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in English Language Teaching in Mexico: Research of Graduate Students

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Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés

Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching in Mexico: Research of Graduate Students

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UNIVERSIDAD DE GUANAJUATO

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INTRODUCTION

The book titled *Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching in Mexico: Research of Graduate Students* presents original studies carried out by five early-career researchers and English as a foreign language (EFL) practitioners who conducted applied research in a variety of educational contexts as part of the thesis requirements of the MA program in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the University of Guanajuato. These research projects were carried out with the aim of understanding issues related to the field of applied linguistics and ELT and providing solutions by adopting problem-solving approaches. This book consists of five chapters which address a range of relevant topics in ELT in Mexico, including the interplay among learner identity, learner socialization and language learning; the relationship between poetry and pronunciation accuracy in EFL classes; growing up as multilinguals; perceptions regarding a constructivist teaching approach in a private school; and the role of emotions related to speaking. The relevance of this book is then twofold. By having conducted research in natural settings, the chapters offer findings and pedagogical implications which are of great significance to other MA students in similar programs who want to research in this area. As well, these studies draw attention to an array of contextual, cognitive, and pedagogical factors in language teaching and learning. Each chapter was peer reviewed by a scholar from the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato and another one outside our university.

In the next section, we provide our readers with summaries of each thesis which are intended to guide the reader with an overview of a diversity of issues and topics presented in this book.

Our first chapter is titled "Exploring Language Learner Identity, Learner Socialization and Language Learning in Young English Language Learners". Ana Guadalupe Avilés Hernández (University of Guanajuato) examines the three areas of identity, learning and socialization within the field of ELT. The central purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the factors which affect learner identity and how these factors influence learning of young English students.

Another author is Neil Blomquist, from the University of Guanajuato. His chapter "The Effect of Teacher-Authored Poetry on the Pronunciation of the Voiced Dental Fricative" focused on the effect of poetry on learning the pronunciation of individual phonemes, specifically the voiced dental fricative phoneme /ð/. This quantitative study examines the challenges of teaching English pronun-

ciation, and how the use of poetry can help to fill the gaps in theory and practice in the area of pronunciation acquisition.

Our next chapter, "Exploring Bi-Multilingualism in a Multicultural Environment in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, in Central Mexico", is from Alma Judith Mendoza, an English teacher and coordinator of a bilingual school, Escuela Bilingüe José Vasconcelos. In her study, she looked at what growing up with two or more languages implies in order to understand the complexities of being bi-multilingual. Her qualitative research focused on how bi-multilingual children live the process of acquiring two or more languages and their identity formation.

Elizabeth Flores Villalobos offers the readers her research titled "Perceptions of a Constructivist Approach in a Bilingual School Community". The author studied how teachers, coordinators and a principal perceived and utilized constructivism as a teaching approach in a private bilingual institution (Centro Educativo Alexander Bain) in central Mexico. The purpose was to understand the participants' challenges, how they faced the difficulties while implementing a constructivist approach, and how they made sense of this approach. This information was helpful in knowing how to address the constructivist approach from the inside of this educational community.

Our final chapter is "Emotions in the Development of Speaking Skills of EFL Students" by Darcy Elizabeth Stock from the University of Guanajuato. She examines how learner emotions are factors that shape the development of speaking skills. By having collected interactional and perceptual data, this chapter shows the strong relationship between learners' emotions and speaking skills. This in-depth study provides pedagogical implications for teachers to have in mind while teaching and developing their students' oral skills.

In conclusion we hope you enjoy reading these five chapters which illustrate the work of our MA students. In addition, we would like to congratulate these five authors for submitting their work for this book. The book provides the readers summaries of five theses that exemplify our MA program in Applied Linguistics in ELT. The chapters portray a range of topics, and research methodologies carried out in the State of Guanajuato. This representation is of value for our profession in Guanajuato, other parts of Mexico and the world. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the University of Guanajuato, the Division of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato for their support in this book.

Irasema Mora-Pablo
Edgar Emmanuell Garcia-Ponce

EXPLORING LANGUAGE LEARNER IDENTITY, LEARNER SOCIALIZATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN YOUNG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Ana Guadalupe Avilés Hernández
Universidad de Guanajuato

Introduction

This research analyses the relationship between learner identity and interaction in the second language classroom, as well as the impact it has on language learning processes.

The central purpose is to examine the importance of learner interaction in the process of language learning and young learner interaction. It is relevant to mention that the role of learners' identity is crucial for their learning process. Confidence and empowerment as language learners are components that build a strong sense of identity, which helps them to socialize within the language classroom.

Background and Context of the Study

The area under investigation is characterized by an extensive body of previous research. The ample research work that can be found in the literature (Anwaruddin, 2012; Block, 2013; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, 2008; Canagarajah, 2004; Jenkins, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Norton, 2008; Ushioda & Dornyei; 2009) serves as the basis for discussing relevant theories and views regarding identity formation and language learning. By understanding basic concepts about identity, its connection with language learning can be more clearly explored through the consideration of the ways in which mental operations function. The importance of the present study relies on the issue that language learners and teachers might not be entirely conscious about the relevance that learner identity represents in language learning.

Identification of Gaps

Previous research in the area (Deaux & Burke, 2010; Jenkins, 2004; Norton, 2008; Stets, 2005; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Ushioda & Dornyei, 2009) has generated theories, principles and models about identity development and language

learning. However, a gap in the field seems to be a need for accentuating the importance of learner identity in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Language teachers have a privileged position within the classroom, they represent a role model for learners, and they can enhance learners' identity in a positive way. Therefore, teachers can pay attention to the issues that surround learner identity, language learning and socialization processes within the language classroom. Emphasizing on the powerful position of teachers can help to bridge the gap between the need for a better learner identity formation and its relationship with learners' interaction in the classroom.

Toohey and Norton (2011) suggest that "pedagogical decisions can reinforce subordinate student identities, and limit students' access not only to language learning opportunities, but also to their imagination of more desirable identities" (p. 430). Attending to the need for learner identity enhancement, teachers can improve the language learning experiences of their students by manifesting their understanding of theoretical knowledge. Tsui (2012) suggests that practical knowledge "can be understood by examining teachers' everyday practice and the thinking behind it" (p. 18). Providing teachers with an overview of the procedures and key elements underpinning this research might give them valuable tools for implementing an array of ideas in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the possible factors that may affect the learner identity formation process of young English language learners. The research question that guided this research is the following:

> What are the factors that affect young English language learners' identity formation process?

In order to explore the research question, a qualitative paradigm to research was followed, together with ethnography implemented as the method in the research. As data gathering techniques, I used a group interview, five-minute papers and a research journal.

Literature Review

The purpose of this research is to examine such aspects of the process of early identity formation and to analyze their role in language learning. In this chapter the reader will be presented with a critical review of concepts related to the main topics.

Concepts of Identity

As the central issue of the study, the concept of identity is examined from various perspectives. Stryker and Burke (2000) argue that identity is "ubiquitous in contemporary social science, cutting across psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, sociology and history" (p. 284). Primarily, a general concept of identity is explored, which comes from the field of psychology. The construction of an individual's identity begins at an early stage in childhood, hence it seems pertinent to begin the exploration of the elements that constitute it. Identity is rather complex and it is comprised of notions of self, others, personality, individuality and similarity. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott (2006) remark that "the wide variety of conceptualizations and definitions of identity have led some to conclude that identity is so elusive, slippery, and amorphous that it will never prove to be a useful variable for the social sciences" (p. 695). This shows that the concept of identity involves a wide range of possible interpretations and viewpoints from which it is addressed. There are perspectives of identity development that focus on a cognitive and psychological viewpoint, centralizing the role of individuality in identity development. Other perspectives opt for analyzing identity from a sociological perspective, arguing that identities are constructed socially.

Psychological Concepts of Identity

Powell (2004) proposes analyzing identity formation from a psychoanalytical perspective. The author examines the process of identity formation from an internal angle; this is analyzing how individuals' process of construction of their own selves. Powell (2004) states that "self-esteem, which refers to self-worth, self-respect or how one regards or feels about oneself, is a concept that is constitutive to the self-concept, which is the perception about identity and achievements" (p. 78). In this regard, the author additionally argues that "this process is the start of forming a 'self' or thinking of self" (Powell, 2004, p. 78), in which children begin to form their individualization, wherein they also initiate the building of features of their personality.

Coinciding with Powell's view, Carter (2013) analyzes the theory of identity from the perspective of the self. He argues that individuals distinguish themselves through particular characteristics that define the self. However, he makes the distinction between the type of identity that is unique to individuals, and the type of identity that binds the self to others. This is relevant for the analysis of classroom interaction in the EFL context, since learners carry unique characteristics with them. The author recognizes that "an identity is an internal positional designation that represents meanings actors use to define themselves as unique individuals (person identities), role occupants (role identities), or group members (social identities)" (Carter, 2003, p. 204). Both authors acknowledge the individuality of the nature of identity, since it conveys personal and unique characteristics of the self. Nevertheless, the role of social relationships in identity development must be addressed in greater depth, since language learners occupy a position within their learning community.

Children's Thinking

Before analyzing the social structures that shape an individual's identities, it is worthwhile to explore the thinking processes of children, as it pertains to the teaching of young language learners. The initial mental representations that children build are crucial elements in the development of their individual identity. In this regard, individual perspectives of identity, as discussed previously, seem to inform the way children develop their identity and personality. However, the fact that children need external agents in their scaffolding processes contradicts the idea that identity is almost entirely build within the mind. Bjorklund (1995) describes children's theory of mind as "children's developing concepts of mental activity" (p. 207), and she additionally states that "having a theory of mind implies recognizing different categories of mind, such as dreams, memories, imagination, beliefs, and so on, and having some casual-explanatory framework to account for the actions of other people" (p. 208). The theory of mind also involves notions of others who serve as platforms for developing their cognitive abilities. This theory recognizes the role of internal mechanisms of thought, while also recognizing that such mechanisms are lived and refined though interactions with others.

Examining the way mental processes begin to form in young learners continues the discussion of identity as a psychological construct. Although it has also been argued that identity is essentially social (Jenkins, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Stryker & Burke, 2000), Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that "a traditional schol-

arly view of identity as housed primarily within an individual mind, so that the only possible relationship between identity and language use is for language to reflect an individual's internal mental state" (p. 587). The authors assert that in order for others to perceive an individual's sense of identity it is necessary to begin from that individual's mind, and this is possible through the use of some type of discourse.

Brewer (2001) claims that "all conceptualizations of social identity refer in some way to the idea that an individual's self-concept is derived, to some extent and in some sense, from the social relationships and social groups he or she participates in" (p.117). In EFL, this notion suggests that a learner's self-concept results from social interaction. Along these lines, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) comment on linguistic interaction: "Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (p. 588). The relationship between identity, social interaction and language is reinforced, suggesting that identity emerges and is shaped within social participation. Language learners engage in social interaction through their use of language within the EFL context.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) suggest that both perspectives "enable us to view identity not simply as a psychological mechanism of self-classification that is reflected in people's social behavior but rather as something that is constituted through social action, and especially through language" (p. 588). This idea about identity resulting from social interaction reduces the relevance of internal mechanisms in children's thinking processes to a certain degree. Block (2013) argues that maintaining a social view of identity presupposes that the self is merely a social construct, lessening the role of the psychology of individuals. Analogously, the theory of mind, as discussed by Hapeé (2003), highlights the relevance of introspective awareness in the identification of one's own self. The author argues that "without self-awareness, an individual might not know how she is going to act until she acted, nor why she acted as she did" (Hapeé, 2003, p. 138). Thus, it could be supposed that the formation of self-identity requires self-awareness, which entails deep mental introspection processes as to be able to develop beliefs about oneself. Young language learners will go about such processes as they enter and engage in a learning community. Nonetheless, the image an individual creates of him/herself will continue to be modified as he/she engages in social interactions.

Stets and Cast (2007), in their work on identity and self-verification, argue that "knowing who one is and having that verified in interaction allows one to move from situation to situation with relative ease because one's beliefs about oneself have been proven to be reliable and trustworthy" (p. 522). Their description binds

together the role of individuals' self-perception and social interaction in identity construction. When young language learners begin to construct their identity through the multiple internal and external mechanisms, they have somewhat cohesively established their beliefs about who they are in relationship to the learner community. Similarly, Brewer (2001) aims to unify notions of self-identity and larger social structures, defining person-based social identities as a term "intended to refer to definitions of social identity that are located within the individual self-concept" (p.117). Brewer (2001) had previously argued that self-identities are molded within social interactions, leaving aside the internal mechanisms of individuals in creating a self-image.

Social Concepts of Identity

An individualistic perspective of identity originates from the individual's subjectivity and deep internalizations of the self. However, the concept of identity includes notions of uniqueness but at the same time it represents a connection to others' individual characteristics. For that reason, it has been noted that identity sometimes denotes contradiction; as Buckingham (2008) suggests, identity implies both similarity and difference. From an early stage in their cognitive development, individuals identify themselves with unique characteristics of their personality, which differentiate them from the rest; nevertheless, individuals also identify themselves with others, which implies a wider relationship with groups or communities.

An individual's own self-perception initially comes from within, generated from his or her psychological processes of building who the person is; however, as Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue "accounts that locate identity inside the mind may discount the social ground on which identity is built, maintained, and altered" (p. 587). The features that illustrate social connections with the different ambits in life may represent a sense of identity towards members of a specific group or community. Such identity may indicate that the individual perceives him/herself as an equal or similar member of the community. Nonetheless, an individual's identity also denotes uniqueness because a person is irreplaceable. In this regard, we can acknowledge an internal positioning of the self while recognizing others as important elements in one's identity.

Bucholtoz and Hall (2005) argue that the importance of seeing identity from a sociocultural perspective lies in the fact that linguistic interaction is the primary foundation of identity. They also offer a concise concept of identity: "identity is the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). This can serve

as an example of the importance of an individual being part of a community, since individuals are social by nature. As indicated, identity is constructed and negotiated through the use of language in interaction; social relationships and the way individuals engage in verbal communication are essential components in identity construction.

Psychologycal and Social Identity Integration

Stryker and Burke (2000) discuss the identity theory, related to a previous work by Stryker (1980), labelled structural symbolic interactionism, which explores the way social structures and *the self* have a symbiotic relationship. This identity theory deals with two aspects of the process of the self: "The first aspect concentrates on examining how social structures affect the structure of self and how self affects social behaviors, whereas the second concentrates on the internal dynamics of self-processes as these affect social behavior" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). Individualistic and social perspectives are acknowledged by the authors, nevertheless, they do not provide a clear way in which both can interrelate and inform one another. In fact, the two views are opposite to each other, and as the authors put it "relatively speaking, the first neglects internal dynamics of self-processes, while the second neglects ways in which external social structures impinge on the internal processes" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). This view separates one aspect from the other, although it might be valuable to look at internal self-processes and social structures as informing one another, rather than antagonistic.

Buckingham (2008) mentions in a clearer manner the way both perspectives interrelate in the following quotation:

> On one level, I am the product of my unique personal biography. Yet who I am (or who I think I am) varies according to who I am with, the social situations in which I find myself, and the motivations I may have at the time, although I am by no means entirely free to choose how I am defined. (p. 2)

This statement seems to refine the ways in which individual and social perspectives of identity contribute to the development of individuals' sense of self. For Jenkins (2004) to discuss identity is to explore its relationship with society structures: "[identity] is the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference" (p. 5). Jenkins (2004) stresses the importance of so-

cial structures and processes in the formation and reformation of identity, which goes in line with the second aspect of Stryker and Burke's (2000) identity theory. In this sense, it is important to reconsider more profoundly the transformative attribute of identity, given that, internal psychological processes of self, social processes and structures characteristically lead to change.

Taking into consideration the changing nature of identity, it has been extensively seen as dynamic and in constant evolution. As Jenkins (2004) puts it "not even death freezes the picture: identity or reputation can be reassessed, and some identities –sainthood or martyrdom, for example– can only be achieved beyond the grave" (p. 5). Alexander (1992) discusses the issue of viewing identity as a result of a constant process of constructing our *selves*. He argues that there is "the suggestion that the key to identifying one of the criteria for the reidentification of persons (personal identity) is the capacity that many human beings have of constituting their "selves"" (Alexander, 1992, p. 83). Here it is evident that the notion of identity is in constant construction and re-construction. The author also mentions that individuals engage in interpreting and reinterpreting their reality and their physical and psychological properties that constitute their individuality.

In the lines of identity seen from an individualistic viewpoint, Alexander (1992) also suggests that "in order to do justice to the notion of personal identity, (a) the self should be treated as an "emergent" entity (Nozick, 92), or (b) that one must take a "subjective" view of the self as self-constituting (Schechtman, 86ff.), or (c) that the self has the capacity to create itself (Glover)" (p. 83). This idea goes in line with Carter's (2003) view of identity as a unique feature that comes from within an individual. Identity, then, can be understood as a construct that does not have a finite end, but that is in continuous construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. The author also emphasizes that the construction of identity can be seen from an internal perspective, one from which the individual surges and that is particular and unique to that person. In this sense, identity is seen as a subjective idea which each individual possesses and construes personally. Furthermore, Block (2013), in accordance with Powell (2004), positions himself in favor of a "more psychological angle when most language and identity research tends to be predominantly social" (p. 15), without neglecting the importance of an interrelation between social structures and individual agency.

