these three groups (10 students from each group). Looking at all these facets of the Cost Rican EFL landscape

allowed us to see not only the push for EFL in the nation but also the effects this push has had on the EFL program Inglés para Todos. The table below summarizes the data sources examined in this paper.

Table 1. Sources of Data Utilized for Analysis

Data Source	Information Found in Data
EFL teaching and learning advertisements found in billboards, magazines, newspapers, and flyers	Circulating discourses around EFL teaching and learning in Costa Rica
Goals of a Costa Rican foundation and its influence on the structure of EFL program nationwide	Pressures on the status of EFL programs and the shape of these EFL programs at the college level
Textbook and testing practices in the program *Inglés para Todos*	Business and career advancement orientation of program *Inglés para Todos*
Self reports of 30 participants regarding their motivations for engaging in EFL learning	Diverse motivations for EFL learning other than the ones contained in dominant discourses

The Media, Nationwide Initiatives, and the Corporate Sector

In Costa Rica, the public is exposed to a barrage of advertisements about English teaching and learning filled with discourses portraying the language as a desirable and inevitable endeavor that brings monetary gain and career advancement, connected to the needs and demands of the productive corporate sector. These advertisements, which can be seen on billboards, in newspapers, magazines, and in social networks, encourage Costa Ricans to study English, by linking its learning to being a competent professional in a ruthless job market, to higher possibilities of getting a promotion or better-paid job, and to opening doors to a lucrative business world in the entrepreneurship sense.

Although this is not an in-depth study of the construction of EFL by the Costa Rican media, an overview of advertisements that abound in Costa Rica serve as an illustration of the ideascapes/mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996) currently circulating monetary- and professionalism-oriented reasons for EFL learning. Specifically, four major ideascapes were embodied in the advertisements we found in various sources: (a) *Thinking in English* was equated with *thinking big*, causing creativity, success, and the pursuit of dreams to be associated with proficiency in English; (b) EFL learning was associated with

increasing profits and allowing professionals to *offer better services,* which clearly connects EFL proficiency to money-related outcomes; (c) a lack of oral proficiency in English was compared to being mute, thus constructing receptive bilingualism (understanding written and spoken English but not being able to speak it as an unfortunate situation that positions individuals in a place of deficit and disadvantage; (d) an implicit promise was made that being proficient in English would improve individuals' *professional profile* by granting them better chances of being hired; and (e) *speaking English* was described as an unavoidable requirement to get a job in the current competitive job market, portraying EFL learning as a competition in which those who learn the language have a competitive edge.

This kind of advertisement and the discourses it contains tap into people's desires and fears by connecting English proficiency to success, profit, professionalism, and a ruthless job market. These circulating discourses have constructed the learning of English as a desirable endeavor, thus pushing Costa Ricans to choose English as their additional language, based on the belief that it unlocks doors to wealth, social mobility, and professional development in a highly business-oriented setting. Against the backdrop of these circulating discourses, English has become a high-demand and profitable area of education in Costa Rica by those aspiring to access economic mobility. As the belief that speaking English automatically translates into access to better paid jobs and material gain, learning English has become more widespread and even gained the support of the government, which has created the conditions to further endorse EFL learning as the only logical choice and to reshape EFL programs. In Costa Rica, more recently, the EFL programs that have flourished are commonly those that have been reduced to the aforementioned ideologies and purposes, thus contributing to the exclusion of alternative motivations for investing in EFL, in favor of utilitarian purposes.

Driven by the English frenzy (Park, 2010) also present in Costa Rica, more and more parents make tremendous sacrifices to enroll their children in the schools with the strongest EFL programs, hoping to secure a prosperous future for their children. This pressing need for English also resembles the EFL landscape of Korea, where due to active promotion of English as a crucial resource "for competition in the global economy, university students and white-collar workers struggle to acquire and improve English language skills to render themselves marketable in the increasingly flexible job market, and parents strain themselves financially and emotionally trying to provide their children with the best opportunity for acquiring English" (Park, 2010, p. 23).

By and large, the dominant discourse in the country seems to be that EFL learning and teaching is worth it, mainly to the extent that it serves economic growth, as is discussed below.

