

Does a quantifiable difference exist in pre- and post-EFL regional and national identities?¹

¿Existe una diferencia cuantificable en las identidades regionales y nacionales antes y después de EFL?

Existe uma diferença quantificável nas identidades regionais e nacionais pré e pós-EFL?

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Abstract

Studies regarding second language learning and national identity tend to, understandably, use small scale ethnographic studies of individuals who have participated in English as a Foreign Language education. Through Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, this article asks whether a large-scale quantitative survey can demonstrate whether there exists a quantifiable difference in the local and national identities of regional Colombians who have had either no EFL education or different years of EFL exposure. A survey was distributed to 1000 people in the city of Ibagué with categories of 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 years of EFL education, asking how strongly they associated as Colombians and Tolimenses (the state) and whether they feel that learning English has positively or negatively affected these identities. The results show statistically significant differences in the self-identification in both state and national identities with both identities being valued less after exposure to EFL. English as a foreign language education does have a quantifiable effect on Colombian national and Tolimense regional identities, and the value given to both identities is reduced over exposure to EFL but the change does not enter the range of negative association with the local identities at any point. Thus, the figures argue that identity change does take place, but the attitudes towards the identities are still relatively positive.

Keywords: foreign language learning, language and identity, national identity, regional identity

Resumen

Los estudios sobre el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma y la identidad nacional tienden, comprensiblemente, a utilizar estudios etnográficos a pequeña escala de personas que han participado en la educación de inglés como lengua extranjera. A través de la Teoría de la Identidad Social de Tajfel, este artículo pregunta si una encuesta cuantitativa a gran escala puede demostrar si existe una diferencia cuantificable en las identidades locales y nacionales de los colombianos regionales que no han tenido educación EFL o diferentes años de exposición a EFL. Se distribuyó una encuesta a 1000 personas de la ciudad de Ibagué con categorías de 0, 1, 2, 3 y 4 años de educación EFL, preguntando qué tan fuertemente se asociaban como colombianos y tolimeses (el estado) y si sentían que aprender inglés tiene afectó positiva o negativamente a estas identidades. Los resultados muestran diferencias estadísticamente significativas en la autoidentificación tanto en las identidades estatales como nacionales, siendo ambas identidades menos valoradas después de la exposición a EFL. La educación en inglés como lengua extranjera sí tiene un efecto cuantificable en las identidades nacional colombiana y regional tolimese, y el valor otorgado a ambas identidades se reduce por la exposición a EFL, pero el cambio no entra en el rango de asociación negativa con las identidades locales en ningún momento. Por lo tanto, las figuras argumentan que se produce un cambio de identidad, pero las actitudes hacia las identidades siguen siendo relativamente positivas.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, lengua e identidad, identidad nacional, identidad regional

Resumo

Estudos sobre aprendizagem de segunda língua e identidade nacional tendem, compreensivelmente, a usar estudos etnográficos em pequena escala de indivíduos que participaram do ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira. Através da Teoria da Identidade Social de Tajfel, este artigo pergunta se uma pesquisa quantitativa em larga escala pode demonstrar se existe uma diferença quantificável nas identidades locais e nacionais de colombianos regionais que não tiveram educação EFL ou diferentes anos de exposição a EFL. Uma pesquisa foi distribuída para 1.000 pessoas na cidade de Ibagué com categorias de 0,1,2, 3 e 4 anos de educação EFL, perguntando o quão fortemente eles se associam como colombianos e tolimeses (o estado) e se eles sentem que aprender inglês tem afetou positiva ou negativamente essas identidades. Os resultados mostram diferenças estatisticamente significativas na auto-identificação nas identidades estaduais e nacionais, com

ambas as identidades sendo menos valorizadas após a exposição ao EFL. O ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira tem um efeito quantificável nas identidades nacionais colombianas e regionais tolimeses, e o valor dado a ambas as identidades é reduzido em relação à exposição ao EFL, mas a mudança não entra na faixa de associação negativa com as identidades locais em nenhum momento. Assim, os números argumentam que a mudança de identidade ocorre, mas as atitudes em relação às identidades ainda são relativamente positivas.

Palavras-chave: aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras, língua e identidade, identidade nacional, identidade regional

Introduction

Second language education is a political fact around the world. The benefits of learning a foreign language in terms of cognitive processes have been exhorted by pedagogists, psychologists and the like, along with economic benefits by governments (Zwisler, 2018a, p. 141). However, despite the expounded benefits of second language education, doubt arises not only among the lay population but among academics as well who argue that second language education may act as a colonial tool of foreign powers, particularly that foreign language pedagogy (especially in the case of EFL) may be ignorant of the local context or that it actively seeks to colonize the values of the country. These are not unfounded fears as the researchers have demonstrated that classroom practices, particularly where identity comes into play, can have a strong effect on the motivation of the learners.