Identities are constructed depending on a number of circumstances in an individual's life. Burke (2006) examines how identities change, and his focus is on exploring the theoretical mechanisms that make this change possible. He proposes the concept of identity control theory (ICT), hypothesizing that "while identities

influence the way in which a role is played out, discrepancies between the meanings of the identity standard and the meanings of the role performance will result in change" (Burke, 2006, p. 81). It can be supposed, then, that identities change because people have idealized roles that certain people are required to play, given particular circumstances. Kumaravadivelu (2012) describes how identity was perceived before, as individuals having to "constitute their identity in tune with pre-existent and relatively unchanging societal norms" (p. 10). During this time identities were seen as something fixed, imposed and delineated, rather than self-constructed. This view recognizes the roles that are sometimes pre-established in society, and that individuals are expected to accommodate to them.

Similarly, Burke (2006) discusses about the roles that we find in society, and how identities change according to those expectations. Burke's (2006) ICT accounts for a possible way in which identity change can be theoretically explained. Burke (2006) argues that within the ICT "an identity is viewed as a set of self-relevant meanings held as standards for the identity in question" (p. 81). His view is somewhat restrictive, in that he explores the changes individuals experience in their identities according to their situations and contexts. In contrast to a modernist view of identity, postmodernism sees identity as something more flexible and acknowledges its continuous reformation. Kumaravadivelu (2012) states that "postmodernism treats individual identity as something that is actively constructed on an ongoing basis. It sees identity as fragmented, not unified; multiple, not singular; expansive, not bounded" (p. 10). This view is relevant to my research, since individuals themselves possess the ability to exercise power over their own identities. Language learners experience changes in their identity as learners, and that, precisely, is the focus of this research.

Language students develop a role which is unique to them, but which at the same time is used to relate to others in the classroom. Buckingham (2008) states that when we identify with others, "we imply that our identity is partly a matter of what we share with other people" (p. 1). This is relevant for English language teaching (ELT) and language learners, because in the classroom the participants (including the teacher) have a role and an image of themselves as part of that group. Jenkins (2004) asserts that "all human identities are by definition social identities. Identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation" (p. 4). This idea gives an important significance to the role of social relations and interactions with members of a group. In this sense, the language learning context, where interactions are to take place, is an important aspect of the identity formation of young learners.

Concept of Learner Identities

The role of individual and social perspectives in identity development has a strong influence in the development of an individual's sense of self. Language learners carry their own individual identities, which have been molded through mental operations and interaction with others, and they occupy a position within the EFL community. Individuals' social identities are largely influenced by their role in a group. Therefore, the concept of learner identity is largely significant in this study given that it has implications for teaching and learning. Anwaruddin (2012) states that "students construct and change their identities as they go through the processes of learning English as a foreign language" (p. 8). Thus, it can be argued that learner identity is constructed as students interact in the classroom and develop an image of themselves in relation to their role in the group. Mellen (2002) states that our complex identities become multiplied by social interactions. Students socialize in their language classroom and they envision various images of themselves due to their engagement in social interaction.

Social and Individual Perspectives in Learner Identity

Identity has been seen predominantly as a social process. Nonetheless, internal mental processes of individuals in their construction of identity will be also seen as largely crucial. Block (2013) proposes the possibility of "bringing together the social world and the psychological world in the study of language and identity" (p. 23). The author shows interest in social structures in the development of identity, as well as to individual agency, arguing that "the importance of social structures in shaping and constraining individual agency depends on the notion that there is some stability in said social structures and that not all aspects of identity are up for negotiation at any given moment" (p. 36). His idea seems to merge together social structures and the psychology of individuals.

A similar attempt to bridge together individuality and sociality in identity formation is discussed by Stryker and Burke (2000):

> The former [social structures] arrives at behavior by moving from social structures to commitments to relationships through the consequent salience of the identity to behavior. The latter [psychological structures] moves from internalized identity standards and perceptions of self-relevant meanings, through a comparison of the two that either verifies the identities or indicates a discrepancy, to behavior that re-

> pairs the discrepancy by altering the situation or creating new situations. (p. 288)

The authors clarify that these processes are in fact interrelated. Stryker and Burke (2000) see behavior as the point where social structures and internal perceptions of self connected to the notion of identity. Thus, behavior can be viewed as the manifestation of identity, through social interaction where those identities are confirmed. Furthermore, Stryker and Burke (2000) argue that "the tie between identity and behavior exists in their common meaning" (p. 289). Being a social person who engages in interaction certainly indicates that identity plays a part in said interactions, which shape identity, and that at the same time are shaped by identity.

Language learners develop their identity as learners inside the social group that exists in school. Especially for children, these socialization processes are important since they are beginning to make interpersonal connections. Their classroom represents the social space where their individuality is part of the complete social group. As Buckingham (2008) illustrates:

> Individual selfhood is a social phenomenon, but the social world is constituted through the actions of individuals. As such, identity is a fluid, contingent matter—it is something we accomplish practically through our ongoing interactions and negotiations with other people. In this respect, it might be more appropriate to talk about identification rather than identity. (p. 6)

The above view clarifies the symbiotic relationship between identity and social structures. Social structures shape identities, but at the same time, identities are shaped by social structures. Individual identities are then greatly important, in that they shape the unique dynamics of a social group, and in that they provide the individual learner with a sense of self and stability in who they are.

The Language Learning Community

The way learners engage in social interaction involves the learning process and the social space where it takes place. Čekaitė (2006) states that "the classroom has been reconceptualized as a fundamentally social site for language learning" (p. 14). In the school context, learners who are active participants in a classroom also develop roles that become characteristic to that particular group. As Čekaitė (2006) argues, "learning cannot be seen as the unilinear development of a single learner identity" (p. 45). Furthermore, learners cultivate a sense of belongingness.

Sharing a purpose creates cohesion and unity in the group, given that they share a common goal. However, it is important to bear in mind that social interaction within the classroom will not necessarily work out harmoniously all the time, despite sharing a sense of community belongingness. This is precisely what constitutes diversity and multiplicity of identities in a community, giving it its characteristic richness. In line with the idea of the EFL classroom as a primarily social space, Čekaitė (2006) argues that the classroom may be a *community of practice*. Socialization within the learning community involves active interactions among teacher and learners, which are modeled by the classroom discourse. Learners engage in participation through their use of L2, completing language tasks that promote classroom interaction and construction of a sense of group belonging.

The EFL classroom seen as a community of practice is a way in which the educational domain can be explored. The social interactions that take place within the EFL classroom relate to the overall practice that members of such community share: learning English. This builds a social identity, which is constructed collectively among members of the group. Wegner (2009) provides his broad conception of a community of practice:

> The concept of community of practice does not exist by itself. It is part of a broader conceptual framework for thinking about learning in its social dimensions. It is a perspective that locates learning, not in the head or outside it, but in the relationship between the person and the world, which for human beings is a social person in a social world. In this relation of participation, the social and the individual constitute each other. (p. 1)

He coincides with previous conceptions of learner identity as constitutive of a larger social learning community. Language learners occupy a role in the community of practice, engaging in social interactions that help them mold their individual identities as part of a shared group identity as language learners.

As individuals are part of a wider social space, individual identities are reshaped as a result of constant socialization. In this regard, the position that each learner takes within the language community represents a significant aspect for the negotiation of group identity and individual identity. Norton and Toohey (2011) comment on the idea of *positioning* in the EFL classroom. They state that "identities are contingent, shifting and context-dependent, and [...] while identities or positions are often given by social structures or ascribed by others, they can also be negotiated by agents who wish to position themselves" (p. 418). Identities in a group such as the EFL classroom are predetermined to an extent by the social

impositions, representative of the school setting. However, learners possess their own individual identities, which interplay among the community.

As mentioned, the learning of English represents one shared goal among language learners within their community of practice. Language learners may develop an interest in learning the language as a result of being part of the language learning group, which can be seen as the desire to feel as a member of the group. Motivation to learn the language then may arise from the sole fact that learners are now members of the L2 learning community. However, Ushioda and Dornyei (2009) argue that "the process of identification theorized to underpin integrativeness might be better explained as an internal process of identification within the person's self-concept, rather than identification with an external reference group" (p. 3). Here, the authors relate motivation to the notion of integrative orientation, which, as they argue is a genuine and personal interest in the culture of the L2. In this regard, it is necessary to consider that sharing a common goal and sense of community can interact with the shaping and re-shaping of learner identities, but most importantly *learning identities.*

Their motivation to learn the language may possibly be based on the sense of affiliation or membership to the particular learning community they have built. As children enter a new social group in their language classroom, expectations about how that group will be like begin to form. Children bring their identity and motivation to learn the language into the language classroom, but also a motivation or desire to be a member of that group. Canagarajah (2004) asserts that "what motivates the learning of a language is the construction of the identities we desire and the communities we want to join in order to engage in communication and social life" (p. 117). Here, Canagarajah (2004) brings into play several elements that contribute to the formation of learner identities. Individuals have an ideal that they seek to attain, identities that individuals pursue. Within learning groups such as the classroom those identities facilitate the entrance to those particular social groups, where learners feel a part of that community. With the sense of belongingness to a certain community, individuals experience a sense of security in regard to their role and what that particular social group represents to them as a whole. Maldonado and Hernández (2010) comment on the notion of collective identity in the following:

> The psychological tie that allows an individual to unify with their group, considering three characteristics: sense of group belongingness, awareness that by being part of that group the individual will be assigned a positive or negative attribute, and feeling

> certain affection derived from the recognition of belonging to a group. (p. 323)

The authors stress the importance of group belongingness in developing a collective or group identity. Each language learner participates as a member of the language classroom as a group, carrying their own individual identity with them. Once more, individual identities play an important role in collective identities, since each individual language learner perceives his or her own personal difference from other groups, which reinforces his/her sense of belongingness.

Learner Socialization

Social structures and socialization processes are in constant evolution as well, which leads individuals to change. Learner socialization seems to be a key element in the development of learner identity and in the learning process. Thus, the relationship between language learning, learner identity and learner socialization processes must be addressed. Mercer (2016) states that "people are social beings and the focus is on our construction of self through social interaction" (p. 16). Language learners develop their identity as they engage in classroom interaction with their peers. Learners require others to be acknowledged as members of a community, which provides them with recognition and stability within their self. Coll and Falsafi (2010) clearly illustrate the above, arguing that "in order to be, the individual requires the co-recognition of himself and others of this being. Hence, having an identity is to have a sense of recognition as someone" (p. 217). Therefore, the processes of social interaction within the classroom are pivotal components that shape learners' identities within their EFL community.

In certain occasions members of the learning community do not engage in as much participative interaction as other members. Learners who exhibit a lower degree of active participation in the learning community may be affected by factors related to their individual identity, their own personality or even difficulty in engaging in social interactions and making friends. Norton (2001) discusses non-participation of learners in the language classroom, linking it to notions of identity and learning communities and she notes that:

> Our relation to communities of practice involves both participation and non-participation, and that our identities are shaped by combinations of the two. Non-participation in some communities is inevitable because our experiences include coming into contact with communities to which we do not belong. (p. 161)

Some learners are more timid and they have difficulty socializing and engaging in interactions. These members may feel not belonging to the community, which may in turn affect their learner identity and their language learning.

The instances where language learners demonstrate struggles to participate and incorporate into the learning community may represent opportunities to become aware of the factors that are involved in such a situation. Wegner (2009) comments on the above in the following:

> This process can cause identification as well as dis-identification with the community. In this sense, identification involves modulation: one can identify more or less with a community, the need to belong to it, and therefore the need to be accountable to its regime of competence. (p. 3)

The socialization process that takes places within a community may be affected by feelings of dis-identification by some members, causing the overall group identity to be challenged and therefore to have difficulty to be consolidated. Learners who exhibit difficulty actively participating in the learning community may possibly have difficulty learning the language and therefore, feeling incapable of communicating through it and relating to the group.

The concept of language socialization is connected to second language socialization and language learning. Duff (2007) mentions that:

> Language socialization' refers to the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group. It is a process that is mediated by language and whose goal is the mastery of linguistic conventions, pragmatics, the adoption of appropriate identities, stances (e.g., epistemic or empathetic) or ideologies, and other behaviors associated with the target group and its normative practices. (p. 310)

It can be understood that learners in the EFL classroom construct their group identity through linguistic socialization, focusing on the way they communicate in their L1, but at the same time, sharing the common goal of L2 learning. This may help us understand the difficulties that some learners face in incorporating in the learning community, since the language being learnt may not be representative of what they want to take from the community.

Methodology

In this section I offer an overview of the methodological approach followed to carry out the present research. First, I explain the paradigm and techniques employed, as well as the context, participants and the data analysis procedures.

There exist multiple paradigms of research from which one can opt in order to carry out an investigation. Johnson and Christensen (2013) recognize two research paradigms: qualitative and quantitative. They define paradigm as "an approach to thinking about and doing research" (p. 30). The authors state that quantitative research focuses on the confirmatory scientific method while qualitative research follows the exploratory scientific method. For this research project I opted to follow a qualitative paradigm of research, which according to Corbin and Strauss (2014) "is not meant to have a lot of structure or rigid approach to analysis" (p.1). This does not mean that qualitative research is not formal or that it is simple to carry out, but that qualitative research is more interested in analyzing human behavior through informed interpretation.

Regarding the method, I decided to use ethnography because it provides the systematical basis and principles to conduct this investigation. Cushman (2002) describes ethnography as a methodology that is "focused on problem-solving through constructive intervention in an interpolated culture" (p. 926). In Emerson's (1995) words, "ethnographers are committed to going out and getting close to the activities and everyday experiences of other people" (p. 1). The role of the ethnographer is crucial, since he or she engages in the everyday activities of the community under investigation and the ethnographer needs to maintain the objectivity of his or her analysis as much as possible. The position I hold within this project as the researcher allowed me to be an active participant in the group. I was able to observe closely, interact with members of the group and analyze patterns, attitudes, and behaviors. The participants were children, and as Yon (2003) writes: "ethnographic research is doubly attractive for the qualitative child-centered and culturally sensitive insights it offers to this field of research" (p. 412). This situation sometimes may represent an obstacle since children are usually difficult to get clear information from. In this regard, it is important to mention that I was immersed in the research context as the English teacher, which strengthened the use of ethnography as the main methodology.

According to Creswell (2003), "the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting data" (p. 14). The EFL classroom setting may signify a space where ethnography is suitable for ob-

serving and analyzing the community's practices. A particularistic and interpretative type of ethnography is described by Govea, Vera and Vargas (2011), which has the characteristic of focusing on a particular social space, allowing the ethnographer to be introspective without violating the natural harmony of the group. This type of ethnography "intends to discover the meanings within the observed social interaction" (Govea, Vera & Vargas, 2011, p. 34). Within the ethnographic tradition of research, an *instrumental case study* examines a particular social space or community, allowing the researcher to come up with outcomes that serve such specific case (Clevenger, 2014; Kraay, 2012; Patton, 2014). This research centered on a specific learning community within the EFL classroom, of which I was an insider. As the researcher, I played the role of a participant observer. Fox (1998) states that in participant observation the researcher has two roles: as an observer and as a participant. The author argues that "the researcher's presence is unlikely to affect the setting, because his or her presence as a researcher is masked by the role of participant" (Fox, 1998, p. 27). This advantage allowed me to participate in the classroom as the teacher and also to experience the participation in interactions with the students.

Context and Participants

The setting for this research project was carried out at a language center, which is part of the University of Guanajuato. In this institution there are language courses for adults, teenagers and children. The program for which I worked was the *Kids* program, which consisted of four basic levels of English, designed as Levels 100, 200, 300 and 400. I was the teacher in charge of the group of learners who participated in the research. At the time of the research, I had six years of teaching English and a B.A. in ELT. As the English teacher of young learners in Level 100, I had the opportunity to observe their process of socialization in an academic environment and how they adapted to their new group with a variety of different students. The participants were new to the school and program, since they were incorporated into Level 100. The participants were a total of 15 (ten boys and five girls) and the age of the participants ranged from nine to eleven years old.

Data Gathering Tools

For the collection of data for this research project I opted for ethnographic techniques, such as observations, diaries/journals, interviews, focus groups and obser-

vations. These techniques explore people's social and historical contexts, and as Newton (2012) argues: "the goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights and understandings" (p. 344). I will outline the techniques individually.

Observation

Observation seemed to be a suitable choice for analyzing classroom interaction and dynamics. As an ethnographic technique, observation allowed me to perceive my students' behaviour in class, the way they engaged in social interaction, and how they formed social bounds and friendships. This technique provided direct access to the community under study. I conducted participant observation, which according to (Fetterman, 1998) refers to the combination of participation in the interaction of the community being studied, while maintaining professional distance which allows adequate observation and recording of data. Participant observation facilitated my involvement in the community; moreover, this advantage is reflected in the fact that I was already their teacher and I did not have to alter the natural environment of the community.

Teacher Diary/Journal

During data collection, I kept a teacher diary, writing descriptions of the events and situations regarding the research. This technique is directly linked to observation, since the diary functioned as a space for me to reflect. Alaszewski (2006) sates that a journal is an organized record of facts and events over the period of time of the research. Ortlipp (2008) argues that keeping a research diary is a common tradition in qualitative research, and that it is useful in terms of reflecting and interpreting situations. She writes: "keeping self-reflective journals is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity, whereby researchers use their journal to examine personal assumptions and goals and clarify individual belief systems and subjectivities" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 697).

In terms of subjectivity, Emmerson (1995) argues that "writing descriptive accounts of experiences and observations is not as straightforward and transparent a process as it might initially appear" (p. 2). Goodwin (2011) writes: "there is a concern for maintaining scientific objectivity when reporting on observational research" (p. 78). The researcher needs to make clear that objectivity is always pursued. Emerson (1995) states that with ethnographic notes "research and writ-

ing commitments qualify ethnographic immersion, making the field researcher at least something of an outsider" (p. 2). This way the researcher can overcome such limitation, maintaining the distance as an observer, yet at the same time being part of the community as a participant.