In Costa Rica, the government has granted EFL learning a mandatory status in elementary and high school education (Álvarez, Valenzuela, & Villalobos, 2008). This situation has been further institutionalized by the creation of a national foundation whose objectives include a) *generating knowledge for decision-making on public policies related to the teaching of foreign languages*, b) orchestrating actions with international volunteer programs focused on language teaching, designing educational processes that emphasize the development of language skills for the workforce, and c) *building public-private partnerships to carry out language programs on a national level.* As evident in the objectives in italics, this government-supported foundation is to become involved in public policies related to EFL, focusing on creating a stronger link between EFL and the acquisition of skills for the productive corporate sector. Although this foundation states that it works as a catalyst for the teaching of various foreign languages, their efforts point to positioning English as the foreign language in Costa Rica, and not as much work has been done geared towards other languages.

Compelled by the objectives described above, this foundation has provided massive amounts of EFL teacher training across the nation, focused on improving the teachers' EFL proficiency and their EFL teaching methodologies. In addition, the foundation has also created mandatory EFL programs in the five public universities in the country, which to a greater or lesser degree, have taken the shape of ESP two-year programs, characterized by a particular choice of textbooks. Of specific interest is the four-level EFL program *Inglés para Todos* in one of these public universities. Granted, the university where this program operates offers other foreign languages such as Japanese, Mandarin, and Portuguese, but the EFL program in question is the one that has been given the most priority, as seen by the fact that for 27 out of 36 majors, taking this EFL program has institutionally been declared mandatory and that while the university does offer few courses in other foreign languages (three to four for each language at the most), up to 27 EFL groups are opened every semester. The projection of authorities in this university, however, is for the program to become mandatory in all majors in the near future.

EFL Textbooks, Testing Practices, and the Corporate Sector

A quick overview of the contents of the textbooks utilized in the program under scrutiny reveals an interesting trend. The content of the textbooks for levels one and two center on a number of topics including: personal details, my region, leisure, home and away, buying and selling, services, work, gadgets and technology, food, journeys, body and mind, and getting together. The topics seem fairly varied but many of these units are developed in office and work related contexts. Levels three and four topics include working life, projects, leisure time from work, services and systems at work, customers, customer service, guests and visitors at a company, security at the workplace, teamwork at the workplace, logistics of business projects, decision-making at the workplace, innovations at the workplace, and evaluation of processes and performance at the workplace. In this second textbook, it becomes more evident how the learners are introduced to the world of business with units that connect English to economic growth, money-related outcomes and professionalism, thus reducing English to just business. None of the units of the second book include alternative uses for English.

One might think that a textbook is only a textbook and that the teachers have the power of agency to include alternative materials and activities, but the sole existence of a pre-selected textbook often results in instructors keeping the textbook at the center of all teaching and learning. This is true even more so when the textbook selected is coupled with the administration of a standardized final exam at the end of each course, which centers on the units contained in the textbook. For example, the standardized final exam administered to students finishing level three in the second semester of 2015 was comprised of the following items. The listening sections included 1) listening to two people talking about their strong and weak points in applying for a job, 2) listening to a woman talking about what she likes and dislikes about business trips, and 3) listening to a man talking about how to create an effective and appealing business website. The reading sections involved 1) matching people to potential jobs according to their qualifications and provided job descriptions, and 2) solving a multiple-choice exercise based on a text about investments. The writing section comprised the following tasks: 1) writing about their dream job, 2) writing a complaint letter to a business manager, 3) writing a new proposal for a company, 4) writing an e-mail to the human resources manager about the importance of work-life balance, and 5) describing a strategy to launch a new product. The speaking section included 1) showing an international business partner the premises of the company he/she is visiting, 2) describing an entrepreneurial initiative to a potential

business partner, 3) explaining to the staff of a company changes in the structure of the business, and 4) engaging in speed networking to find business partners. The clear match between the units in the textbook and the final standardized exam is a factor that may force teachers to allow the business-oriented textbook to guide their teaching.