Ellis (2007) mentions that learning communities are heterogenous, whereas as Norton (2013) mentions that identity practices and resources are mutually constitutive, thus indicating that identity processes are unique to the individual context of the learner and that as such each individual learning community and its resources will construct the learners' identity differently. We accept this reposition entirely, not only as researchers but as (former) language learners we have experienced it. However, in order to either assuage fears of negative effects on national identity through colonialising classes or to confirm these fears, it is necessary to look above the level of the individual learning community and analyse language learning and regional and national identities.

In terms of the relationship between foreign language learning and national identity, foreign language education has been shown to have effects on first language identity. Numerous studies in study abroad contexts (e.g. Wilkinson, 1998; Pellegrino, 2005) have shown that exposure to foreign language learning can increase the value of the home national identity, whereas Zwisler (2018b) indicates that in the case of foreign language education in the home country, there is a sense among students that there is a change in worth of the national identity, but that further research is

needed in order to classify that change as positive or negative. Studies regarding second language, second language education and identity are numerous and tend to be small-scale qualitative studies, which are extremely effective at analysing the minutiae of the individual and identity. These studies have made great advances in terms of how we understand the interplay of discourse, power, and code choice, with many of these becoming cornerstones in modern sociolinguistic theory. However, modern research discourse in the social sciences acknowledges that to truly understand a phenomenon one cannot limit oneself to a single methodological framework, be it qualitative or quantitative. And in this vein, the aim of this article is to add to the growing number of quantitative studies regarding second language, second language education, and identity. Thus, this article asks whether the change can be measured at through a large-scale study with results that can be extrapolated in general, and whether there is a quantifiable difference in national and regional identity pre-EFL and post-EFL which can address the concerns of academics (or at least contribute numbers to the debate).

Literature Review

Identity can be broadly understood as the way a person understands their relationship to other people and the world (Norton & McKinney, 2011). While it is commonly thought that who we are is static, the reality is that identity is a dynamic construct, and we are constantly constructing who we are and how others see us. Modern theories of identity are built upon Tajfel's 1978 'Social Identity Theory', a theory that argues a view of identity being divisible in two parts: a personal identity and a social identity. Personal identity is formed from qualities that are unique to the individual such as physique and personality, whereas social identity is formed from one's self concept as understood from one's participation in and knowledge of social circles. Later socio-psychological theories build on this to create a more complex image of identity. Importantly among those are Communicative Identity Theory and Identity Process Theory. Communicative Identity Theory (Hecht, 2001) argues that individuals possess not two but four levels of identity: a personal identity composed of self-concepts, enacted identity (identity expressed through language), a relational identity (an identity relative to others), and a communal identity defined through group membership. Identity Process Theory refutes both arguing that an individual's identity is a dynamic social product of the interaction between memory, consciousness, and organized construal with the physical and societal processes that constitute the social context (Breakwell, 2010).

All three of the previous theories work on the idea of 'attribution'. Attribution theory (Weiner, 1987) states that we classify attribute people's behaviour to either qualities or the demands of the situation. Attribution comes out of our need to understand and control the world around us (Padilla, 1999). All social groups form attributions according to the experiences and situational demands of the attributer. It is the creation of repeated attributes that allows for the identification of other groups via schemata. Schemata are the collections of attributes that form the basic 'ideas or forms' of our concepts of groups or things (Lloyd & Boyd, 2014). Positioning theory (Andreoulli, 2010) develops upon this idea stating that during discourse, both interacting parties use the mutually recognised attributes, schemata, and the reputations/opinions attached to these attributes in order to position each other relative to social groups that carry these attributes and flaunt different positions in relation to other groups (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Identity then is the relative positioning of groups in reference to each other using socially recognised attributes, schemata, and reputations.

All modern theories agree that identities are far from stable and are under constant pressures from social changes that affect personal distinctiveness and self-esteem (Jaspal, 2009), and that there is substantial common ground between all working models of social identity. Chiefly among these is the constructivist idea that identity is constructed through discourse and does not precede it (Drummond & Schleef, 2016). This means that interlocutors use the discursive and semiotic recourses available to them to shape the way the other sees them (Baxter, 2016). Bauman (2001) adds that identity is the situated outcome of rhetorical and interpretive process where interlocutors make motivated selections from shared semiotic resources. Pavlenko and Blackridge (2004) see identity as a social, discursive, and narrative strategy used to claim social spaces through the cohesion of often disparate personal narratives which must be performed through discourse. Norris (2007) builds upon this, adding that identity is constantly and interactively constructed where individuals' identities are claimed, contested, and reconstructed in reference to each other in interaction.