Face to Face Interviews

Interviews provide nonverbal elements which can increase the quality of the information, as Opdenakker (2006) states, mentioning that a face to face interview can use social cues to enrich the interaction. Bell (2010) states that "a skillful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do" (p. 157). Although interviews provided useful information, I still noticed that the students felt nervous and therefore they could have provided more information. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) comment on this issue stating that "an individual can give one version of the world in an interview and another in a conversation with friends" (p. 120).

Group Interviews

The following step in the collection of data was the implementation of a group interview, as a way to obtain additional information. According to Flick (2009), group interviews permit the researcher to collect data in context and to create a situation of interaction. Group interviews create a communicative environment and the participants are stimulated to share their ideas more freely. Flick (2009) argues that "in real or natural groups, the members already know each other" (p. 194), which is the case of group interviews. They prompt the "interactive aspect of data collection" (p. 197). With this technique I complemented the collection of relevant data that helped answer the research question.

Five-Minute Papers

Five-minute papers consist of an open-ended question or a general statement that needs to be completed anonymously by participants. As examples of such statements or questions I used something such as: "What I enjoy about my English class is…" and "What would I change about my class environment?" As Murphy (2001) mentions, this technique is helpful in exploring the perceptions of students in relation to their class, their learning process, experiences and expectations. Murphy

(2001) states that "learner responses to such questions are especially useful if the teacher emphasizes that the purpose is to provide formative feedback on how the course is going" (p. 502). Five-minute papers are a great way to know student opinions in relation to a specific topic. In order to assure that their most sincere ideas were shared, I guaranteed that their responses were confidential.

Data Encoding, Analysis and Interpretation

The process of data encoding was based on the name of the technique being used. For the journals the code is: JET1, which means journal entry technique one. For the individual face to face interviews the code is: STINT1, which means student interview one. For the five-minute papers the code is: Q1ST1, which means question one student one. Following that logic Q2ST4, for example, means question two student four. The group interview's code is: GINT, which means group interview.

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected was carried out through the identification of patterns through an inductive analysis approach. Patton (2003) argues that "findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst's interaction with the data" (p. 110). It is often argued that the researcher may offer a biased interpretation of the data which lacks objectivity. Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) suggest that the researcher is situated in the real world and interprets what is visible; objectivity is ensured through neutral analysis of the data.

Ethics

The participants were informed and asked for permission to use the information they provided. In the case of children, it was especially important to involve the parents in the research. I asked their parents for permission and I handed out a letter of consent that assured confidentiality. Creswell (2003) argues that "researchers need to respect the participants and the sites for research. Many ethical issues arise during this stage of the research" (p. 73).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the discussion of the data obtained from the current research. There are four themes that emerged from the data analysis and interpretation stage, which are presented below.

Students' Perceptions and Expectations towards School and Learning

The experiences that leaners gather throughout their academic lifetime may influence how they learn and engage in social interaction with their language peers in upcoming learning experiences. Situations that children encounter in their elementary school may affect the way they perceive learning in general, how they perceive themselves and how they engage in social interaction. The following quotes show students' views about their primary school's physical setting:

> I feel fine, well, more or less... in my school there are times where it is dirty because some girls from first grade leave the space really messy. (GINT4)

> One thing that I don't like is that the kids from primary leave trash and the cleaning lady has to clean everything. (GINT2)

These two quotes reflect on the way students perceive their physical space at their elementary schools. The first quote mentions that the setting is often dirty and she identifies other classmates as the reasons that cause this issue. The participant remarks that the space in which they carry out their activities is unpleasant. In the second quote the participant seems to disapprove of the fact that other classmates leave the setting cluttered and that the janitor has to clean it. This shows that perhaps the participant is aware of the issue and he shows empathy towards the extra work that must be done by the janitor. Children may be affected by their physical space in different ways and they may feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed.

The group environment inside the elementary school classroom is another factor that appeared to affect how the learners socialize in the group. These quotes seem to evidence how some situations in their classroom affect how they feel about their classmates:

> I feel bored. Well, some kids are always doing stuff and there were problems. (GINT4)

> My friends are OK, but there is one who is very annoying, and there is another one who got really mad and started to throw everything away. One time he grabbed a ruler and he threw it at a boy. It didn't hit him. It was gonna hit him, but he bent down. (GINT6)

In these quotes the participants mention how their classmates show problematic behavior. The first extract shows that the participant's mood is affected by such

issues, since some classmates create problems in their classroom. The second participant states that apart from his classmates, there are other students who show problematic behaviour in the classroom, even aggressive or violent actions. What the second participant means by "always doing stuff" is that in his elementary school the rest of the classmates are distracted, playing or doing off-task activities. These negative situations regarding their classmates seem to affect them in a way that they may feel uneasy to be part of that learning community.

The following extract from a journal entry illustrates how students feel about being in the language classroom and how they relate their experiences to the primary school as well:

> I notice how some students feel comfortable in the language classroom and how they compare certain issues they find in their elementary school. Annette was talking to Dinorah during a break and they were in the classroom before going out to the patio. They were talking about some difficulties they have in their primary schools where their peers seem to be hard to interact with and how they sometimes prefer to stay in the classroom instead of going out during break. They mentioned that they felt comfortable in this school (the English class) and that they feel confident when talking to most of their classmates. It seemed to me that they were able to recognize that in their language classroom they have a more positive learning experience due to a more welcoming atmosphere. (JET1).

From the previous reflection it can be noted that these two students seem to project a positive attitude towards their overall participation in the language classroom. In the case of these participants, being members of the classroom appears to positively affect the way they engage in social interaction because they feel appreciated by the other children. Furthermore, the participants openly acknowledge the differences they notice between the issues they deal with in their elementary school and how they feel accepted by group members at the language center.

Discussing experiences in their elementary school, the participant provided more feedback via the five-minute-papers:

> In my elementary school I don't feel good because they don't teach us right. (Q2ST6)

The participant shows awareness about the ways in which classes should be taught. However, we do not have the complete notion of the reasons for this stu-

dent to assert such statement. The participant might have had certain expectations about his experiences in the elementary school, which are not met. His experiences might have been unsatisfactory, and so his perceptions towards the quality of teaching he receives may indicate that he notices a lack of professionalism in his teachers.

Concerning the way children perceive how they are taught, the following extract from a reflection journal entry addresses a similar situation:

> During class today we were looking at the ways we can use there is/there are and we were reviewing the topic with objects around the classroom. Fidel and Abril were having difficulty differentiating the singular and the plural and I noticed it so I went to their seats and asked them if everything was clear. They seemed to not want to ask a question (they seemed resistant), but Fidel asked about how to use the plural and the singular. Then I asked the rest of the group to respond to the question and soon they provided examples and explanations to their peers. Abril told me aloud: I didn't want to ask a question because I thought you were going to call me out for not knowing. (JET5)

From this extract, the two children clearly demonstrate that other learning moments in their lives have a strong influence in the way they perceive school and learning today. Their expectations about the way teachers generally respond to their difficulties in class seemed to be determined by the way they had been taught in the past. The girl was surprised that I was actually willing to help her out with her question, and that I did not react angrily to the fact that she was confusing the singular and plural forms. Sometimes language learners feel vulnerable because they might feel pressured to be competent in their language learning process. Participation in the language classroom is helpful and enriching for all the students, but some of them might avoid participating because they fear losing face. This reflection suggests that children are deeply affected, either positively or negatively, by the way their teachers treat and teach them, and therefore, this forms a particular way in which learners perceive their learning process.

> Another participant shared her thoughts in a five-minute-paper: I like that we can bring our toys, and they give us easy assignments. I don't like when they give us a lot of homework and they don't explain. I like when teachers treat us the same. (Q2ST12)

This participant values the way in which teachers in her primary school allow the

children to bring personal objects. This may allow the participant an opportunity to help her lessen the feeling of tension or pressure. The extract also shows that perhaps too much work may lead to anxiety, difficulty and discouragement. Her expectations towards her elementary school, teachers and learning seems to be connected to a satisfactory learning experience. Equal treatment to all children from the teacher is significant for the student and her identity as learner. This student evidences a sense of group community by including himself in his use of the term *us*. Norton and Toohey (2011) highlight that "pedagogical practices have the potential to be transformative in offering language learners more powerful positions than those they may occupy either inside or outside the classroom" (p. 417). In this regard, teachers could take advantage of their position and be more attentive to their teaching practices and how they affect their learners.

The physical space in which students interact was mentioned repeatedly. The following quote illustrates how one participant feels regarding his classroom:

> I didn't like the classroom that we have. It is the same that we had last year and the same teacher. It is better to have a change. (GINT6)

This participant states that for him, it is better to have a change, which he associates with his classroom and the teacher. Having the same classroom and the same teacher for two years may provoke him to feel unrecognized and trapped in the same learning context. This may affect his identity as a learner, because he is actually progressing in his learning, but not having a change makes him feel as he knows less, or as he has not advanced.

Sometimes other aspects related to their school are important for children to feel comfortable and therefore have a better attitude towards their school.

> My school is fine because there are many patios. There are places where each group can play. (GINT9)

> I feel good about my primary school; I only wish there were more water dispensers and that we were allowed to run. (Q1ST6)

The quote above shows aspects of the school's physical environment. The data unveils the importance of having big spaces for socializing. Similarly, the second quote from a five-minute-paper shows that the student acknowledges a lack of water dispensers, and he sees it as an inadequacy. Physical activities such as running is a

natural necessity of young children, and being forbidden to do so represents a limitation. When the school limits the children's freedom to do activities, such as running and other activities, it could generate in children a subconscious view of school as strict and unpleasant. On the contrary, being in a pleasant physical setting affects students in a positive way. Since they perceive such environment as comfortable and secure, they feel confidence, which boosts their identity as learners.

A similar view in regards to students' needs about physical movement is shown in the following quote from a five-minute-paper:

> I feel good because the teacher plays videos in class, but she doesn't allow us to run and so the break becomes very boring, and I like to go out in the patio with my friends. (Q1ST9)

The participant mentions that she enjoys the classes, activities, social interaction and group community. At the same time, she associates her learning experience to the limitation of running inside the school, making the recess boring. The participant emphasizes that she has a need to socialize with peers, while acknowledging that the teacher sets rules and limitations.

The following quotes reflect how two participants feel about their English language classroom:

> I think that the classroom is very big, and there is a lot of echo. (GINT3)

> It's just that, when we are working you can hear the sound of the alarm…and sometimes it distracts me when I'm working. (GINT2)

The participants mention how the physical space affects them, even in a subtle way, and how that alters their learning process and daily activities. The first quote shows that the participant probably feels annoyed by the echo in the classroom, and that may be unsettling, even to a small degree. The second quote illustrates how external factors about the physical space are small obstacles for him during class. He mentions he gets distracted and taking into consideration that such physical setting is where they will engage in learning experiences, it is important to have a good perception of it.

Students have their own perceptions towards how they are taught and what they learn in their elementary school. Some students state that they feel as if they were doing easy activities in the English classroom. The following data samples ex-

emplify the participants' perceptions about their English classes in their elementary school:

> Mmm, it's like, they don't teach us right…or it bores me. They teach us very simple things. (GINT6)

> I feel bored… I wanna go out and play… I wanna talk to my friends. (GINT4)

Both data samples show that students expect more from their elementary school classes. The first quote mentions that it is boring because he does easy activities; the second one also mentions that he feels the class gets boring when he finishes earlier than the rest of the group. These statements may reflect a lack of meaningful or challenging activities in the English classroom. It affects their identity since they may believe they can do more, but due to the simple tasks, they may feel as if they are less capable.

In some data samples students share their thoughts regarding their learning experiences and expectations. The following quotation shows that a student has developed an awareness about the overall language learning experience he receives:

> I feel bad because we don't watch videos, the classmates yell too much; we have a short break and we don't play much. We practice a lot of questions. We don't practice sentences, phrases, vocabulary, only questions, she, he, they, etcetera. (Q1ST1)

The participant shows that he may hold a perception about his elementary teacher and the way she teaches, considering she lacks a more dynamic approach. The participant shares his preferences about learning; he demonstrates a predilection for more dynamic activities that involve the use of multimedia (videos), physical movement and games. All of the above may be linked to a need for socialization in the classroom, since such expectations about learning and school demonstrate that the student requires a learning environment which is energetic, active and motivating.

The varied domains where young children engage in learning opportunities with other children are also part of the multiplicity of components that play a role in their overall learner identity. Young children began to make connections between what they learn, and how they learn in their elementary schools to what they experience in the language classroom as English learners. Norton and McKinney (2011) acknowledge the multiple nature of identity, as relevant in second language acquisition (SLA). The authors state that: "The construct of identity as multiple is

particularly powerful because learners who struggle to speak from one identity position can reframe their relationship with their interlocutors and reclaim alternative, more powerful identities from which to speak" (Norton & McKinney, 2001, p.74). The authors discuss complicated situations within the EFL classroom that may affect how learners construct their identity. The learning community that this research explores provides learners with alternative opportunities to take on specific learner identities that they can benefit from.

These accounts clarified the different ways students process their learning experiences and how those perceptions influence their identity formation as learners. The relationship between identity formation and language learning is relevant for this research, since young learners begin to build their identity in regards to their learning abilities within the school environment. Their experiences acquiring other types of knowledge in other domains provide insightful solutions to understand their identity as language learners.

Students' Perceptions towards Their Teachers

Many times, teachers influence their students' social interaction in the classroom by reflecting beliefs and ideologies through teaching and structuring behaviour norms inside the classroom. The previous might be based on the image that students build about their teachers through their classroom experiences, the teachers' attitudes and actions, among other aspects. From the data samples, some students mentioned that they considered that their elementary school teachers were not serious and they did not do their job properly, as it can be seen in the following quotes:

> My elementary school is very boring, I don't know…they don't teach us. The teachers keep walking out of the classroom. (GINT3)

> I don't feel good when the teachers walk out of the classroom, and then sometimes in the group they are very talkative, and the teachers go, and they don't school them. Even though there is a camera, they continue misbehaving. (GINT4)

These quotes show examples of what these students perceive about their teachers based on their actions. These participants complain about the fact that the elementary school teachers are constantly outside of the classroom. They also show that their perception about school is affected by teachers; they consider that the teachers do not teach. The teacher is generally an image of authority, but in this case, that im-

age is distorted and replaced by one who lacks control. It is important to remember that teachers act as models of behaviour by simply teaching and being in front of students, and students might mimic such subconscious examples of socialization. Students may feel not important for the teacher because of their lack of professionalism. It is important to bear in mind that the teacher is an influential figure for learners, who can help them build a sense of identity within the classroom. Anwaruddin (2012) illustrates teachers' role as follows: "It is, therefore, important that researchers and teachers view learners as persons with multiple and changing identities, not just as individuals with (e.g., English language) learning needs" (p. 14). Teachers need to pay attention to the way their learners acquite knowledge from them, and how that represents a valuable opportunity to achieve successful learning outcomes.

As mentioned in the first theme, students are affected by the type of content in the class, and when they do not feel motivated or stimulated, they may in turn feel disappointed. This might result in the majority of students feeling discouraged in their classes by taking the teacher as an example of behavior and the perception he or she holds about teaching and learning. Depending on the example the teacher offers by simply teaching a class, students might adopt a particular view of learning and school. The following quote illustrates this:

> In my past school they just gave us the classes but they didn't teach us much. We only had to write down some words and make some drawings. (GINT1)

This participant shows how he feels about his teacher not teaching him enough. The student was not being stimulated to do something more, which he was capable of. This may produce a negative image of his English teacher, since the student is aware that she was not responsible for providing more meaningful activities in the class. Equally, this may influence his identity as a learner, since the teacher does not believe they can do more, and she only provides simple activities and content. As a result, he may begin to feel disconnected from the class. Such comments may show a connection between motivation and identity formation as learners. Lamb (2011) argues that motivation is non-linear and that it emerges from individuals' identity and the learning context they are part of. The author maintains that "all three constructs (identity and autonomy as well as motivation) are organic and share three noteworthy traits: they change over time, they depend on context and they are socially mediated" (Lamb, 2011, p. 72).

The role of the English teacher was repeatedly shown in the data and students show their perceptions towards teachers in various ways. For instance, some stu-

dents mentioned positive aspects of their English teacher that seemed to have influence in their general performance and attitude about the class. The data that participants provided seemed to demonstrate how teachers influence the way students see learning in general. Teachers' attitudes about students, teaching and learning are easily internalized by students. The following extract from the five-minute paper technique serves as an example of this:

> I feel happy. I learn many things and I can speak more in English. I like the book and doing activities in the notebook, studying, asking, watching videos, playing, and talking about the language. I like how the teacher Annie teaches us. I like her activities. I like when we listen to music and work. I like that we have a break, the classroom and the desks. I like to work in teams with my classmates. (QIST3)

This participant shows her general view towards the English class. One can see that the student has an overall positive attitude about the language itself, the activities, classmates and etcetera. She seems to consider that she is more capable to speak English as a result of her classes. The overall environment in the group appears to be a factor for her positive experience learning English. Moreover we see the role of the teacher; the teacher appears to have positively influenced the student so as to encourage the student to develop enjoyment of the class.

Several students mentioned positive aspects of their English teacher that appear to be connected to their overall learning experience. The importance of having what they consider as a good teacher is shown in the following extract, which comes from one five-minute paper:

> I feel happy because I am being taught English. My teacher is good, and she helps us and explains when we don't understand. I like being with my classmates and talking to them. (Q1ST2)

The participant demonstrates that the role of the teacher is important for her. She shows that some characteristics of the teacher, such as being supportive, understanding and ready to lend a hand may provoke enthusiasm in learning the language. The student shares her need for a teacher who makes things clear when she has difficulty.