The textbooks selected for the *Inglés para Todos* and the privileged standardized testing practices resemble the trend of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), "which incorporate[s] concerns like 'negotiations', 'meeting skills', 'preparation skills'...." (Cameron, 2002, p. 71). Although ESP is, of course, a valid and important option to have, the predominance of ESP topics in textbooks, the abundance of ESP courses/programs, and the reduction of EFL to the learning of work-based and business-oriented skills stifle learners with diverse motivations from the opportunities to learn the language for alternative purposes, favoring the interests of those concerned about business and profit making. Needless to say, our aim is not to criticize the existence of ESP courses and programs but to problematize the marginalization of alternative motivations for EFL learning and the assumption that ESP equals guaranteed professional advancement.

The EFL Classroom: A Complex Landscape of Motivations

Given the particular textbook selection and testing practices in Inglés para Todos, a survey was conducted with 30 EFL students taking their third semester of English, to learn about their motivations to study the language. The participants were majoring in economics, environmental management, international affairs, administration, history, visual arts, topography, gender studies, etc. In the survey, they were given a list of possible reasons to study English, were asked to choose three that coincided with their own motivations, and to rank them in order of importance. This list included studying abroad, getting to know the culture of English-speaking countries, finding a job, getting a promotion, meeting general interest in foreign languages, meeting general interest in learning more about English, facing a personal challenge, expanding their knowledge of the world, traveling, making/maintaining relationships with English speakers, fulfilling an academic requirement, and setting up their own business.

As regards their first motivation, Figure 1 below shows that although the biggest force driving the respondents to engage in foreign language learning coincides with the discourses spread by the media and government-supported initiatives, their EFL endeavor is also fueled by other various motivation of a more personal type.

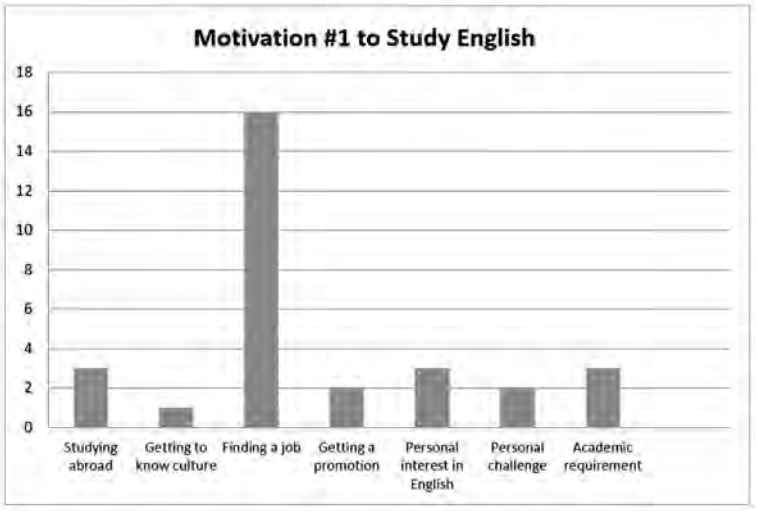

Figure 1. Motivation #1 to study English

Regarding their second motivation for studying English, most students report to have money-related motivations such as finding a job or getting a promotion, as well as career-based reasons including studying abroad and academic requirement. However, it is important to note here that the money-related motivation fell from a 60% to a 26% whereas career-based motives remained stable. Additionally, the informants also reported to have other motivations. Clearly, as they explore other reasons why they engage in EFL learning, other alternative motives not related to money or career building start to emerge and become more prevalent.

Figure 2. Motivation #2 to study English

Finally, as to their third motivation, the picture becomes a bit more complex, in which the majority reported to be interested in meeting a general interest in understanding English better and personal reasons, as well as career-based motivations.