National identity is a social identity in that it has been found to be enacted in relation to other ones. The pivotal argument in modern studies on national identity is that of Anderson (1983), who argues that nations are imagined communities i.e., groups which do not have a firm existence but exist as the expression of certain behaviours and attitudes. The nation, according to Renan (1982), is a site of continuous construction by individuals forming competing groups, and as such, national identity is neither stable nor objective in who it represents. As such, national identity is not a personal identity in the Tajfel sense as it is not fixed at both but requires ongoing construction

and performance through the repetition of recognised activities and histories (Billig, 1995), this is even the case of those who are born, raised and educated in a single region from a single country as even these people must nurture their national identity through recognised symbols and activities (Block, 2007). As such, national identity has no essentialist substance but is a social identity requiring ongoing discursive construction between agents using publicly recognised discourse and socialization (Wodak et al., 1999). Language choice is an important factor in these performances and symbols, as the choice of a language signals allegiance to a certain group and its history (Zwisler, 2018a). Attitudes and language identities in favour of one language signal political allegiance and must not be understood as the inherent strengths of any given language (Rajagopalan, 2001; Byram, 2006). Language laws and policy are choices made by dominant groups that reflect choices favouring one version of history or another, and one group over another (Joseph, 2004).

Block (2007) and Norton (2011) argue that language learners enact new identities based on the imagined community of the target language. Recent research on language and second language acquisition tends to focus on the new identities that learners create with or in relation to the target language community (e.g., Block, 2007), being good language learners (Miller, 2007), investment (Norton, 2013) and intersectional identities language learning (Block & Corona, 2016). In terms of foreign language learning and its relation to national identity, we see studies in foreign languages learnt abroad and foreign languages learnt in the home country. In the case of study abroad contexts, Polanyi (1995), Twombly (1995), and Talburt and Stewart (1999) note that study abroad students use an increased value of their national identity as a means of overcoming uncomfortable foreign situations. Acton and Walker de Felix (1986), Laubscher (1994), Bacon (1995), Wilkinson (1998, p. 23), Pellegrino (2005), Kinginger and Whitworth (2005), and Isabelli-Garcia (2006) observe that study abroad programmes may also increase ethnocentrism as the student comes to value their nationality over others as a result of the experience abroad. In terms of studies of foreign language learning in the home country and identity, Zwisler (2018a) notes that there is a general sense of change in national and regional identities and that participant comments appear to indicate a positive appraisal of both national and regional identities, but that further research was needed to determine the true nature of the change. That is what this study will do.

Methodology

Methodological overview and instrument

The idea behind the study was to determine whether there exists any change in national and regional identity that can be demonstrated in a large-scale sample of a population. The chosen theory with which to work this question is that of Social Identity Theory. In particular, the notion that people retain identities that are favourable to them and will not identify with groups that are unfavourable (Tajfel, 1978). Thus, if EFL classes have a negative effect on national and local identity, one should see a departure a movement away from strong attachment to these local identities over the different periods of EFL class exposure, and the opposite should be true if the effect is positive. As such a survey was devised to test the years of exposure to EFL classes against 10 questions with a Likert-type scale. The Likert-type scale ranked positions from 1 (absolute disagreement) to 9 (absolute agreement), using a larger than normal scale to gain finer definition in responses and reduce their deviation.

Context and sample

The study took place in the central Colombian city of Ibagué, located in the department of Tolima. Ibagué has an estimated population of 553 600 and Tolima a population of 1 400 000 (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, 2005). Ibagué has several EFL institutes –one at the local public university, three at private universities, and a variety of local private language institutes, as such foreign language learning (and, in particular, EFL) is not an uncommon commodity in Ibagué.

The sampling method used was a convenience quota sample. The sample used was of 1000 people which, given Ibagué's population, provides a margin of error of 4.069% at a confidence level of 99%. The sample was divided into years of EFL exposure for distribution, with the levels of exposure being 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 years (thus giving 200 surveys per level of exposure) of adult EFL learning. This was further divided into equal female and male groupings, giving 10 divisions in total. To remove age as a factor, it was decided to keep all participants between 18 to 30 years of age (population parameter: 16.44%).