On a similar note, the relevance that children's teachers have in their learning processes is illustrated in the following extract from a journal reflection:

> I think they feel less resistant to share their thoughts and views about their teachers. In class they openly comment about how they like to be taught and treated, and I consider that we have built this empathic environment along the connivance and overall interaction in the classroom. Children frequently mention that they feel confident in class and that I am a good teacher. In occasions they also mention the way other teachers have made them feel in positive and negative ways. This reminds me that as teachers we have an enormous responsibility and influence upon our learners and their learning processes. (JET7)

This extract shows how learners manifest the ways in which their teachers impact their learning processes and experiences. Children commonly share what I consider to be more honest opinions and they have less restraints when it comes to speaking their minds. However, I have also observed the way in which children hold back their thoughts to avoid conflict with the teacher, who they see as the authority. The way children react to different learning experiences and processes is important to their identity formation because teachers represent a significant role model. As a result, children began to construct a view in regards to the role of their teachers, and it affects the way they perceive themselves, taking into consideration that young learners' identity is a work in progress.

During the data gathering phase, participants showed their perceptions towards their elementary school teachers and English teacher. Their teachers represent role models who shape the way their learning might occur. The way teachers present content and how they manage a group signifies an influence for students' perceptions about teachers. The image they have of their teachers affects students' identity to an extent since they will most likely relate learning to their teachers. In some cases, students mentioned positive aspects about their teachers and what they liked about them; however, many others shared their perceptions and expressed some type of disappointment. A teacher holds a powerful position within the classroom and has a responsibility to foster a positive learner identity among her students.

Learner Socialization and Identity Formation

Some students mentioned issues that occurred with older students and younger students. Participants in this study generally go to school where a secondary school is in the same location, so they have shared space to socialize. However, conflicts between older and younger students arise due to issues with dominance with the older students. The following quotes show how students feel about this:

> I feel bad, because sometimes the kids from secondary school don't let us (elementary students) play, and even sometimes the sixth graders. (GINT10)

> When we were playing football, they said we could play with them, but then they played dirty and hit us. So they did it on purpose. (GINT1)

These data samples show the difficult relationship among some students. Participants expressed how they see this as upsetting for them, because they feel rejected. These situations are serious because students should not be refused to do their normal activities and engage in social events. Experiencing conflict may affect their identity, since they may feel inferior or not good enough to share social spaces with older classmates.

On a similar note, a participant shared in a five-minute-paper the type of experiences he goes through in his elementary school:

> What I like is that we're going to change the school where we study, because children bully me, they throw my glasses away and they steal from my backpack. (Q2ST7)

From this quotation we can see how the participant shows a feeling of relief because he will change schools. He suffered from bullying in his elementary school and he manifests his discontent, and in a certain way he tries to draw attention to the things he used to be a victim of. His experience was clearly negative and he might have had difficulties creating bonds and socializing in his group, which might be the reason for his optimism. Children who go through situations where bullying is involved can develop a resistance to socialize in their group, which might as well affect their identity. They might feel incompatible and therefore believe there is something wrong with themselves.

The way students perceive their elementary school, classmates and teachers, and how they integrate within such social spheres represents an important indicator of their attitudes and perceptions about how they incorporate into their language classroom. In the following quote the participant expresses how a difficult social environment makes him feel stressed, and that he considers it to be an inconvenience for him:

> What I don't like is that there are many kids. I don't like them because they get angry at everything. My friends are: Chino, Hector, Diana, Kevin, Abraham. They are cool and funny. (Q2ST2)

The participant evidently regards having difficulty to socialize as an obstacle in his classroom, indicating that certain classmates show a negative attitude. This situation may influence negatively how this participant perceives his classroom, how social relationships work and what his own social identity is. The participant has a group of friends, regardless his difficulty to socialize in such a complicated environment he describes. The fact that this participant makes reference to his friends indicates that he values having a learning community that he can belong to. This could help learners build a stronger sense of learner identity, where they can find collaboration and friendship when learning. His identity as a learner may be affected by the obstacles he faces, which may in turn hinder his ability to make friends and socialize.

How classmates influence each other may result in negative or positive outcomes for their learning development and identity formation. The following excerpt indicates how a participant is aware of some bad habits a classmate has, and how that may influence others:

> One of my classmates raps, makes graffiti, smokes and sometimes he sneaks out of the school. (Q2ST6)

> What I like is that we are going to switch to the evening schedule at school, because in the morning I am bullied. They throw away my glasses and they steal my money. (Q2ST7)

This first participant highlights his classmate's bad behavior, and in a certain way he tries to call attention to this classmate's actions. The fact that this participant is indirectly trying to point out how his classmate's bad behavior is not correct may indicate that he is aware of the possibility of being influenced by him. This indicates that he values the harmony of the learning community. In the second quote, the participant shows relief because he avoided bad behavior showed by other classmates. This also demonstrates that a positive environment created by harmonic behavior is valued by students.

When children feel comfortable in a welcoming environment, it is only natural that they enjoy their learning processes as well. The following quote concisely illustrates this:

> All of the classmates are kind. The teacher is really nice and I like her. I feel really good and I have good grades, I work hard in class and I am part of the group as a leader. (Q2ST4)

The previous account illustrates that a welcoming classroom atmosphere can promote the development of a positive learner identity. The participant mentions aspects of her language learning experience that seem to indicate that a warm environment fosters the shaping of a good identity as learner, and therefore a positive learning process. This participant self identifies as a leader, which could have been caused by previous learning experiences where she felt empowered by learning the language.

The way children interact in the language classroom is a fundamental aspect for their identity formation. In the elementary school, children also build relationships and create connections with others, and in other occasions, they face difficulties doing so. The following data exemplifies the way a participant values a positive relationship among classmates and the teacher:

> With my classmates I feel good, where my classmates don't discriminate, where they don't put you aside and I feel like I am actually learning. The teacher is good and knows how to explain. I feel comfortable. (Q1ST5)

The participant shows awareness about a positive group relationship, and possibly a positive group identity. Building a relationship among classmates based on respect and values, where she feels included and part of the group seems to be appreciated by the participant. The importance that she gives to feeling part of the group may be connected to a positive learning experience. She shows a sense of progress which may be linked to a positive experience socializing with her classmates.

Learners repeatedly mentioned the importance of having a good relationship with their classmates in the English classroom. They were asked in a five-minute-paper a question about how they felt in their English classroom. The following excerpt illustrates how a student values the sense of belongingness to the learning community:

> I feel important with my classmates, I was able to make friends and they don't bother me. The teacher is nice and she does fun activities and she does pay attention to you. (Q1ST10)

The participant highlights the importance of feeling an important part of the group and being accepted. This is a significant aspect of his learning experience, since he also remarks being able to make friends within the classroom. The participant values the role of the teacher by including him as part of the group. Addition-

ally, having a positive outlook in regard to one's role within the group may boost his self-esteem and confidence, which in turn helps him develop a positive learner identity.

Participants shared their preference to work in groups during their English class activities. The following quotes illustrate how students feel about working cooperatively in class:

> I prefer to do group activities. (GINT11)

> I like to work in teams because that way we can help each other. (GINT3)

These data samples reveal that students have an actual preference for working co-operatively with their classmates. Mellen (2002) describes identity as "the human nature that is socially constructed and changing" (p. 17). This improves the overall relationship of the students and the teacher because they have a better perception about the class. They are aware of the benefits of collaboration with their peers in order to accomplish a shared goal. This fosters a positive identity, as a valuable member of the group and as a capable learner. They play a more productive role in the classroom and it boosts their confidence, self-image and the relationship with classmates.

The relevance that teamwork has for most of the children was illustrated by a participant in the following quote, from a five-minute-paper:

> I feel really, really, really good, because everybody talks to me and the teacher makes us work in groups very well. Everybody is quiet and working. The recess is OK, and we can work in teams with whoever we want. (Q2ST10)

For this student the importance of social interaction and teamwork is palpable, as he expresses a positive attitude and even excitement about working with his classmates. Socializing with his classmates seems to be significant for his learning process since he highlights the fact that he enjoys working in class with classmates. He also stresses the relevance it has for him the fact that learners can choose who to work with, which might be a sign that the teacher allows them to exercise their agency and individuality, making their own decisions in class. This can certainly have an impact in their identity formation as learners, because they recognize their own unique value and build a strong confidence in themselves.

Some participants expressed how they value their own role as members of the

learning community, and how they give importance to cultivating a constructive social space among the group members:

> I feel part of the group participating in class, being friends with everyone. My best friend (a boy) is friendly, silly; my best friend (a girl) is studious, easy-going. I like everyone even though we are all different. (Q2ST12)

Apart from giving a high value to overall group relationship, this participant recognizes that his own position as member of the group is important. He highlights his contribution to the group by mentioning that he participates in class, which could possibly strengthen his own identity as language learner and as member of the social group. This might signify that for young learners in this study, engaging in positive social interaction among classmates is substantially fundamental for their language learning processes and their identity formation as learners.

The act of teaching in general provides teachers with opportunities to observe the ways in which learners get involved in their social space. The following reflection from a journal entry provides an illustration of the above:

> I noticed that Valentín is very shy in class. He is smart and responsible, and he is a good student and tries to interact with others although I see that he has certain difficulty. He's been hanging with Emmanuel and he (Emmanuel) has a contrasting personality. Emmanuel is outgoing and more participative, and extrovert. Valentín has become less shy and I notice that he has started talking to the rest of the group a little more, volunteers more and shows a more outgoing attitude. (JET1)

The way individual identities are formed, reformed and transformed is clearly observed through social interaction. The reflection above illustrates how one of the participants has a strong influence over another learner, who displays a rather malleable personality. In this example, both learners influenced each other; Valentín might have motivated Emmanuel to serve as a model for him to develop a somewhat stronger character. This discussion noticeably refers to this research, and it was visible through the conduction of it. One should not make assumptions or overgeneralizations that are universally transferred to other contexts. However, this one example can help amplify the vision of teachers in relation to the way their learners form social identities in the classroom context. The individual identity of a learner can be shaped by the influence another learner has, with the possibility of stimulating involvement in class and consequently confidence.

The data shows that the socializing process of students in the classroom is an important aspect that plays a role in their identity formation. Having group identity is significant for them because it boosts their self-esteem and confidence, which may bring advantages in their learning process. Hall (1997) notes that identity is highly influenced by the outside environment and the recognition that others have towards us; he claims that without others, we lose self-recognition. Participants in this study mentioned aspects of their socialization experiences which, in some way or another, affected them. There are some commentaries about issues with other classmates and difficulty to socialize. There are other data samples that show the importance of a positive socializing experience inside the classroom. Teachers are also an essential part in this process, since they set the tone of the classroom atmosphere and they can build a good relationship among students and teacher.

The Role of Learner Styles in Identity Formation

From the emerged data students show that most of them prefer learning with playful, outdoor and dynamic activities. This has a strong connection to the previous theme of learner socialization and learner identity formation. The topic of learning with games in the English classroom was made evident because the participants showed greater involvement and interest. The following two quotes illustrate what participants think about the use of games:

> I think that my school is OK; it's very fun. In the English class they teach us everything with games…I like that a lot. (GINT1)

> I like to come here and study English because they teach us using games, and we play outside too. (GINT2)

These participants state that they like their English class because they learn with games. With children it is commonly assumed that they enjoy games in the English classroom, and with these opinions from these participants it is confirmed. Learning with games and playing implies that the learners will engage in collaborative work and cooperation, which can help to reinforce their sense of community and socialization.

In a five-minute-question the learners were asked about the activities they preferred and felt better doing. The following two quotes show their preferences:

> I would like to have more games and to watch more videos, because sometimes I get a little bored. Also I want to do more activities outside, to go out to the patio and to do activities from the class. (Q4ST6)

> I like activities when we work in groups, in pairs and also with the book. I feel better with activities outdoors, in the patio or inside the classroom when we make teams. (Q5ST2)

As a general trait, children usually require constant physical movement and they are energetic students who most of the times are actively participating in the classroom. These two examples show that children feel motivated by activities where a change in the context is provided, moving from the traditional classroom activities to more dynamic ones outside the classroom. This helps them socialize while they work in the learning context, and in turn this improves their sense of community. The activities that language teachers carry out have a significant impact in the way children learn and in the way they perceive their language classes. It has been mentioned previously that children construct an image towards school and learning in general from experiences in the classroom Being able to see that their interests and needs are being addressed in the language classroom, such as including outdoor, playful and dynamic activities, might reinforce a positive view in regards to their learning process.

Students show that they are aware of the benefits that using games in class has for them. A number of data samples show how participants consider that using games in the classroom is beneficial for them. The following samples illustrate the connection that students make between learning and playing:

> There's a saying that says that you learn better by playing. (GINT1)

> I like the games we play in class because we learn better when we are playing. (GINT2)

> I like my English class because we can be learning but also playing. (GINT4)

> I like that even though we are working and learning, we play games too and I like that a lot. (GINT8)

According to these four participants, one learns better by playing. It is impressive to see that for relatively young students, this conception is present in their minds. The first quote shows that the student is confident to assert that learning is closely linked to playing. From this idea we can see that students show a preference for a fa-

miliar or friendly platform for learning. Experiencing learning in a way in which they feel engaged and comfortable may positively impact their learner identity. Socialization through games might additionally help to lessen the resistance factor which sometimes inhibits learner participation, since they feel more comfortable and safer. Teachers should include activities that involve playing games. Using familiar activities for children might be helpful in boosting a positive social identity and learner identity. They show that their learning styles affect how they perceive and experience learning English.

Some learners demonstrate a preference for certain learning styles, either as language learners or as elementary school learners. The data shows that students repeatedly talk about their preferences for learning English and learning in their schools. Moreover, they mention their learning styles in relation to achieving a better result in learning. For instance, they mention wanting to work with the book, to carry out activities outside the classroom, and to use technology, visuals and other materials. In particular, this theme showed that learners have a strong inclination towards games, pair work and group work. The inherent social interaction that characterizes group work can help students build a much stronger sense of community. Cooperative work might enhance their learner identity because they enjoy collaborative playful work. When students show preferences towards specific activities, materials and topics, teachers can identify those inclinations and implement them in the classroom. Teachers can positively promote learning strategies for their learners. Lamb (2011) argues that "teachers, therefore, should offer opportunities to develop the metacognitive knowledge and strategies which will enable learners to be more involved in their learning, nurturing their identity as learners capable of taking control of their learning" (p. 78). Implementing what students prefer in terms of learning styles or ways of learning may be helpful in building a positive learner identity.

The Importance of Their Self-image in Identity Formation

A major theme was the role of their self-image in their learner identity formation. From the data, students shared aspects about themselves that might be key to their identity formation. Students mentioned how they perceive themselves as English learners and as elementary school learners in general. Hirano (2009) argues that "people tend to maintain their identities, day after day, throughout their lives, to create stability and coherence in their lives" (p. 37). In order to achieve a successful English learning progress, students must feel confident, empowered and responsible for their learning.

Learners shared their ideas about how they perceive themselves as English learners. This is important because students position themselves as part of their group in relation to their self-image, and this is linked to their learner identity. Students sometimes have a negative perception of themselves as learners, and they may certainly be able to do more than they think they can. Students show learning difficulties due to several things, but many times this is due to their negative preconceived notions. Their role in a group can also be determined by how they interact inside the classroom, how they build their confidence and the beliefs they have. The following two examples show the perception that students have about themselves:

> Well, I think that I am like more or less, because I get good grades, but I don't think I'm like super smart. (GINT8)

> I feel that I'm not bad but not very good. I don't feel like I don't know…like very smart…but yeah, I do learn. (GINT10)

These two demonstrate that students seem to be unsure of accepting their capabilities. These self-perceptions may be a result of previous English learning experiences and experiences in their elementary school. The fact that they mention that they are not as good may be a sign of insecurity, which may result in a negative learner identity. When students are not certain of their capabilities, they are perhaps more vulnerable to believe they are bad students.

The perceptions of teachers about their learners can certainly have an influence on their own self-image. The following extract from a reflection journal describes how learners internalize the ideas that teachers have about them:

> I see that some students generally refuse to participate, or sometimes they have an unenthusiastic attitude. I consider that some of the students who are a little bit ahead of the rest usually show less initiative and seem less animated. With Hector this was happening, because I noticed he was feeling bored in class. He is very close to Ricky and they help each other with the activities, but Hector continues to start getting off-task and shows a bad attitude. I told Hector that he could help Ricky with his activities and I even gave him the task of explaining to him when he didn't understand. After some classes, I asked Hector to help Ricky, and he began to behave different and even to participate in class explaining some of the aspects we were learning. I think that he is slightly changing his attitude for the better. (JET4)

With this reflection I noticed that the self-perception that young learners have is often created from the way teachers see them. In this particular case, the learner who was more advanced to some extent showed a negative attitude, feeling bored, not doing the activities and not participating in the good atmosphere of the group. The fact that he was close to one of his classmates helped to create a different scenario, where Hector became the guide and represented a support for Ricky. Both benefited from each other since Hector began to show a better attitude, feeling more responsible and finding a role within the learning community which boosted his confidence and self-image. Getting involved in the class and engaging in social interaction within the learning community might be the motivation Hector needed to develop a positive self-image, which in turn helped him find a role he was comfortable performing.

Some students mention that they do not feel very competent, but even more, some of them describe themselves as bad students. This may represent a serious problem for students to experience successful language learning. Sometimes students begin to build their own obstacles based on their role as English learners and their perceptions:

> I think I still have more to learn… almost everything. I describe myself as if I still have a lot more to learn about English. (GINT1)

> I describe myself as very bad, very bad in English… I am not good at it, I'm not good...I try my best, but if I don't know… if I can't. (GINT6)

Students give the impression of feeling behind; they feel they still have to learn more. The first quote shows that the participant perhaps has a feeling of frustration because he feels that he still needs to learn. He might feel behind probably due to comparing himself to his classmates based on the comments of their teachers or even their parents. Although he feels he does not have a high level of English proficiency, he is aware of his learning, and he can perhaps do something about it in the future. In the second quote it seems that the student has internalized the idea of him being a bad English student, therefore he seems to have projected that in the classroom.