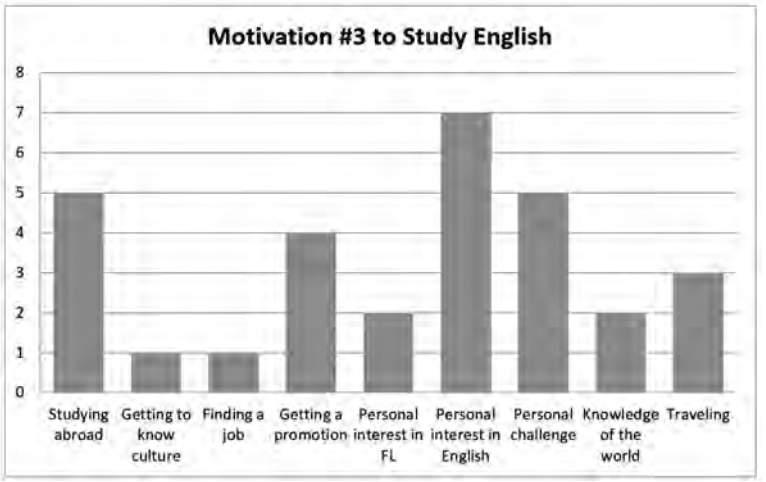

Figure 3. Motivation #3 to study English

These figures demonstrate that individuals normally have multiple motivations for engaging in EFL learning, that even the majority of students who are driven by money- and career-oriented purposes have other motivations as well, and that the classroom is a complex landscape of motivations. As demonstrated in the figures above, learners walk into EFL classrooms driven by diverse motives and hoping to accomplish multiple objectives that programs focusing on money- and career-related outcomes fail to meet. The high percentage found in the respondents' first motivation to study English shows that the discourses that connect the learning of English to thinking big, to granting skills to offer a better professional service, to boosting one's professional profile and opportunities to get hired in a competitive job market, are pushing individuals to believe that EFL learning is a desirable and unavoidable task, thereby fueling an English frenzy (Park, 2010).

Our Task as Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

In light of the 'English frenzy' (Park, 2010) spreading in Japan, Korea, Canada, Colombia, and Costa Rica, and the proliferation of EFL programs that respond to narrow motivations for EFL learning, it is

essential that we as EFL professionals take measures to bring about change geared towards a more diverse EFL curriculum. To this end, the design and implementation of EFL curricula must consider that not all learners are invested in EFL learning for the reasons advanced by circulating discourses and that those who are, may also have other alternative motivations. We insist that learners be critical of their motivations because even when the discourses connect English to promises of material gain and career advancement, both teachers and learners must examine the extent to which these promises can become a reality.

This critical examination of motivations is possible by opening spaces in EFL classes in which the forces pushing people to learn English and guiding language curricula are discussed to move the current desire for English from an unconscious to a conscious plane (Motha & Lin, 2014). The resulting new awareness can constitute an important starting point for teachers and students to start to question their own motivations and their connection to dominant circulating discourses around EFL and to seriously examine what English can do for them. This dialogue can potentially allow them to make liberating decisions about their EFL learning endeavor and about what they will do with the English they learn. Again, critical discussions should center on an examination of how dominant monetary and career advancement discourses impact individuals and EFL curricula. This dialogue can be a process to come to terms with the many contradictions EFL teachers feel between their altruistic reasons for joining the field and the often-limiting ways of being an EFL professional in programs that favor money- and career-based motivations.

In the direction of catering to multiple motivations for EFL learning within the curriculum, we generated some examples of activities and topics teachers may incorporate into their lessons to cultivate a multi-faceted rationale for studying English: (1) using English for volunteering or working for international altruistic aims, (2) exploring aesthetic uses of language such as composing music e writing poetry and short stories, (3) learning not only about English speaking countries but also about the world through different perspectives, given how much media is produced in English, (4) participating in and promoting youth culture by consuming, analyzing and creating content from a youth culture perspective, (5) taking a stand to support minority or indigenous language rights and revitalization, (6) turning aesthetic reading into an everyday classroom practice, and (7) discussing the need for social and not only economic entrepreneurship.

These seven ideas are rarely tackled in the books that are currently used in EFL programs in Costa Rica, and are never to be found in the current advertising for EFL learning nor in the goals and projects of the national government-supported foundation. By integrating such topics and activities into an EFL curriculum, students may find themselves more engaged, more successful, and may develop more and better communicative proficiency, which in turn may serve them very well in the marketplace. But more importantly, these may allow EFL learners to see the multiple purposes for which English can be used, other than the money- and career-based ones comprising the dominant circulating discourses.