Distribution

The surveys were distributed by the two researchers and 18 additional students trained in survey distribution during October, 2021. The surveys were distributed on

the streets of Ibagué in key strategic public places with high pedestrian traffic on the weekends (the city centre, the commercial district and the main street which becomes a pedestrian walkway on Sundays). Participants were asked if they were willing to participate and were given an explanation form of the project. Those willing to participate were asked how much EFL education they had received during their lives outside of the mandatory high schooling requirements. Those that fell into the exposure category of the sample were given the survey, while those with different exposure levels were thanked for their disposition to help and turned away.

Data Analysis

The surveys were entered into the programme SPSS 22. While Likert-type data is considered ordinal data, we analysed our data as interval data as explained in Sullivan & Artino (2013). Descriptive data for the Likert items was prepared, in addition to calculating any statistical significance between EFL exposure time and Likert scores through Chi-squares. Additionally, demographic variables (gender, social class and level of education) were checked for statistical significance against the Likert items.

Results

Demographics of the participants

While the surveys were divided evenly by gender and by years of exposure to EFL classes, three other demographic variables were asked: age, level of education, and social class. The mean age for the participants was 23. For level of education, participants were asked to mark the box that showed that maximum level of education achieved (with an 'other' box, just in case). The education levels of the participants can be seen in Figure 1 below.

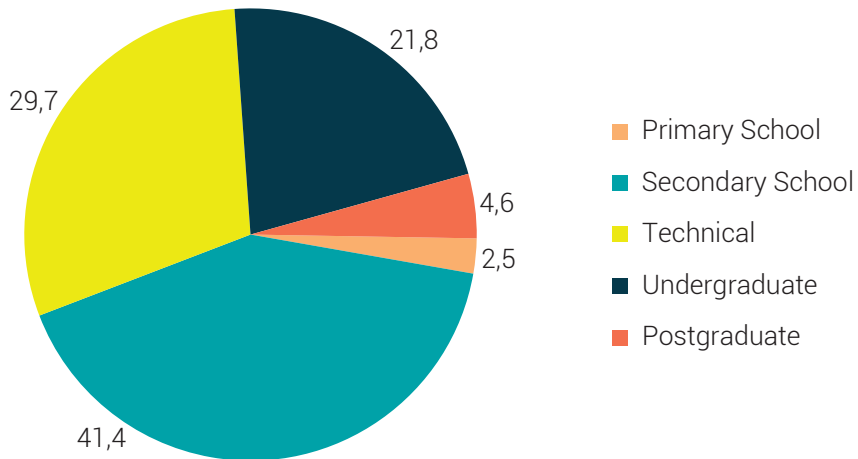


Figure 1. The maximum level of education achieved by the participants.

Source: own elaboration.

Social class in Colombia is managed under a government implemented system called 'estratos sociales' (social strata). This system divides the society into six strata which determines how much a household pays for public utilities and education – either receiving a subsidy or paying more. Social strata are determined according to the design of the house, its location in the city, the infrastructure of the city in question, the mean income of the neighbour, among other factors. Under this system, strata 1 and 2 are considered the lower classes, 3 and 4 the middle class, and 5 and 6 the upper classes. The survey for this project asked the participant's stratum. The participants' social strata can be seen in Figure 2 below (which quite fortunately matches the census data for social strata in Ibagué).

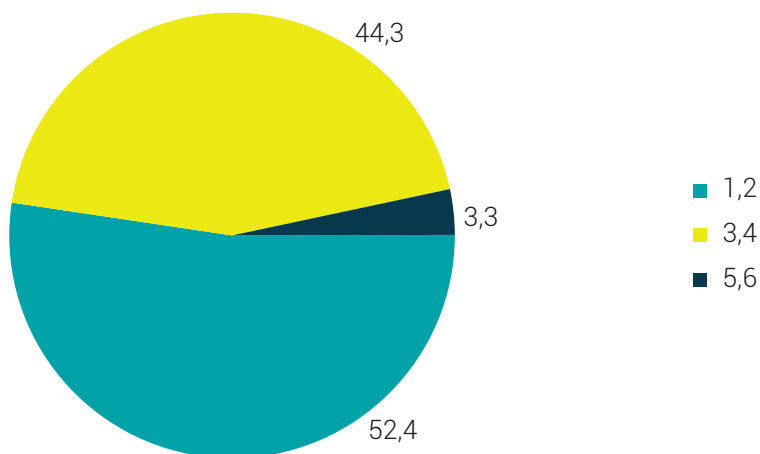


Figure 2. Social strata of the participants.