The following two quotes from a five-minute-paper illustrate how they perceive themselves:

> I feel like the one who studies, who works hard, and the one who participates and answers. (Q3ST1)

> I see myself as someone who studies, talks in class and sometimes gets distracted. I feel comfortable with my classmates. (Q3ST2)

These two examples show that learners have a general positive view of who they are as language learners. These participants demonstrate a sense of pride and gratification while expressing these thoughts. One might say that learners place strong relevance to the act of participating in class, which gives them the notion of being effective learners and act as models for other classmates to speak up in class. They show confidence and they relate such confidence to the work they carry out in the language classroom. Children quickly internalize the moments when teachers and classmates give recognition to their efforts, which may help them boost their motivation, self-esteem and positive self-image. Learners who feel responsible and feel that they are good students most likely will feel motivated to continue learning and improving. Small imperfections in learning are part of the language classroom nature, and realizing that they can be off task from time to time and still be good students can help them feel confident and develop a positive identity as members of the classroom community.

Conclusions: Answering the Research Question

The notion of identity is complex in its nature and it involves an interplay of a wide variety of elements. In addressing the research question, the data showed several issues which influence the learner identity formation process of young English language learners. One of the major areas which the data displayed was the role of their socialization process in the EFL classroom. The process of socialization in the language classroom community is a significant component of their learner identity development.

Having group identity seemed to be a relevant factor in their learner identity development. Furthermore, their relationship with classmates and teachers was significant in determining their sense of belongingness and their position within the classroom community. The data suggested that learners sought recognition and participation as members of the classroom community. Their identity was affected by the relationships they had with classmates, and in turn, those relationships shaped their individual learner identity at the same time. Just as their sense of affiliation to the classroom community affected them positively, participants expressed their frustration when they had difficulty to socialize. They often felt excluded and they found it difficult to relate to the wider community.

The way learners participate, and their level of involvement were shown to be affected by the way others perceived them and how they perceived others. In relation to the perceptions they hold about issues regarding their language learning, participants demonstrated that those perceptions affected the way they behaved in the classroom and how they interacted among participants of the community. Learners' interaction within the classroom community shapes, to a certain extent, their collective identity as community members which in turn affects the way they engage in learning processes and their development.

In relation to this dynamic process, the role of teachers in learners' socialization and identity formation was similarly significant. Participants provided evidence which informs the way in which teachers' behavior, actions, teaching styles and overall their relationship with learners suggests a connection with learners' identity. It is important to recognize that the role of teachers in their students' learning process is fundamentally influential. Learners gradually build up perceptions regarding their teachers and learning, which are shaped by the way teachers perceive learning, their beliefs, attitudes and behavior in school and education. Learners expressed how their teachers represented a stimulus or an impediment in their involvement with the language and with the classroom community in general. Therefore, it might be appropriate to assume that teachers hold a significant responsibility in defining a great deal of their students' identities.

The way in which young English language learners conceive their learning process and school in general are crucial factors to consider in relation to their learner identity. Language learners' perceptions, expectations and beliefs about learning and school have a strong influence in the way they see themselves as language learners. Data revealed that participants had an already solid perception about their learning of English. Students associated a negative classroom environment with a lack of motivation to work and participate in class. For this reason individual learners may perceive their classroom community as opposing to or disassociated from who they are. Participants depicted a chaotic learning environment as an issue that hindered their learning experience. This has to do with their self-image as learners since they constructed an idea of school which lacked order, discipline and perhaps seriousness.

Learners' self-image is critically important to their formation of learner identity, and in order to explore this aspect, learners manifested the ways in which they perceived themselves. This theme is particularly significant since their self-image impacted their identity as learners and their learning performance altogether. It was found that some participants hold an image of themselves which is characterized by struggle, incompetence and lack of motivation. In other words, learn-

ers sometimes labelled themselves as weak learners. Some other participants also had ideas about themselves in regard to their capacity to learn the language, and they labelled themselves as good students. From the data it was found that learners may label themselves with positive or negative adjectives which depend on other factors. Such factors include the students' social relations in the classroom, their relationship with the teacher, and their expectations, beliefs and attitudes towards learning English, school, classmates, teachers and themselves. From these findings it can be presumed that learners' individual identity is dependent on the ways they see themselves in relation to others, the ways others see them and their role within the learning community.

Implications

In answering the research question, the results obtained from the data indicated an array of possible issues that seem to be involved in the development of learner identity. The consideration of such factors allows teachers to have an enriched knowledge of their students and the process of language learning which connects to their learner identity. Henceforth, teachers hold a privileged position within their classroom where they can enhance their students' language learning process. Van Lier (2008) suggests that pedagogical action is required in order to direct learners to what he calls affordances in the environment. Such affordances refer to the learning opportunities available for them within their social space in the EFL classroom. Teachers are in charge of a considerable amount of pedagogical actions within their classrooms. They can help learners to take advantage of their social space and what it brings to their learning and identity development.

The relevance of the ways in which learners construct their identity and the ways that identity influence their language learning must be taken into consideration not only by teachers alone, but by authorities in charge of the design of language programs and curriculums. As argued by Coll and Falsafi (2010), "learner identity is the main mediator of participation in learning situations and as such deserves the special attention of policy makers and practitioners" (p. 229). Understanding how students' learning process is affected by multiple issues regarding their self-image might be beneficial for the design of language programs that take into consideration such issues. A major finding showed that the process of socialization in their language classroom sphere is a fundamental aspect for their identity development. Socialization in the language classroom largely contributes to a constructive formation of learners' identity. Learners' roles and the level of involvement as members of the classroom

community and their identity as learners are reciprocally informed by each other and should be fully considered by teachers in their practice.

Classroom interaction was visibly an important factor that is present in the construction of learners' identity. Positive and negative impressions of their learning community seemed to influence the way they interacted in the classroom, and in turn, their attitude and behavior were shaped by such interactions. Positive experiences in their language learning process seemed to improve their attitudes and behavior, and their learner identity was enhanced as well. For language instructors and authorities in the field it is valuable to consider how classroom interaction influences learners' identity. Young learners may possibly be benefited from teachers who take into consideration the ways in which they can construct a more positive learner identity through classroom interaction, and as a result, a positive language learning experience.

Limitations

This study was carried out in a local context; therefore, the findings should not be generalizable to wider contexts. It is important to consider the particularities of this study so that teachers and the ELT community members are aware of the limitations of the study. Nevertheless, English teachers could consider some of the more general aspects mentioned here.

Not surprisingly, time constraints were part of the limitations that this study faced. The need for more time to carry out the data gathering phase of the study represented a difficulty when conducting the face-to-face interviews with children. The choice of this technique represented that piloting was needed in order to enhance the interviews and the information to gather. The interviews were conducted after the required piloting was done. In order to delve into the interviews, a group interview was conducted. On the aspect of time limitations, the amount of data gathered by means of individual interviews, group interviews, five-minute-papers and the researcher journal took a great deal of time investment in decoding and analyzing the data excerpts.

Recommendations for Further Research

The area of investigation involves various aspects, such as identity formation, socialization, learners' self-image, among others. This study focused on the process of learner identity formation of young learners of English. Further research can

possibly attempt to explore the same construct, but from the perspective of language teachers. Further exploration in the ways in which teachers' identities and learners' identities affect one another is recommended. This might be helpful in providing insight into the area since teachers hold a particularly influential position with their learners. Exploring the ways teachers' identities interplay with aspects related to their practice could provide a wider vision in order to understand how teachers develop their teacher identity.

Conclusion

The purpose of the exploration of this research was to address different elements connected to the process of learner identity construction. The findings showed that the identity formation process of young children is highly influenced by a number of aspects related to their language learning. Most of the aspects reflected the importance of the role of socialization, the formation of a collective identity on the classroom group, the ways others perceive them, and their roles within the classroom community. Being members of the community influences the way they developed a self-image as learners. Language learners also developed ideas about themselves in relation to their capabilities, the way they interacted in the classroom, the ways they were perceived and the ways they related to others. It is pertinent to note that throughout the analysis of data it is suggested that learners' self-image and learner identity are closely connected. Learners who develop a positive learner identity were shown to be more likely to experience an equally positive language learning process. Based upon such findings, it is noteworthy that language learners go through such complex processes of identity formation, and these processes are influential in their process of language learning. Considering those issues that surround language learning and learner identity formation are crucial aspects to consider in teaching the language.

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THE EFFECT OF TEACHER-AUTHORED POETRY ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE VOICED DENTAL FRICATIVE

Neil Blomquist
Universidad de Guanajuato

Introduction

This is a study of the effect of teacher-authored poetry on learning the pronunciation of individual phonemes, specifically the voiced dental fricative phoneme /ð/. My interest in pronunciation has developed because of a personal interest in learning other languages, such as learning Portuguese and Spanish. I always struggled with pronunciation and tried to find ways to make it easier. One of the ways was to find a standard pronunciation which was widely used in the media. Another way was through the memorization of poetry. The problem with most poetry, however, is that it is often lexically complex, and therefore more difficult to concentrate on the pronunciation. In addition, there are often no limits to a particular phoneme, and so they result in being complicated for a beginner learner as well. As a Spanish and English language teacher, seeing my students go through the same experiences, I began to search for pronunciation activities and tools to help them. But there are very few resources, especially for beginners, and I saw my students overwhelmed with the quantity of information in a typical literary poem.

At the same time, as I was finishing the Master's in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching at the University of Guanajuato, I was studying some of the research on learning theory in general education, which examines the phenomenon of information overload on students learning a new skill. The only problem was that, according to many linguists, such as Chomsky, learning a language is different from learning other skills. Therefore, the experiment in this study was designed in order to test if general learning theory can be applied to language learning, as well as to test the effects of poetry on pronunciation acquisition.

This quantitative investigation explores the problem of teaching pronunciation and why a new delivery system may be necessary due to these gaps in theory and practice in the area of pronunciation acquisition. Although some time is spent on the theory, the purpose of the study is firmly fixed on the practical benefits for the teacher and student: to provide a more accessible and efficient means of teaching and learning pronunciation. This study focuses on the basic unit of pronunciation, the phoneme. To introduce these concepts of this study, this section will briefly

look at the problem, context, background, purpose and possible contribution of the study, as well as an overview of the content of the study.

Description of the Problem, Context and Background

Pronunciation is at a crossroads. Many teachers still avoid teaching pronunciation (Atli & Bergil, 2012; Breitkreutz *et al*., 2001; Fraser, 2006; Macdonald, 2002), even while increasingly some researchers encourage that it should be taught (Derwing, 2010; Jenkins, 2004; Levis, 2005), at least for the purposes of intelligibility. However, non-native speaker accents still pose a theoretical problem for researchers and teachers alike in determining how much accent is allowable without adversely affecting intelligibility (Doel, 2006). The research is not conclusive about what elements affect intelligibility, or whether teaching for the purposes of mere intelligibility is adequate. In the past, there has been some debate between those disagree about segmental features (individual sounds or phonemes), or suprasegmental elements (such as intonation) affect intelligibility more. However, Celce-Murce (2010) believes that the trend is shifting to attempt to include elements of both phonemic and prosodic elements in pronunciation instruction.

For prosodic elements, poetry is commonly used. For individual phoneme instruction, minimal pair activities are often used. This is an assumption based on any library or bookstore shelf in the pronunciation section of which poetry books for pronunciation are scarce and minimal pair books abundant. By nature, minimal pairs are focused on individual phonemes. The problem with minimal pairs is that they impose heavy demands on the student's mental capacity. This mental effort is called cognitive load (Sweller, 1988), and working memory is similar to short-term memory (Baddeley, 2003).

The reason that minimal pairs have more cognitive load is because of the tendency to present difficult phonemes at the same time, presumably for a single lesson. Not only can individual phonemes be more difficult to learn when presenting them with little regard for effects on cognitive load, it can be difficult to teach as well, because it requires too much of the teacher's personal time to study the lesson, not to mention class time, to present it all. Minimal pair activities may also require special materials, at least in the form of a supplementary book.

There is little research on the effect of poetry on the pronunciation of individual phonemes within second language acquisition (SLA), especially with a focus on the effect on beginners. Selevičienė (2013) is one author that makes a brief reference to the importance of individual phonemes. Woore (2007) uses poetry

for teaching grapheme morpheme correspondence (GMC), which trains the students to connect the actual sound (the morpheme) to how it is written (grapheme). The emphasis in research is on intelligibility, and the literature, for the most part, dismisses a focus on phonemes for comprehensible English (Munro & Derwing, 2006). As mentioned, the change to a more balanced approach is occurring, but minimal pairs are favored for instruction of individual phonemes, where as poetry is rare for this purpose.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to prove the following hypothesis: pronunciation accuracy of the voiced dental fricative phoneme /ð/ through minimal pair practice is more effective for beginners through rote memorization of poetry than through a minimal pair activity using a minimally guided approach. Minimally guided instruction is an umbrella term which covers various approaches, some of which will be discussed in detail below. In general, it is a term to describe the idea that a teacher should not explicitly teach students but should instead let them solve problems by themselves. According to the proponents of minimally guided learning, if students solve problems, they learn better. The hypothesis and primary purpose of this study is to challenge this common belief in pronunciation instruction as it has been challenged and effectively rejected in other areas of learning such as mathematics.

The other aspect of the hypothesis involves minimal pairs but have nothing to do with minimal guidance despite sharing the word *minimal*. Celce-Murcia (1996) defines a minimal pair as "words that differ by a single sound in the same position" (p. 3). For an example in this study, 'they' /ðeɪ/ and 'day'/deɪ/ are a minimal pair because of the change from /ð/ to /d/, which also changes one word to different word.

This approach to pronunciation instruction was chosen because they are a common way to teach pronunciation, as can be seen by the plethora of minimal pair books on the market, such as *Pronunciation pairs: An introduction to the sounds of English* (Baker & Goldstein, 2008) and *Ship or sheep* (Baker, 2006). The problem is that few researchers are questioning the use of minimal pairs from the standpoint of modern research in cognitive learning theory (often abbreviated as CLT, but to avoid confusion with communicative language teaching, which is also abbreviated as CLT, these abbreviations are not used in this study). The consensus about learning is that humans cannot assimilate much information at one time and retain it in

long term memory. This is true for any subject, and certainly true for language. In many cases, the teacher is an information regulator, supplying the correct and comprehensible information at the correct time so as not to overwhelm the student. In the case of a typical minimal pair activity, teachers will overload their students with too much information if they do all the activities that these books typically offer. For example, they contain various difficult phonemes taught side by side, as in the phoneme in this study, the voiced dental fricative /ð/, which is typically contrasted with the /d/, as in 'day' and 'they.' Yet the grapheme, the written representation of the phoneme for /d/, is typically where the voiced fricative occurs in Spanish. This is difficult for beginner students to master, and the amount of learning burden increases further when these minimal pair contrasts are illustrated with difficult and low-frequency vocabulary. Low frequency vocabulary are words that are not as common in the language. For example, the general service list (GSL) put together by West (1953) gives the 2,000 most frequent words in the English language. The farther away from these 2,000 words, the less frequent and more difficult a word is to learn. Cognitive learning theory also informs the problems of using a minimally guided approach to teach pronunciation through minimal pairs. A minimally guided approach was chosen as part of the experiment because it is rare for teachers to explicitly teach pronunciation, so naturally, students are left on their own to learn it.

Poetry was chosen because it is meant to be performed and read aloud, thanks in part to the tradition that began with the Greeks (Miller, 1996), but, most importantly, it is meant to be memorized. For good reason the Greeks made the memorization of poetry the theoretical basis of their pedagogy (Beran, 2004). This experiment could be an activity in which the students read aloud, but students often have more problems with pronunciation while reading (Silveira, 2009). The lyric poem could be considered a song, and the teacher could choose to do a song activity, except that, for the pedagogical purposes of pronunciation, there are problems with music. One is that the musical instruments do not allow the teacher, nor student, to properly hear and evaluate the phoneme in question. Another problem is that it is difficult to focus on only one of the many phonemes in the song, and this phoneme is not repeated a sufficient number of times to be pedagogically beneficial. There may be songs available, but it is time consuming to find songs like this. And finally, I have personally found that students are distracted by other low-frequency words and idiomatic phrases, and the lesson turns into a focus on low-frequency vocabulary and slang instead of pronunciation. In addition, students do not expect to memorize an entire popular song in class, but they may expect to learn a poem by heart, especially a short one. They may prefer

to listen to a popular song. They may even prefer to memorize one. The question for the teacher, however, is whether this is worth the time and effort. On the other hand, students can memorize a short poem based on one phoneme without too much difficulty or class time being diverted to the activity. This is because the teacher-poem can be as short as necessary, and because the rhyme scheme acts as a mnemonic device (Glaz & Liang, 2009), which is any technique that helps students remember more information for longer.

Poetry is also more easily modified than other mediums and pronunciation activities. The rhyming nature of poetry forces a change in emphasis in the minimal pair, focusing on the /ð/. The teacher also has more control over the vocabulary. This is done in order to limit the amount of information or the cognitive load so that the student can more effectively learn the target phoneme. The purpose of this study is to discover if poetry is a more effective way to teach pronunciation of phonemes than minimal pairs, since it may provide an easier and faster way for busy teachers to teach specific phonemes.