One good example of the ideas exposed above is the Caracola Creative Languages project by Alice Emery, Luz Cadavid and Wendy García, located in New Haven, Connecticut, whose vision is to provide socially engaged language teaching and learning founded in the principles of experiential learning, artistic creation as a transformative exercise, and communication. In their philosophy, they state that while they are aware that speaking multiple languages brings about numerous opportunities for growth, they seek to open spaces for exciting cultural experiences in collaboration with members of the community. This, they claim, may serve to bridge the social divides that may exist at the community level. To this, we would add, that a curriculum that departs from the expressed needs of the learners is more likely to help those learners become successful at communicating in the second or foreign language that they are learning; skills that may as well serve them for job and money related purposes or any other motivations they may have. The Caracola Creative Languages founders understand this and have managed to translate it into a curriculum that responds to their learners.

Our idea is not to stop individuals from choosing EFL or to shut down ESP-oriented programs but to call for the diversification of EFL curricula so that it includes various motivations and to educate individuals to become conscious of their own motivations and critical towards circulating discourses connecting English to profit, career advancement and success. One good starting point to initiate dialogue in the EFL classroom is the question, *"How might English be a language that allows us to be more, rather than just to have more?"* (Pennycook, 2000, p. 220). EFL needs more critical language teachers and learners capable of taking actions towards diversifying EFL curricula.

Fueled by the discourses in advertisements and the pressures from the government-supported foundations, English itself and EFL programs in Costa Rica are being commodified, where individuals' fears

of a competitive job market take priority over their aspirations to travel, to get to know the world, to keep and maintain friendships with native and nonnative speakers of English, to expand their perspectives of the world, to set up their own business, to take on a personal challenge or simply to learn more about a foreign language. A program that excludes non-money related motivations runs the risk of leaving little to no room for discussions around diversity, equity and justice; for the development of critical thinking skills; for activism around important current issues such as immigration and human rights. Programs that mostly focus on work skills, as seen in the textbook and testing practices favored in *Inglés para Todos*, exclude topics such as social entrepreneurship, as it responds to the needs of the industry and not to studies that focus on prospective students and their various motivations to engage in EFL learning. Interestingly, at the national level, needs analyses seem to be done on the industry and corporate sector and not on the learners themselves. Governments and universities seem to operate upon the premise that serving corporations equals serving people's needs, dreams and aspirations.

Conclusions

This discussion is grounded in the Costa Rican context, specifically that in higher education. The consequences of monetary and career-based motives for studying English are likely to apply to primary and secondary school settings as well, but this is outside the scope of this paper. We speculate that the issues raised here are repeated all over Latin America, but again, this discussion focuses the analysis on the situation in Costa Rica. We also acknowledge that is paper is not an in-depth study of ideology in any given institution's EFL program. It is merely a scholarly reflection on and critique of the current state of affairs in EFL teaching in higher education in Costa Rica. In this article, we explored international literature on the proliferation of English for monetary and career-based motivations and then linked this literature to the unique context of Costa Rica, with a small set of data serving to illustrate some of the issues raised.

By engaging in the actions described in the section above, the satisfaction many teachers may feel is to know that while they are part of the teaching force of one of the most powerful languages in the world, they did not succumb to a prescribed curriculum without critical examination of alternative perspectives to those offered by the dominant discourses. Opposition to the current commodification of EFL teaching and learning and its reduction to profit and career purposes is

a big challenge that is already long overdue. The ideology –real and imagined– that English serves the "broadest possible communication" and that "it is an instrumental 'necessity' for getting a good job" (Gal, 2012, p. 39) is so much a part of our everyday lives that it becomes unthinkable for society to start operating otherwise. But in hindsight, every effort counts in changing a landscape of foreign language teaching that still puts the market at the center of human activity and leaves humans and their diverse reasons for engaging in EFL learning at the periphery.

Our discussion aims to articulate a problem in the field of EFL teaching and learning; namely, that we should not allow the study of English to be defined entirely by the demands of the market. There are many reasons to study a language and by tapping into or even cultivating these multiple reasons for English learning, we have the opportunity to engage learners in dynamic, current, authentic language teaching and learning.

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