Source: own elaboration.

It is important to note that gender, social class, and level of education did not affect the results shown below. Statistical testing was done on all the social demographic variables, and none were found to be statistically significant factors in any of the results. This indicates that, at least in Ibagué, the intersectionality of variables such as gender, social class and level of education are not macro factors in any change in national or regional identity in terms of EFL education. Thus, the sections that follow analyse the Likert scale only in terms of years of EFL education taken outside of high schooling.

Self-identification as Colombian and Tolimense

The first statement on the psychometric scale was 'I identify strongly as a Colombian'. The overall mean for this item is 8.29 (SD= 1.47), thus showing a strong sense of national identity in the sample. Analysis of years of EFL against this sense of national identity shows a slight move towards neutrality/disagreement which, while statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ using a Chi-square, does not exit the 8-9 range ('I absolutely agree'). Self-identification with the departmental identity (Tolimense) shows a similar but stronger trend. The overall average is lower ($\bar{x} = 7.26$, SD = 2.52), however the move towards neutrality/disagreement is also evident, though somewhat stronger than the trend seen in national identity. Analysis against the years of EFL shows the result to also be statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. This suggests that EFL classes weaken attachment to departmental identity slightly over time. Figure 3 below shows the trend towards neutrality/disagreement, plotting the mean score per EFL year (note: statistical significance was not calculated using means).

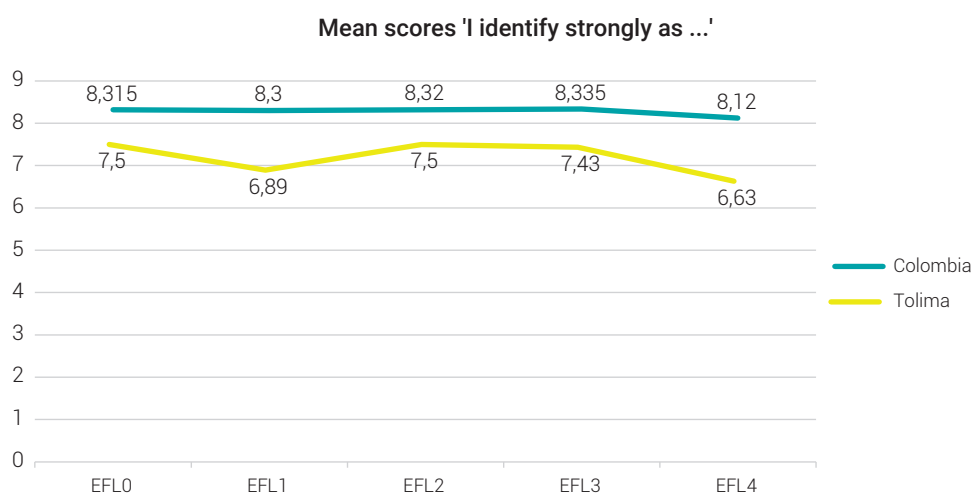


Figure 3. The mean scores for 'I identify strongly as Colombian/Tolimense' per year of EFL instruction outside of mandatory high school classes.

‘I compare my country/department favourably with other countries/departments’

The next two items on the scale were ‘I compare my country favourably with other countries’ and ‘I compare my department favourably to other departments’. The first of the two items produce a mean score of 6.61 (SD = 2.32), that is slightly in agreement with the proposition. There is, however, no statistically significant relationship between the item and the years of EFL exposure at $p < 0.01$; thus, suggesting a general trend in Ibagué to compare Colombia favourably to other countries regardless of EFL education. The latter of the two items produces a mean score of 6.63 (SD = 2.19) and does have a statistically significant relationship with the EFL years at $p < 0.01$. What we see is a dramatic movement towards neutrality/disagreement over the course of EFL exposure, with the 0 years mean being 7.07 (‘I agree’) and moving to 5.38 (I neither agree nor disagree) on the fourth year. This shows that prior to adult EFL classes, there exists a general disposition to compare Tolima favourably to other departments in Colombia, however as the individual has more EFL class this opinion shifts towards neutrality/disagreement. Figure 4 below shows this trend via mean scores per year of EFL.