Contribution

It is my hope that this study will contribute to various perspectives to the field regarding pronunciation. Primarily, I hope that teachers and researchers alike might become more sensitive to the idea that some theories and approaches are applicable to certain levels as mentioned briefly and as will be explored further. For example, minimally guided instructional approaches are good for advanced learners, but not for beginners, as many studies have shown (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006). The same may be true with poetry, where its use for phoneme instruction may be better for beginners, whereas focusing on prosodic elements may good for advanced learners but lead to cognitive overload in beginners. In this I hope to raise awareness of poetry as a useful tool for pronunciation instruction of individual phonemes since poetry is not generally used for this. I would also like the research to reinforce the practice of teaching pronunciation as early as possible in language programs.

The problem is that poetry specifically for individual phoneme instruction is quite scarce. Because of this, I wrote the poem for the students to use in this experiment. In this aspect, I would hope to contribute not only the poem, but the idea that teachers can write their own poetry for their own classes without too much difficulty. To illustrate this point, and for reference, the poem is given here, and at other relevant places throughout.

The *t* and *h* in *the* and *they*
Is: Tongue out, vibrate, now say,
The and *They*.

As seen in the introduction, the scope, though narrowly focused on one phoneme, is by no means simple in theory, especially when it comes to learning theory in general, but also specifically in language learning and how it applies to pronunciation. This chapter explores the relationship between learning within a cognitive framework (cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics) as it relates to the theory and practice of pronunciation. It also proposes and sets out to prove that poetry is an effective vehicle for teaching and learning pronunciation of an individual phoneme, the voiced dental fricative best represented by the digraph (th) found in the word *the*.

In this section, relevant literature will be examined to give a theoretical basis for teaching pronunciation through poetry. Some background on learning theory and linguistics within the cognitive framework is given. Cognitive learning theory will be touched on as well as cognitive linguistics (CL) in order to show the basis for using poetry to teach pronunciation. The question as to why pronunciation is not taught explicitly will be explored as well. One of the reasons for this may have to do with the influence of the popular notion that students will learn pronunciation without explicit instruction. This minimal guidance from the teacher is dealt with at length, as well as the theoretical reasons for offering viable alternatives, in this case through poetry.

Historical Overview and Clash of Methods

As researchers become entrenched within their work and limit their research and teaching to a single linguistic school, other important factors lose importance or get left out altogether in favor of holding true to ideas only because they fall within the scope of a particular theory. To be sure, the development and application of one theory does not always occur in such strict, logical fashion and can be quite messy as Feyerabend (1993) observes in his book *Against method*; according to him, there is only one principle in research that can be historically supported:

> It is clear, then, that the idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naïve a view of man and his social surroundings. To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to

> please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, objectivity, truth, it will become clear that there is only one principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in all stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes*. [Emphasis in original] (pp. 18-19)

Keeping this anything-goes principle in mind could help applied linguistics more as well. It could help language teachers and researches in their application of theories and approaches where the gap between research and practice is so wide. To illustrate, behaviorism was initially concerned for practice in applied linguistics as can be seen from the popular audio-lingual method it helped create (Celce-Murcia, 1996). After a time, however, this view became inflexible, especially as another theory arose to challenge it, generative linguistics. It is claimed that language learning occurs differently than other types of learning, including behaviorist learning (Chomsky, 1959). Generative linguists threw out everything behaviorism had to offer and started over, stating that learning a language is different from other learning because the human mind comes with a universal grammar in place (Thornbury, 2006). From this kind of beginning, it is easy to see how rigid the generative perspective would be, how nothing but this theory goes, and therefore, how difficult this theory would be to apply to anything outside of the laboratory, much less the classroom. The gap between theory and practice became a chasm.

Chomsky's ideas were indeed a revolution, and this came to be called the cognitive revolution. This is because he began to focus on what is occurring in the mind, the mental processes, as we learn a language. However, Chomsky developed the black-box theory and left it at that. Meanwhile, further cognitive research continued, behind his back as it were, or behind his theory, with more of an anything-goes perspective, and in the 1980s came to be known more formally as cognitive linguistics. There is more of a tendency to support practice with theory, which in large part is the intention of cognitive grammar (Knop & Rycker, 2008). Researchers in the cognitive tradition, whether in cognitive grammar, CL, or cognitive psychology, at least in these beginning stages, remain less rigidly within the confines of learning or linguistic theory. This may be due in part to the fact that they start from research and work with the results to conclude whatever is necessary, although it challenges previous long-standing theories. Tomasello (2000), for example, based on research, challenges Chomsky's poverty of the stimulus argument and suggests that there may be a cognitive explanation in how children use formulaic language at first, and then move into more abstract uses of language later. Tomasello (*ibid*) notes how some researchers misinterpreted data, possibly

due to the prevalence of Chomsky's notion of the language acquisition device:

> Early work in developmental psycholinguistics, such as that of Braine (1976) and Bowerman (1976), found many highly concrete, highly local, item-based patterns in corpora of many different children learning many different languages. The conclusion was thus that child language was not fully adult-like. But these researchers seemingly could not believe their own eyes... (p. 68)

Geeraerts (2006) emphasizes that flexibility of CL in which "There is no single, uniform theoretical doctrine according to which these research topics belong together: CL is a flexible framework rather than a single theory of language" (p. 2). Fakhraee Faruji (2012) states that a cognitive framework can include behaviorism, whether it was intended or not by the proponents. However, CL is different from behaviorism because it focuses on the internal mental processes of learning a language. Behaviorists are interested in observable, outward changes in behavior, not the internal mental processes, which may or may not reflect an immediate change (Anderson, 2008).

As noted, generative linguistics is cognitive in that it is concerned with language as a mental process. What sets the perspective of CL apart from that of generative linguistics is the rejection of the generative tenant that there is something special about learning a language as compared to other types of cognitive learning. Mompeán (2006) states that:

> As it has generally been conceived of since its inception, Cognitive Linguistics (CL) is an approach to the study of language that endeavors to explain facts about language in terms of known properties and mechanisms of the human mind/brain. The guiding principle behind this area of linguistics is that the human language ability is not separate from the rest of cognition, that the storage and retrieval of linguistic data is not significantly different from the storage and retrieval of other knowledge, and that use of language in understanding employs similar cognitive abilities to those used in other non-linguistic tasks. (p. 1)

What sets cognitive linguistics apart from behaviorism, as seen in the above quote, is a focus on the mental processes. It is for these reasons that this study's framework will be cognitive, not behavioral, because of the focus on the mental process. It is not generative, because it is assumed throughout this study that language learning is like other kinds of learning.

Therefore, theoretically this study implements studies from another cognitive science, cognitive psychology, specifically as it pertains to learning and the relevant internal mental processes. Before moving on to learning theory, a relevant quote from Geeraerts (2007) makes this clear:

> Cognitive Linguistics is cognitive in the same way that cognitive psychology is: by assuming that our interaction with the world is mediated through informational structures in the mind. It is more specific than cognitive psychology, however, by focusing on natural language as a means for organizing, processing, and conveying that information. (p. 5)

This cognitive processing –the focus on what happens in the brain, and how the brain conceptualizes linguistic data– is a central focus in this study, with special attention on how the brain conceptualizes and processes phonemes in recognition, learning and production.

Learning Theory

Based on cognitive linguistics rejecting the theories of universal grammar, SLA has very much to do with what research has revealed about the mental process of learning in general, giving it a more flexible approach in research and practice. As will be seen, poetry has a similar flexibility, which allows it to incorporate elements of cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology. It may include behavioral elements in that it is a repetitive activity that is performed in the classroom with the praise or disapproval of the teacher. But this repetitive quality is necessary for much learning and, in most fields, the idea that one must practice something is rarely seriously challenged with the exception of applied linguistics; yet as soon as language is involved, the notion of practice is maligned along with behaviorism (Dekeyser, 2007), especially when it includes any kind of repetitive practice. However, this study aims to explore how poetry can move beyond the limitations of theory, in this case behaviorism, by taking into account the psychology of learning in two respects. First, "behavioral" or repetitive learning (listen and repeat) can be tedious for students, (Galloway, 1993), but poetry is not. Second, explicit instructions within the poem can offer students opportunities for repetitive practice with feedback without the need for a teacher's punishment or reward.

Practice is essential, especially with pronunciation. Contrary to current popular opinion evidenced by the pejorative drill and kill, repetitive practice is an effective

way to learn some skills such as sports and music (Ericsson, 2016). Though mechanical drilling may not be the best for all linguistic learning, it is "relatively uncontroversial that pronunciation is relatively immune to all but the most intensive formS-focused treatment" [capital S in the original] (Dekeyser, 1998, p. 43). Repetitive practice is a way to become intimate with a subject (Handa, 2011). The usefulness of pronunciation drills may be that it partially involves motor skills. It uses the tongue, lips, mouth and vocal cords to produce the necessary sounds that constitute phonemes; and motor skill development is best accomplished through repetitive learning. It is difficult to imagine a tennis player becoming good by hitting the ball once or twice a day, or watching others play tennis. Repetition is the mother of learning as the Roman phrase goes, especially when this learning is a motor skill.

Minimally Guided Learning

Naturally, CL goes hand in hand with cognitive learning theory when considering the practical applications of theory in the classroom. What ties the two together is a focus on the processes of the brain. As already mentioned, cognitive learning theory is a branch of study within cognitive psychology which is, in opposition to behaviorism, a focus on the mental processes of learning rather than a focus on environment affecting behavior (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Namy, & Woolf, 2010). The basic idea which sets it apart from pure behaviorism is that it focuses on the learner more than on the environment, more on the unobservable processes of the brain and how the brain works. Memory, the mental process is a significant area of research in cognitive learning theory (Clark, Nguyen & Sweller, 2011). It may be the most important concept to highlight in this section as it is the role memory plays in learning that, if ignored, can greatly hinder the process. Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark's (2006) simple definition of learning is a transfer of knowledge from short-term memory to long-term memory; therefore, learning is a "change in long-term memory" (p. 75). Indeed Miller (1956) confirmed the limitations if short-term memory in his research that people can generally remember seven plus or minus two bits or chunks of information—not much. Then, humans must quickly transfer these seven bits of information in the short-term memory to long-term memory and without distraction or they will not learn. Coming from this view of how the brain processes information, it will be clearer to understand how the minimally guided approach fails in part because it ignores how memory actually works.

Without guidance and the corrective feedback that teachers can give, students are unlikely to practice in a deliberate and effective manner. Ericsson (2016) calls this

focused, conscious practice deliberate practice. Considering what various branches of cognitive science have revealed about learning, teachers should be offering explicit guidance throughout the process until the students become experts themselves. Ericsson (*ibid*) illustrates the importance of guidance in the learning process and urges learners to find instructors because they can help so much in noticing errors, offering feedback and giving expert guidance on how and what to practice.

However, as will be seen, guidance is out of fashion these days. There is a theoretical basis for a variety of teaching methods that fall loosely under what will be called in this study minimally guided learning. Some include constructivism in this approach to learning, but the term minimally guided learning will be favored here because it describes the teachers' role (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004). This approach is rejected by cognitive psychologists for several reasons. One is because the main tenet in minimally guided learning is that learning occurs better when students must resolve problems for themselves rather than just have the material given to them to be memorized, hence the names minimal guidance (from the teacher) and at times constructivism, because the students must construct knowledge on their own, for the most part. There have been other names, such as discovery learning, problem-based learning (PBL), inquiry learning and experiential learning (*ibid*). Bruyckere, Kirschner and Hulshof (2015) list some other characteristics common to constructivism; these characteristics are inherent in the minimally guided approach such as: "group work, problem-directed education, the importance of authentic tasks and situations: these are all important elements of this social constructivist tendency" (p. 11). Hattie (2009) lists some of his observations on constructivism, with a provocative final sentence:

> Constructivism too often is seen in terms of student-centered inquiry learning, problem-based learning, and task-based learning, and common jargon words include "authentic", "discovery", and "intrinsically motivated learning". The role of the constructivist teacher is claimed to be more of facilitation to provide opportunities for individual students to acquire knowledge and construct meaning through their own activities, and through discussion, reflection and the sharing of ideas with other learners with minimal corrective intervention (Cambourne, 2003; Daniels, 2001; Selley, 1999; von Glasersfeld, 1995). These kinds of statements are almost directly opposite to the successful recipe for teaching and learning... (p. 26)

The minimally guided approach remains popular despite its problems (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004). In fact, Bruyckere, Kirschner and Hulshof

(2015) state that it is the primary paradigm in most countries. It is another example of how, once researchers and teachers subscribe exclusively to one theory, ignoring research, problems begin to surface. In this case, minimal guided learning has survived despite overwhelming qualitative and quantitative evidence against it. Minimal guidance can work and should not be discarded just because it is not cognitive, but as Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) reveal, this is the case only for advanced learners and experts because they already have a solid knowledge base. However, much of the research indicates that the minimally guided approach does not work for beginners (Bruyckere, Kirschner & Hulshof, 2015; Clark, Nguyen & Sweller, 2011; Hattie, 2009, 2015). Indeed, since the 1960s, minimal guidance has yet to be conclusively shown to work for novice learners (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004).

Minimally guided teaching is popular in language teaching as well, though less obviously. In part, this is why a minimally guided approach was chosen as the alternative minimal pair exercise in contrast to poetry, which, in this study, is more explicit: there is a relationship between minimally guided teaching and the communicative approach in that communicative language teaching tends to avoid explicit pronunciation instruction (Derwing, 2010). Or it may be that teachers simply do not teach pronunciation at all because they are afraid to teach it because they do not feel qualified (*ibid*). Whether due to cognitive learning theory or to a minimally guided approach, teachers may simply believe, without much theoretical basis at all, that students will eventually learn to produce foreign phonemes by themselves without explicit instruction from the teacher.

Cognitive Load Theory

Developed by Sweller in the 1980s, cognitive load theory empirically opposes the theoretical basis of minimal guidance. Clark, Nguyen and Sweller (2011) write with a sense of urgency in the modern information age citing yet another modern psychological problem called information fatigue syndrome, which is mental fatigue due to constant cognitive overload. One of the teachers' jobs should therefore be limiting the amount of information that a student gets in class, especially by organizing the information adequately. One of the ways to do this is by limiting what Clark, Nguyen and Sweller (2011) call extraneous load which is information that "imposes mental work that is irrelevant to the learning goal" (p. 12). Students who must learn something and resolve problems alone use too much of their mental resources in figuring out the solution than in learning the fundamentals.

Pronunciation

There are many reasons why teachers avoid teaching pronunciation (Derwing, 2010; Szyszka, 2017). This may not necessarily be a result of the teacher's conscious decision to remain consistent to a minimally guided approach, or because cognitive learning theory deemphasizes its importance. One reason why teachers do not teach pronunciation includes believing that they do not have the proper training (Derwing, 2010; Katayama, 2007). Another reason is that teachers sometimes think students do not want pronunciation instruction, but Derwing (2010), Katayama, (2007), and Yavuz, (2014) indicate that students do indeed want to learn it. This should not be a shock given the amount of material online and in bookstores dedicated to pronunciation. Searching for the exact phrase English pronunciation on Amazon returns more than eighteen thousand results. What is surprising is how little pronunciation is featured in the typical language learning classroom given the demand, but this is not always the teachers' fault. Little explicit instruction of pronunciation exists in many English textbooks such as the popular *American headway* (2010), which occasionally inserts a brief section on a suprasegmental aspect such as raising your voice at the end of a sentence for asking a question. The rest is mostly "listen and repeat" exercises with the alphabet or phrases, especially in the beginner textbook with no individual phoneme instruction (Soars, Soars & Maris, 2010). *New American inside out* is another example which relies on the behavioral listen and repeat approach (Kay & Jones, 2008). There are many other activities that a teacher can use to teach pronunciation in class such as using some of the phonetic alphabet when explaining vocabulary, which is what Underhill (1994) promotes, to name but one example.

However, there is some evidence that teachers are beginning to focus on teaching pronunciation in the classroom again, as was common before the communicative approach in the 1980s, except that many of these practices are not evidence based (Thompson, 2013a; Thomson 2013b; Wahid & Sulong, 2013). Whether not teaching pronunciation, or teaching it incorrectly, the result is the same: the student who needs or wants it does not learn it. Indeed, Derwing, Munro and Tomson (2008) found that, without explicit pronunciation instruction, L2 speakers will not make phonological changes. Not only this, but the longer a student produces the phonemes, the more likely that fossilization will occur (Ellis, 1997; Hismanoglu, 2009). Individual phonemes are not as commonly taught in the EFL classroom as prosody, but should be (Levis, 2005). And pronunciation should be taught right from the start to beginning language learners (Odisho, 2014).

Given the many varieties of English in the world, the argument could be made that it is futile or even racist to choose one way of pronouncing English over another. It is for this reason that there has been a major shift from "correct" pronunciation, or accentedness, to a focus on intelligibility (Derwing, 2010; Edo Marzá, 2014). However, intelligibility may not always be enough; some students want or need a certain pronunciation. This is where the communicative approach has also left language teaching void as far as pronunciation. It leaves the impression that it is enough to communicate, as if it were enough to point and communicate something which is considered intelligible out some vague wish or desire —as long as the students make themselves understood, everything is alright, and the thinking must go. This line of thinking ignores many other motives for expression through language besides the communication.

Much of the complicated nature of focusing on intelligibility is social. There may be an insufficient context for the interlocutor to understand. This is common for questions or requests such as: where can I get some water? If the word *water* is mispronounced and there is no water nearby to point to, communication may break down if the word *water* is pronounced differently from a commonly recognized accent. Besides this, there are a multitude of reasons why a person might want or need to pronounce accurately. Most obviously, people learning a second language within a certain country's borders might have social reasons to endeavor to speak like those around them (Giles & Coupland, 1991). This is my case where I speak Spanish as a second language and the pressure to speak it well is high for all the typical reasons such as avoidance of the various kinds of prejudicial treatment, such as social and workplace discrimination (see Derwing, & Munro, 2009). Sometimes the pressure to speak well is high just because I simply want to avoid the common stereotype that certain people from certain countries cannot learn languages well, especially concerning pronunciation –something commonly said of people from the United States living in Mexico. Also, there may be an unconscious element there as well. There is interesting research into why people start to sound alike in conversation, which Pardo (2006) calls phonetic convergence, and whether this is a conscious decision or not. Some of this is merely contact with other cultures, as accent convergence can be seen in South Africa after the fall of apartheid (Reed & Levis, 2015). But it may happen through the media, much of which is from the U.S. Two important reasons for a standard in pronunciation are that, one, it is useful for foreign language students as an aid to learning, because there are consistent rules, and two, because students can be understood in many contexts. As one Irish colleague at my workplace who people often do not under-

stand complained once: "Everybody understands the North American accent."

The social pressure for accent modification is strong in an English as a second language (ESL) context, but the argument for choosing one accent is more difficult to make where English is taught as a foreign language. However, there is an influence, if only because the countries are geographically close. There is significant pressure for comprehensibility in speech and listening for some Mexicans who are involved in international relations with the U.S. in business or politics. To be sure, business and English are controversial combinations these days, with some arguing that business is part of what is causing the perceived need for English, and as a means to maintain political and economic control of other nations (Holborow, 2006). Nevertheless, there are people who work or will work in businesses where English is important, and the necessity is real. These people sometimes work in companies from the U.S. and must communicate with management from the corporate headquarters by phone, in video conferences and meetings, live meetings and so on. Somebody involved in international business, hoping to make a sale, will be conscious of accent and the impression this gives —it could make or break the deal. The amount of foreign investment is quite large in the local context of the State of Guanajuato and the new *Puerto Interior* where many American companies are now doing business. There are many other international companies there as well; many choose to conduct international meetings in English, such as Siemens. The same may be true of some politicians where the impression they make may mean as much at home as it does abroad, given the negative reactions from Mexicans to their former president Peña Nieto's English, which has more to do with his pronunciation because his English is intelligible. Take for example one of the many videos from YouTube in which there is an informal transcription of Peña Nieto's pronunciation. Notice how the voiced dental fricative /ð/, such as in the words *the* and *that*, are transcribed with a *d* such as *de* and *dat*.

Teaching pronunciation may not have everything to do with production, but comprehension. There is some evidence to suggest that teaching pronunciation can help students in general with reading and listening comprehension (Roberts, 2005). This is the basis of one study in Mexico by Kolesnikova (2012) which sets out to teach pronunciation through computer assisted drilling.

It should go without saying that it is important that teachers do not make value judgements about pronunciation. They should not force a certain pronunciation on a student because they think their native country's accent is the best, the most correct, or the most beautiful. They certainly should not think that their culture is superior. Some students will only want to understand and be understood, and

sometimes only by other non-native speakers, so they certainly do not need to have perfect received pronunciation (RP) or general American (GA) accents, which are now minority accents worldwide (Jenkins, 2009). That is acceptable, and the teacher should not force the student to want more than what the student needs. However, if a student does want or need more in the way of pronunciation, teachers should be willing and able to give it to them and not turn intelligibility or a certain accent into a rule. Again, what is essential here is assessing the pronunciation needs of the student and being able to respond to these needs, for example with a simple questions or surveys about why students want to learn English, with continuing pronunciation assessment throughout the semester based on their these needs, especially if their pronunciation affects intelligibility, such as is the case with inter dental fricatives (Hismanoglu, 2009).

One major challenge with teaching English pronunciation in EFL is the lack of exposure to the language and one general accent from one specific country. This is no small disadvantage, but there are some advantages which may not be obvious. One is that, where teaching ESL in the United States, the students come with many different L1s, while teaching English in Mexico, most of the students have a common L1 with Spanish. Therefore, predictions can be made about the phonological problems that they will encounter, and teachers can develop strategies to deal with them. Obviously, L1 phonology interferes with L2 accent in specific and predictable ways, one study by Liu (2011) having confirmed this patterned negative transfer in pronunciation. Therefore, we can identify the L1 of the person speaking English because they have a specific way of producing phonemes according to the rules of their L1. In short, we say that they have an accent, and often qualify this by saying that they have a regional accent (Nathan, 2008). This means that the phonological concepts of Spanish speakers will be the same for the most part, and easier for a teacher manage. This also means that these phonological concepts that the students have as a result of their L1 can be utilized to assist them in forming different concepts using contrastive analysis. For example, Gómez and Sánchez (2016) note a common practice among Spanish speakers when attempting the English pronunciation of the voiced dental fricative: because /ð/ does not exist in Spanish in the same way, they often replace the sound with /d/. The /ð/ does not exist in Spanish in the same form, as it does not exist in many languages (Karakaş & Sönmez, 2011). The voiceless dental fricative /θ/ exists in Spanish as a close allophone, but the concept that Spanish speakers have of when to use it changes based on the phonological environment, not to mention that it is represented by a different grapheme in Spanish, represented by (d) (and (z) in Spain).

There is a variation of /ð/ in Spanish, as in the second *d* in *dedo,* but it is shorter and harder. In other words, it is produced with more intensity, or a higher decibel level. To native speakers of English, their /ð/ sounds different.

This slightly different pronunciation of this phoneme can make a significant difference, as will be seen, and is one of the reasons it was chosen for this study. Another reason is that the voiced dental fricative /ð/, represented by the digraph (th), is found in the word *the*. Though small, it is one of the most frequent words in English. The words chosen for the minimal pair experiment are *the* and *they* which not only both contain the phoneme /ð/, but these are common words. In fact, *the* is the most frequent word in English according to the Oxford English Corpus, while *they* is 26th in the list. Furthermore, in the top 100 words, there are ten other words that contain the /ð/.

The also contains more information than is expected. It is a good representation of the problems of teaching pronunciation as related to memory and learning explored above. It will be remembered that short-term memory can hold seven plus or minus two bits of information (Miller, 1956). If the information is a familiar word, the number of words, or bits goes up because these bits fit in chunks; if it is an unfamiliar word, the quantity of bits that can be remembered goes down, because there are fewer chunks that the student can form. This is relevant because of the number of separate bits of information contained in a foreign word with different, often unfamiliar phonemes such as the word *the* for English learners (ELs). In pronunciation alone it involves two new sounds for many Els: the schwa /ə/ and the voiced dental fricative /ð/. Students must learn how to pronounce the schwa and know that it is represented by the letter (e) as well as remember that it can be represented by other graphemes. Likewise, they must remember the more complicated pronunciation of /ð/ and that it is represented by the combination of letters (th). Besides this, the word *the* is generally not stressed, and so takes on the complicated aspects of prosody (or suprasegmentals, which is stress, intonation and rhythm). ELs must remember all of this besides the meaning, which may or may not be easy depending on their exposure to English. When first presenting this word to students, teachers often assume that it is easy, at least in meaning, but forget the complexities of learning the pronunciation, making the assumption that students will learn it eventually on their own. If teachers do not explicitly teach pronunciation, they are employing minimal guidance regardless of whether they use minimal guidance in other areas of language teaching. On the other hand, when teachers do teach pronunciation but use a typical minimal pair activity, too much information is added.

This heavy cognitive load can be seen from the popular minimal pairs book

Ship or sheep (Baker, 2006). For example, too many low frequency words are included such as *doze, breeze,* and *scythe*. Students will be distracted by repeating words they do not know, and will likely ask for the meaning, as has been my experience. Not only this, but the phonemes employed here induce a heavier cognitive load because they are in themselves difficult to produce and easy to confuse with other phonemes given in the lesson such as /z/ and /d/, phonemes for which entire classes could be dedicated. In order to avoid problems these problems, only one difficult phoneme was chosen for this study.

Another reason the phoneme /ð/ was chosen for this study is because attention to segmentals are seen to be less important for intelligibility than suprasegmentals (Doel, 2006). This is not to say that segmentals are not important, and some researchers do believe they are (ibid; Hismanoglu, 2009; Reed, 2011). Based on my experience with teaching, prosody (suprasegmentals) is more difficult to teach and, for the students, more difficult to learn, while individual phonemes are relatively easier to teach and learn (Levis, 2005; Saito, 2014). Therefore, I teach problematic phonemes first. If a student has problems with producing individual phonemes and has problems with prosody, this may cause more problems with intelligibility than problems only with prosody. For these reasons, I work on correcting segmentals before suprasegmentals.

Munro and Derwing (2006) propose a way to prioritize which phonemes should receive more attention and which less. They call this the functional load principle. This priority is based on how many minimal pairs there are for a contrast in words for each phoneme. For example, they point out that many words are distinguished by /l/ and /n/, but few between /ð/ and /d/. This is true. In fact, a nonstandard word *duh* was used to create the minimal pair for *the* in the experiment. However, as Zielinski (2008) proves in her research, comprehensibility can be affected by mispronunciation of the phoneme as well as misplacement of the stress. It is my experience that Spanish speakers, who normally stress their definite articles, also stress the English definite article *the*. This alone may not be enough to negatively affect comprehensibility, but if the phoneme /ð/ is pronounced as a /d/ or a /t/, intelligibility problems may increase. Comprehensibility may become even more of a challenge when the second phoneme of the word *the* is not /ə/ or an /ɪ/, but a completely different vowel. Furthermore, there is the problem with the word that follows, which may have similar problems of phoneme production and proper stress, adding to problems of intelligibility. These are strong reasons to prioritize phoneme focus in the classroom. The functional load principle, on the other hand, has significant drawbacks in selecting which phonemes should receive

priority in the teaching of pronunciation since it is based on minimal pairs, a relatively narrow criterion for prioritizing the needs of English learners.

The concept of intelligibility is complicated with such a common phoneme as /ð/ as well because the person listening may have no problem understanding what is said, but simply gets irritated and distracted by the frequency of the error (Doel, 2006). There is even evidence that accent can affect the way in which a native speaker perceives the grammaticality of an utterance: accent can make native listeners perceive grammatical errors when there are none (Kennedy, 2015).

Poetry

Poetry and the choice of the term poetry must be justified. Defining poetry is no easy task. Mill (1860) argued that the term poetry should not be limited to the form of a composition, such as meter and verse, but that it is something more artistic, philosophical and complicated, and that poetry can even be found in music and sculpture, stating its most important characteristic:

> The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite, namely, not prose, but matter of fact or science. (p. 93)

Using his definition, much poetry would not be considered poetry by Mill (1860), such as narrative poetry, disqualifying many of the great narrative poems of literature. Narrative poetry is nevertheless poetry according many literary canons, as well as according to one entry under poetry in the *Oxford English dictionary*:

> With special reference to its form: Composition in verse or metrical language, or in some equivalent patterned arrangement of language; usually also with choice of elevated words and figurative uses, and option of a syntactical order, differing more or less from those of ordinary speech or prose writing. In this sense, poetry in its simplest or lowest form has been identified with versification or verse. (Poetry, 2002)

In this definition, the essential quality is pattern and versification, which differs from ordinary speech or prose writing. Mackail (1911), also cited by part in OED, notes what for him the most important aspect of the form of poetry is:

> In general, the essence of poetry as an art is not so much that it is rhythmical (which

> all elevated language is), or that it is metrical (which not all poetry is, except by a considerable extension of the meaning of the word), as that it is patterned language. This is its specific quality as a 'fine art.' The essence of 'pattern' (in its technical use, as applied to the arts) as distinct from 'composition' generally, is that it is composition which has what is technically called a 'repeat;' and it is the 'repeat' which technically differentiates poetry from non-poetry, both being (as arts) 'composition.' The 'repeat' may be obvious, as in the case of rhymed lines of equal length, or it may be more implicit, to any degree of subtlety; but if it does not exist, there is technically no poetry. The artistic power of the pattern-designer is shown in the way he deals with the problem of 'repeat;' and this is true of poetry likewise, and is probably the key (so far as one exists) to any technical definition or discussion of the art. (pp. 12-13)

This definition also focuses on the pattern of poetry, but more specifically on the repeating sounds, such as rhymes, and by extension other poetic devices, such as alliteration and consonance. These last two definitions would include biblical poetry, which is a repetition of ideas or parallelism (Casanowicz, 2017).

These definitions allow for the range of uses of words to describe poetry. Nursery rhymes, for example, are considered poetry (Carpenter & Prichard, 1984). What seems to separate the different forms of poetry which contain repetition and verse is the intention and audience. Nursery rhymes, sometimes simply called rhymes, are often pedantic and for children. Tongue twisters could be classified as poetry when they are in verse form and have the features of the repeat, usually in sound. Tongue twisters are generally used in English, as well as Spanish, to cause problems in pronunciation for a humorous affect. However, in Spanish, there are what could be classified as *rimas* or rhymes, which are generally not emotional or high art, used not to confound pronunciation, but rather to help it. An example of this kind of poetry in Spanish begins, *R con r cigarro.* This poetry is usually referred to as rhymes (*rimas),* but this is not always to distinguish it from literary poetry, and the terms rhyme and poetry can be synonyms referring to poetry. One example of this can be found in the title to Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's (1864) *Rimas y leyendas* in which *rimas* refers specifically to his poetry. There is also Coleridge's (1798) *Rime of the ancient mariner,* which also refers to the poem with verses and repetition.

For these reasons of ambiguity with the classification of *rhyme*, the teacher-authored poem designed for this study will be called a poem and poetry, though, according to some, it is not literary nor high-minded art with emotional and philosophical subtleties. It will be referred to as poetry because of the following reasons: it is in verse form; it repeats end-line consonance, or rhymes; and, most impor-

tantly, it repeats the key phoneme /ð/ which is the most important pattern for the purposes of this experiment. Another reason that this type of teacher-authored pronunciation poetry will be called a poem is because there is a sort of continuum in poetry from simple children's poetry to sophisticated high art, from no emotion to based on emotion. In a similar way, the simple teacher-authored poetry can be for beginners in pronunciation who are trying to master individual phonemes, while the more complicated artistic, literary poetry can be for advanced learner trying to master intonation and rhythm.

As seen, using poetry to teach prosody instruction is more common (Rai, 2012). Using poetry for individual phonemes instruction and practice is less common in English teaching, and relatively little literature discusses this for ESL/EFL. Often, the discussion in using poetry in the classroom involves phonics, common for teaching literacy in the L1 such as this title: *Synergistic phonics and fluency instruction: the magic of rhyming poetry!* (Rasinski, Rupley, & Nichols, 2008). Within English Language Teaching (ELT), Woore (2007) uses poetry for teaching grapheme morpheme correspondence (GMC), which is the ability to recognize the letters and produce the corresponding sound. This is important, although GMC is the focus and not phoneme production. Poetry is used to increase phonological awareness in a general way by some (Algozzine, McQuiston, O'Shea & McCollin, 2008; Selevičienė, 2013). Wong (2008) also uses poetry for phoneme instruction, but she clusters the phonemes together rather than focusing on one phoneme at a time. A problem with these approaches is that they are not focused enough, dealing with too many phonemes at once, which can lead to cognitive overload for English students.

If pronunciation of individual phonemes is taught, the most common tool is minimal pairs, evident from popular books such as *Pronunciation pairs: An introduction to the sounds of English* (Baker & Goldstein, 2008) and *Ship or sheep* (Baker, 2006). For this reason, minimal pairs were chosen as one of variables to remain constant in the experiment. The variable to be checked is poetry in order to see if it is an effective way to modify pronunciation (or conceptual phonology) at the individual phonemic level through explicit instruction focused on one target phoneme.

Teacher-authored poetry can go beyond minimal pair instruction by reducing the cognitive load. This is necessary due to the problems with presenting minimal pairs as traditionally found in textbooks dedicated to this method of pronunciation teaching. One major distraction with a typical minimal pair activity is that they typically include words that would rarely be confused in context (Levis & Cortes, 2008), or they must use words that have a low frequency, especially for a

beginner. This can be seen in the book *Pronunciation pairs: An introduction to the sounds of English* (Baker & Goldstein, 2008). In the introduction, presumably for beginners to the sounds of English, they have such words as: *doze, lather, breed, breeze, tease* and *teethe*. For this reason, in order to control the variable of vocabulary becoming a distraction, the excess vocabulary words in this study were removed, and only *the* and *they* remained for the experiment. The poem has basic words, which most beginners know with the likely exception of *tongue*. Poetry may also elevate a minimal pair activity because poetry can include other aspects of pronunciation such as prosody, without increasing the cognitive load much, for example, by teaching them that *the* is not stressed.

Even though minimal pairs could fit within a cognitive phonology framework by showing contrast, which is about the extent of it being cognitive. Poetry, on the other hand, also shows contrast, as well as other important cognitive elements such as the use of images. Use of images has been shown to improve learning (Pashler *et al*., 2007). Of course, images could be used with the minimal pair activity at the expense of the teachers' time, and possibly money (if they had to print out the image), but the poem includes the image, albeit imaginary; it is no less of an image just because it is mental. This image is represented by the second line of the poem, "Tongue out, vibrate." Now, it is by no means, a sophisticated poetic metaphor, but it is something that can be easily visualized. If the teachers writing the poem for their classes are able, and their students so inclined, more complex imagery can be used, but it is not necessary. Fraser (2006) illustrates the importance of images within a cognitive learning framework with the adage, "When I hear, I forget; when I see, I remember; when I do, I understand" (p. 87).