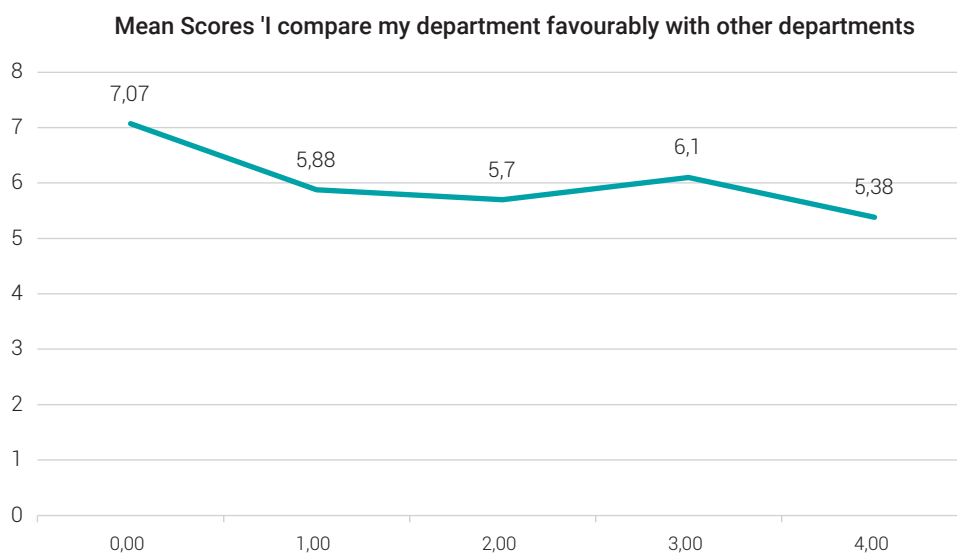


Figure 4. Plot of the mean scores per year of EFL education outside of high school for the Likert item ‘I compare my department favourably with other departments’.

English Learning and favourable/unfavourable positions

The final four items on the scale were 'Learning English has changed how I see being Colombian/Tolimense positively/negatively'. In the case of 'Learning English has changed how I see being Colombian positively', there is a mean score of 6.25 (SD = 2.47) which falls into the category of 'I slightly agree'. There is no statistically significant relationship between this Likert item and the years of EFL category at $p < 0.01$. The same occurs in 'Learning English has changed how I see being Tolimense positively', here we find a mean score of 5.76 (SD = 2.53) which is in the 'I neither agree nor disagree' range limiting 'I slightly agree'. Again, there is no statistically significant relationship between this Likert item and the years of EFL category. In the case of national identity, it can be seen that the participants believe that learning English as a foreign language outside of mandatory high schooling positively affects how they see their nationality regardless of the time they have spent studying EFL. However, in the case of departmental identity, the opinion is only slightly above neutral, indicating more a sense of indecision on the matter than agreement on positive change.

The converse questions were asked for clarity and produced, as is to be expected, scores in the range of 'I disagree'. 'Learning English has changed how I see being Colombian negatively' produced a mean score of 3.03 (SD = 2.27) and 'Learning English has changed how I see being Tolimense negatively' a mean of 2.98 (SD = 2.17). However, contrary to the prior two Likert items, these two items do have a statistically significant relationship to the years of EFL category (both at $p < 0.01$), in both cases, there is an initial disagreement with the preposition which moves towards neutrality over the course of the EFL years. Yet, at all times, the mean values per year stay within 0.5 of 3 (I disagree), indicating that while there is a statistically significant slight shift, the overall opinion itself remains the same. Figure 5 below shows this trend via means.

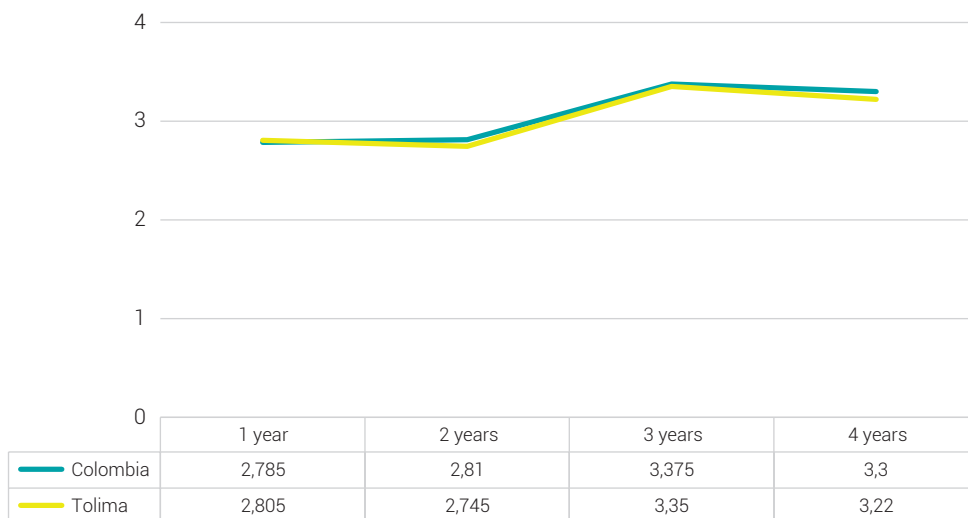


Figure 5. Mean scores per year of EFL outside of high school for 'Learning English has changed how I see being Colombian/Tolimense negatively'.

Discussion

Does a quantifiable difference exist in pre- and post-EFL regional and national identities? Yes, there is. In both cases there is a statistically significant, measurable difference in the attachment to both national and regional identities after exposure to EFL classes. We see a reduction in the attachment to both identities and this, in the Tajfel sense of Social Identity, is indicative of a difference and change in the social identity. Thus, it is correct to say that EFL education does impact national and regional identities, and that it 'negatively' affects both identities. However, this change is more complex than just a simple move towards Likert neutrality/disagreement. The other Likert items provide a more complex picture of how national and regional identity interplay with foreign language learning in the long term.

Surprisingly, intersectionality with the significant social variables of gender, level of education and social class is not a factor in any change to national or regional identity resulting from EFL education. While Ellis does make a strong point about the heterogeneity of communities and how this affects the local construction of identities, at a statistical level this does not seem to be a factor in national and regional identity. Gender, education level and (importantly) social class did not provide any statistical difference to any of the Likert items. While small localised communities may have different constitutions that affect interaction and the portrayal/creation of identities in their respective language institutes, individual demographic factors do not seem to

have an effect on the large, populational scale. Thus, it can be argued that national and regional identities are constructed apart from gender, class, and education level –or at least in the case of EFL and regional Colombia. It should be noted, however, that ethnicity was not a factor in the study. Colombia is a multicultural country and there are indeed regions where ethnic identity is a point of contention, however that is not the case in Ibagué which is a principally mestizo population. Thus, for the sake of this study, any resultant change in values is a direct result of EFL and not of the combination or interplay of other variables.

With the mean trend for 'I strongly identify as Colombian' sloping slightly towards neutrality/negativity and the relationship between EFL exposure and this preposition being statistically significant, it is tempting to argue that learning English decreases attachment to national identity and, as such, changes identity. While this is statistically true, it must also be considered that at no point do the mean scores leave the 8-9 range of 'I absolutely agree'. This is more so the case when we consider the results of the preposition 'Learning English has changed how I see being Colombian negatively' that, although producing results in disagreement, this disagreement moves towards neutrality/negativity over the course of 4 years. We see in both cases a move towards neutrality/negativity – Colombian national identity moves slightly towards neutrality/negativity as does the disagreement that learning English negatively affects how Colombian identity is seen. As such, based on these two Likert results, we can effectively argue that learning English as a foreign language does affect national identity and does so 'negatively'.

However, what we here find is a complex contradiction between belief and actual identity process. There was a mean score in favour of the preposition 'Learning English has changed how I see being Colombian positively' (6.25). This score was static, having no statistical relationship to the EFL variable. As such, it represents a general position that learning English as a foreign language produces a 'positive' change in national identity. Yet, as just mentioned, this contradicts the aforementioned two Likert items that do show statistical significance. In practice, then, we find a move towards neutrality i.e., a lessening of the attachment to the national identity (be it though ever so slightly). This in Social Identity theory signals a change in the social identity of nationality, which contradicts the general expectation that EFL should positively affect how this national identity is seen. Thus, the results agree with Zwisler's (2018) assertion that EFL classes affect nation identity in Colombia but not in the positive way he predicted. While Zwisler predicted, using triangulation of values, that the effect would be positive, the direct questioning here indicates that the effect is slightly negative, despite what the participants themselves expected from EFL education.

These results also indicate the contrary to the experiences noted by the study abroad students mentioned in Polanyi (1995), Twombly (1995), and Talburt and Stewart (1999), foreign language education does not strengthen national identity or regional identity. Furthermore, where Acton and Walker de Felix (1986), Laubscher (1994), Bacon (1995), Wilkinson (1998), Pellegrino (2005), Kinginger and Whitworth (2005), and Isabelli-Garcia (2006) observe an increase in ethnocentrism in students that study languages abroad, the opposite is also true in this study as well. Whereas study abroad students recur to their national identity as a means of overcoming uncomfortable situations, this is not a luxury afforded to students who are studying a foreign language in the home country as they are, obviously, immersed in their national identity via the national group. Thus, where students recur to the national group and its symbols as a means of shielding themselves from unwanted situations abroad, students in the home country environment cannot do so, and as such we find a (very slight) lessening in the attachment to the national identity.

Regional identity follows a pattern that, while similar, requires a different analysis. Regional identity, i.e., the identity as belonging to one's local political unit (in this case, the department of Tolima), has yet to be thoroughly examined in terms of foreign language education. Zwislser (2018) touched on it, and triangulated increased attachment to regional identity. However, this was not the case in this study. The first relevant Likert item 'I identify strongly as Tolimense' showed a marked and statistically significant shift towards neutrality. While the score remained in the 'I agree' side of the scale – thus indicating that the participants do not shed their regional identity – there is a movement towards neutrality that suggests that the attachment to the identity and its symbols wanes. This in the Tajfel Social Identity suggests a reconsideration of the ingroup and a possible change in the social identity, but not a change great enough to leave the group in favour of another.

This argument is further compounded by two additional Likert items – 'I compare my department favourably to other departments' and 'Learning English has negatively affected how I see being Tolimense'. In the case of the prior item, there is a mean movement from 'I agree' to 'I neither agree nor disagree' which is telling in the Social Identity sense. Social Identity requires the favourable comparison of the ingroup to outgroups and in this case, there is a marked movement from this favourable comparison to lack of agreement on the comparison. This also sits with the movement towards neutrality seen in the later mentioned item. While starting in clear disagreement, there is movement towards neutrality that suggests over time, the 'negative' effect of foreign language learning is considered (although still rejected). Furthermore, the item 'Learning English has positively affected how I see being

Tolimense' never produced a statistically significant relationship to EFL exposure but did produce a mean score in the 'I neither agree nor disagree' range. This compound of Likert statistical relationships to EFL exposure and general means indicate the learning English as a foreign language does reduce attachment to regional identity and that there is a change in identity. However, identity appraisal of regional identity remains positive, so a discarding of the prior regional identity in favour of another identity is not warranted. It appears to be the case that the regional identity is re-evaluated, and while the attachment to the identity remains, it is lessened.

The difference in change between national and local identities is also interesting. What appears to be the case is that regional identities are more strongly re-evaluated than national identities in the classroom. It would seem to be the case that the symbolic resources attached to national identity supersede regional identity and are more strongly repeated than those of regional identity in the foreign language education environment. In this environment, the symbols and discourse associated with the regional identity are positioned differently to national symbols. The classroom must present the two identities as separate entities unrelated enough for the regional identity to be weighed as a different set of (un)favourable attributes (in the Weiner sense) by the students and for students to judge their discursive elements differently.

The question as to why this occurs remains though in terms of classroom practice. What are the practices that lead to this change in identity positions? If we accept Norton's argument that identity practice and resources mutually constitute each other, it would appear that the practice in the classroom and the resources used by the classroom result in a reworking/re-evaluation of the discursive and historical resources of the nation. The identity of the classroom is, then, that of a place of national and regional re-evaluation – not of imposition as has been argued by some academics. For, if the identity of the classroom was that of imposition, one would see a dramatic move towards disagreement in the psychometric scale, but this was not the case. What we see is a slight move towards neutrality that could be inferred as maturity in position coming from an analysis of the discursive elements present in other national and regional discourse such as would be present in a foreign language classroom. Even arguing this, there remains a point which requires further study, with different instruments – if learning communities are heterogenous and a variety of different pedagogical models are in use (as is the case in Ibagué, what are the common factors in classroom discourse that result in the change in identity value seen in this research?

Conclusion

English as a foreign language education does have a quantifiable effect on Colombian national and Tolimense regional identities. In terms of the debate mentioned in the introduction about foreign language education negatively affecting local identities, this study would seem, on the surface, to confirm the academics' fears. However, the change does not enter the range of negative association with the local identities at any point. Thus, the figures argue in favour of an identity change, but the attitudes towards the identities are still relatively positive. It must be clarified though that we do not see the change in national and regional identities as an inherently positive or negative phenomenon. National and regional identities in politically monolingual countries change over time with or without foreign language education. As social identities, they are under constant evaluation as the symbols and semiotic resources attached to them as both ingroups and outgroups evaluate their use and appropriateness.

Declaration of Interest Statement

Both authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in the publication of this article and that the article represents no financial benefit.

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