Not only does imagery play an important role in poetry and make it a more effective medium for teaching pronunciation through minimal pairs, it also incorporates elements that involve other effective aspects of cognitive learning theory, including this aspect of repetition of the target phoneme. The disadvantage of doing a typical minimal pair activity is that there is not enough repetition of the phoneme. Too much time is often wasted on other non-target phonemes. The cognitive load is too much, and learning can decrease. Time is wasted on practicing other confusing phonemes such as /d/, which may cause them to learn less because they confuse the two sounds due to difficulty and similarity, yet with different graphemes in the L1.

Minimally guided approaches use the student's time inefficiently (ibid), and this is the case for this experiment as well. In the non-poetry group, the participants were required to figure out for themselves what the difference is for the minimum

pairs *the* and *duh*. At the end of the time allotted, they had to tell me and the class what to do with the mouth, lips, tongue and voice to produce these words. In the twenty minutes of the experiment that it took for the minimally guided group to come up with a theory about the articulatory difference between /ð/ and /d/, they may have said the phoneme many times, but they were investigating, not practicing. The poetry group, on the other hand, had practiced the target phoneme of /ð/ around an average of fifty times. The /ð/ was repeated five times, which means that, if it takes around 10 repetitions to memorize the poem, they say the phoneme 50 times in 20 minutes. With the activity found in *Pronunciation pairs: An introduction to the sounds of English* (Baker & Goldstein, 2006) they will have said the phoneme fifteen times. Again, with the minimally guided activity, they may say the word many times, but they may say it incorrectly. The idea is for the target phoneme /ð/ to be practiced correctly and use the student's time more productively. Hattie (2009) illustrates the importance of this correct practice for beginners:

> A key difference, however, between experts and novices, is that it is deliberative practice rather than experience that matters –that is, extensive engagement in relevant practice activities for improving performance (as when swimmers swim lap after lap aiming to over learn the key aspects of their strokes, turns, and breathing). It is not deliberative practice for the sake of repetitive training, but deliberative practice focused on improving particular aspects of the target performance, to better understand how to monitor, self-regulate and evaluate their performance, and reduce errors. (p. 30)

In the poem, the students are given exactly what to do to produce the phoneme, and a way to check to see if they are doing it correctly in the line *Tongue out, vibrate*:

> The *t* and *h* in *the* and *they*
> Is: Tongue out, vibrate, now say,
> *The* and *They*.

Poetry can also elevate minimal pair instruction to a different and improved level of effectiveness because of enhanced focus. For one, teaching two different phonemes too closely may cause confusion for beginners. Nation (2000) makes an observation about the problems of lexical sets in learning vocabulary: if the words are too similar, or are easily confused like Tuesday and Thursday, the words, if presented to learners at the same time, will require more repetitions to learn. There is a possibility that this same phenomenon could occur when learning two similar phonemes

at the same time, as in this case the /ð/ and /d/. This is even more confusing for EL's whose L1 is Spanish because the grapheme (d) more closely corresponds to the unvoiced /θ/ (as in the (th) of bathroom), not the phoneme /d/. Poetry's flexibility allows, and, in this experiment using rhyming poetry, demands a change to non-targeted phonemes that are not trying to be mastered. In this experiment *the* /ðə/ and *they* /ðeɪ/ the vowel is changed, not the phoneme /ð/, thereby lessoning the cognitive load and amount of repetitions needed to learn the target phoneme. *They* rhymes with *h* and *say*. It is still a minimal pair activity, but the minimal pair has been shifted to the non-target phonemes. Anything that requires practice, not mindless repetition, requires conscious practice. This kind of practice is why pronunciation may facilitate deliberate practice (Ericsson, 2016) in pronunciation exercises limited to one phoneme. As stated, poetry can be extended to suprasegmental practice as well. There are no minimal pair exercises for prosody, of course. If teachers hope to teach pronunciation effectively to advanced learners, teachers will have to supplement the minimal pair activity with other pronunciation activities. This is easier said than done and can be costly in time and money. Teachers are usually busy and using other pronunciation teaching approaches will involve learning how to use them in the classroom. With poetry, it is just a matter of having the students memorize the poem and offering corrective feedback. If the classes are large, a line can be included in the poem which allows students to check themselves or others and offer corrective feedback. Other pronunciation activities can cost the teacher money because most textbooks do not focus on pronunciation, so they may need to buy a special pronunciation book, if it is not available in the school library. *Ship or sheep*, the popular minimal pair book, costs about $40 with the CDs on Amazon. The school may not have other resources necessary for some of the other pronunciation activities. Some of these activities need special materials, such as audio-visual equipment, computers and special computer programs which take time to learn how to use, and money from the teacher or institution to buy. Simple, teacher-authored poetry is cheaper in time and money because the teachers can write the poem themselves for beginners to practice each target phoneme. For more advanced prosodic aspects, such as stress, rhythm and intonation, teachers can use classic poetry for advanced learners, or, if they feel comfortable, write a simple poem focused on the more complex aspects of prosody. This is more common use of poetry, as seen, but poetry could be designed to focus on certain problem of prosody and may then be suitable for beginners and intermediates as well.

Rote learning, and listen-and-repeat activities have a bad name these days, and there are many articles and theories maligning any use of it in the language class-

room, because it might seem boring to students does not adhere to a particular approach or method such as cognitive learning theory, or contains elements of behaviorism. Behavioral drill and kill do not fit within more commonly accepted language theories such as Chomsky's language paradigm. Behaviorism in a linguistic paradigm is adamantly rejected by Chomsky (1959), but recent developments in cognitive linguistics suggest that languages are learned in much the same way as anything else. The cognitive emphasis in other areas such as psychology, especially cognitive learning theory, are therefore relevant to SLA. Cognitive psychology rejects the various minimally guided approaches to learning for beginners based on many years of qualitative and quantitative research showing that they do not produce learning conditions which justify the time, effort and cost on the part of teachers and students. One of the principle reasons for this is the fact that novice students who are not explicitly guided by a teacher experience heavy cognitive load on working memory, or short-term memory. This is due to students using more mental resources on resolving the problem. With so little space to begin with, less is available for deliberate practice. Low cognitive load combined with deliberate practice is one of the keys to good learning in general, and this experiment confirms that the same may be true in SLA also. Keeping these general learning principles in mind for pronunciation activities in the creation of a teacher-authored poem may help students learn important phonemes for effective communication. Students may not always like poetry, but they do not always like grammar either. Nevertheless, I have found that students resist at first, but they eventually enjoy the poetry. Conversely, though many students will say that they like doing a song activity, quite often they get bored by it, either because it is not their style of music, or the lyrics are too easy or too challenging. Teacher-authored poetry gets around this because teachers know their students, and a poem activity can be as short or as long as the students need.

Discovery happens through a combination of research, luck, judicious application of theories at the right time, flexibility and the idea that anything goes in research and teaching, as long as there are favorable results. This mentality is flexible enough to keep an open mind and not adhere to linguistic schools of thought at the expense of research or teaching outcomes not supported by empirical evidence.

Methodology

This section explains and justifies the methodological basis for a quantitative research experiment in a teaching and learning context. It lays out the design of the

experiment, the sampling of the student population, the computer program used to analyze the voice data and the standards used to analyze the data.

Brown (2011) defines second language studies (SLS) research as "any systematic and principled inquiry in second language studies" (p. 190) and defines quantitative research as "any research that focusses on counting things and on understanding the patterns that emerge from those counts" (p. 192). This is a quantitative study which was designed, first of all, around the belief that quantitative analysis can and should be used in applied linguistics, though it is not common nor easily accomplished, especially in setting up randomized experiments (Brown, 2004; Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991).

This was an experiment, and not a quasi-experimental study because the experiment adhered to scientific principles. Though the population is limited to the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato, the students included in each group were randomly selected. The sample size was relatively large (at around 158 students) and the environment was highly controlled (Brown, 2011). It is experimental because it tests a hypothesis: to test the effectiveness of poetry as compared to a traditional minimal pair approach involving aspects of learning theory in order to prove or disprove the following hypothesis:

> Pronunciation accuracy of the voiced dental fricative phoneme /ð/ through minimal pair practice is more effective for beginners through rote memorization of poetry than through a minimal pair activity using a minimally guided approach.

Another important aspect of quantitative analysis is variable control and the inclusion of a control group (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). A typical minimal pair activity contains a large amount of information, such as various phonemes and complicated vocabulary. In order to control the variables, the amount of information in the control and experimental groups was reduced for both.

The poem was designed with a view to keep this kind of information overload to a minimum in both groups, taking into consideration the principles of cognitive load theory. This was accomplished by limiting the focus of the treatments to the voiced dental fricative. In this way, one aspect of learning theory was still able to be tested in both groups, which is whether students can learn pronunciation with minimal guidance from the instructor.

Another variable that was controlled considering cognitive learning theory as a basis of the design of the activities is that, for both control and experimental groups, the pronunciation of the words was modeled by the instructor. For the

control group, *the* and *duh* and *they* and *day* were modeled to match the number of times that those words were read in one reading of the poem: three times for *the*, and two times for *they*. The poem was likewise modeled to the students by reading it one time to the students. They had to memorize and repeat the following poem, written by the author for the purposes of this study:

> The *t* and *h* in *the* and *they*
> Is: Tongue out, vibrate, now say,
> *The* and *They*.

Consistent with cognitive learning theory, the idea here is that the students were told explicitly what to do with their tongue and how to do it within the poem, followed by rote memorization and deliberate practice of the target phoneme. Each participant repeated the target phoneme five times per recitation. So, if it took them ten repetitions to memorize the poem, then they repeated the phoneme 50 times in the 20 minutes allotted for the activity.

The variable of the type of activity was controlled by making both activities minimal pair activities. The poem was designed with a modified minimal pair concept. This was done to maintain the rhyme scheme of the poem, and the rhyming was an element that I did not want to exclude, because it is one of the justifications for using poetry in the first place, which is that rhyming poetry is easier to remember (Glaz & Liang, 2009). The modification was also made to reduce the minimal pair to a non-target phoneme while retaining a focus on the target phoneme. In this case, *the* and *they* are technically a minimal pair. But the traditional approach to teaching pronunciation through a minimal pair activity would be to make a contrast between two phonemes, one of them being the sound which is being taught. For example, *they* and *day* where /ð/ is the sound being taught and /d/ is the contrast. However, with the poem, even though there are many more phonemes present in other incidental words, the focus remains on the /ð/and instead the minimal pair is made with the vowels which are not the focus. Therefore, the schwa in the word *the* /ðə/ is contrasted with the diphthong *they* /ðeɪ/ thereby maintaining full cognitive attention on the /ð/.

The control group retained a traditional minimal pair approach with a focus on the phoneme in question and a phoneme to show the contrast /d/. There are two more phonemes, the vowels /ə/ and /eɪ/, with a total of four phonemes in two words. Consistent with the one of the fundamental concepts of minimal guidance, the students had to theorize, with no help from instructor, about what difference

there was between the following minimal pair, and how to produce these sounds on the model I provided to them by pronouncing the following words:

The—Duh.....They—Day

As mentioned, the variable of time was controlled and both control and experimental groups were 20 minutes in duration. Feedback was restricted for both groups. However, feedback naturally occurred between the students and was not discouraged. It will be noted that the feedback was often incorrect in the non-poetry group while feedback in the poetry group was based on the explicit instruction of tongue placement written in the poem.

The independent variable then is the pronunciation activity type within what is classified as a minimal pair activity: Poetry as compared to a minimally guided activity. It will be noted here that this is an experiment to prove that poetry does indeed work well to modify phoneme production. This is not simply guided instruction vs. minimally guided instruction, but rather how poetry can incorporate various elements of cognitive learning theory and CL. Therefore, it is easy to limit the cognitive load, include explicit instruction, and exemplify deliberate practice by having a focused exercise with a template of feedback within the poem itself, i.e. whether the tongue is out or not. This is verified by studying the dependent variable by measuring the differences in the changes in the pronunciation of the production of the target phoneme /ð/.

Objective

The general theoretical objective of this study was to prove that, in general, learning theory can be applied to SLA. The specific theoretical objective was to see if minimal guided learning is less effective than guided learning as it is in other areas of learning, such as math and science. In this study it was consistent with experiments in other areas, and the conclusion is that pronunciation should be explicitly taught to beginners. An effective way to explicitly teach individual phonemes is through deliberate practice, or focused attention throughout the repetitive task; memorization of a poem designed to be used with expert guidance from a teacher may be one way of encouraging pronunciation based on recent research with cognitive approaches in learning theory and linguistics.

A secondary objective of this project is to develop an approach to teaching pronunciation which is free, relatively fast, effective and easy to employ by teachers

who have little experience or resources with which to teach pronunciation. These poems are easily written for any phoneme, and they could conceivably be written by any language teacher. However, further qualitative research is needed to determine teachers' perceptions on writing these poems, as well as factors that would determine resistance to the approach.

Population

Both experimental groups were made up of students who volunteered and signed consent forms. The student participants were randomly selected from all levels from the entire population at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato. All students were Mexican and have Spanish as a first language. Without a doubt, proficiency is a complicated issue because language learners can have varying degrees of proficiency regardless of level. This is especially true with pronunciation proficiency which can vary greatly, with some beginners more proficient than some advanced learners. The problem of an advanced learner who has fossilized pronunciation of the voiced dental fricative who needs intervention will be dealt with in the conclusion of the study.

Age was not a variable that was controlled for two reasons. One is that the majority of the students fall between 18-25 years old. And two, the research is not conclusive on this subject. In a meta-analysis of pronunciation instruction, Lee, Jang, and Plonsky (2014) found few reliable and conclusive studies on pronunciation and age, with complicated factors, such as second language and foreign-language contexts not being adequately accounted for. Most importantly, the authors found that many studies do not include participants within the critical period of before 12 years of age. In this study, there were no participants who were 12 years old or under because of a minimum age requirement at the University of Guanajuato being set at 15. In this same meta-analysis, gender is not mentioned (*ibid*), and is therefore not accounted for in this experiment.

The Language Department at the University of Guanajuato had a population of 1,124 students during the January-June 2016 at the time of this study. Of these students, 24% were masculine and 76% were feminine. Initially, the sample was chosen from 18% of the total population, which was around 200 students. However, due to factors, such as desertion and scheduling conflicts, the experiment ended with 14% of the total population, or 158 students from the eight different levels. The sample size goal was at least 10% of the population. A factor that can negatively affect the sample size is the care with which the participants were in-

cluded in the experiment. The greater the care in selecting the participants, the lower the percentage can be, such as the case of the Gallop Poll which accurately predicts U.S. presidential elections by sampling as little as five people for every 100,000 (Freedman, Pisani, & Purves, 2014). In order to ensure that the sample was representative of the entire population, care was taken to include students from all levels of the program and from a variety of different classes in the morning and afternoon with both native and non-native teachers.

These eight levels were divided into three different categories for the purposes of the study: Beginner: Levels 1 and 2; Intermediate: Levels 3, 4, and 5; Advanced: Levels 6, 7, and 8. These 158 students were divided into two groups. The first group, the poetry group, consisted of 73 students or 46% of the sample, while the non-poetry group had 85 students, or 54% of the sample (Figure 1).

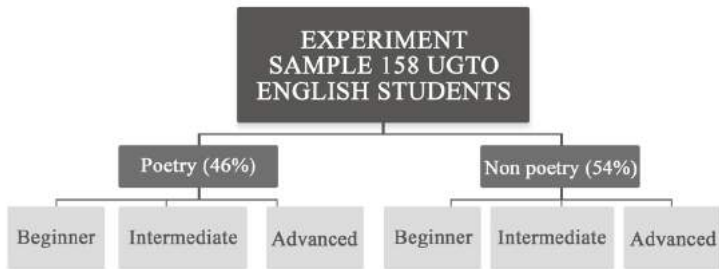

Figure 1. Classification of the groups.

Voice Data

Three recordings were obtained from the students. The first recording took place before the pronunciation activity. The second recording took place immediately after the activity. And the third recording was obtained a month after the activity to check for retention. All the data was recorded on a phone and processed on the computer.

The data was analyzed through a free computer program called Praat. The program allows for the spectral-temporal analysis, which means that the voice data is represented graphically and can be measured. Praat was used to analyze three key features for producing the voiced dental fricative: duration, intensity (measured in decibels) and whether the recording contained what is known as a voice bar (Smith, 2013). This bar appears in the spectrogram if the phoneme is produced with the voice active in the lower decibels throughout the duration of the production of the phoneme (Figure 2).

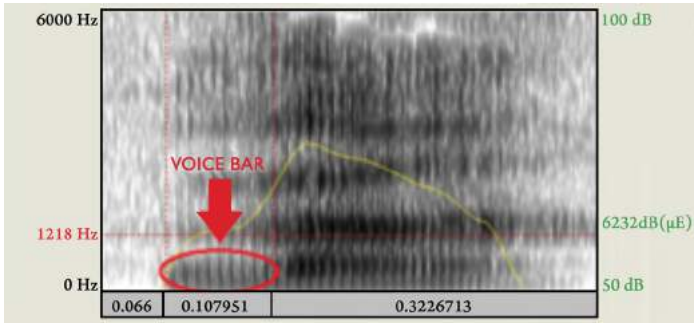

Figure 2. An example of the appearance of the voice bar in the production of the voiced dental fricative /ð/.

Discussion of the Use of Praat and the Standards Employed

The voice data was recorded ensuring, as much as possible, that there was minimal ambient noise. The data was organized with reference to the values of duration, intensity and whether there existed a voice bar or not for each recording of the production of the word "the." The computer program Praat was the ideal program for converting the voice data into numerical data, for various reasons, not the least of which because it is free. It has the capability to measure down to milliseconds. This is an indispensable tool for phoneme pronunciation measurement because a difference in deciseconds with the voiced dental fricative /ð/ forms a different phoneme such as /d/ (Figure 3).

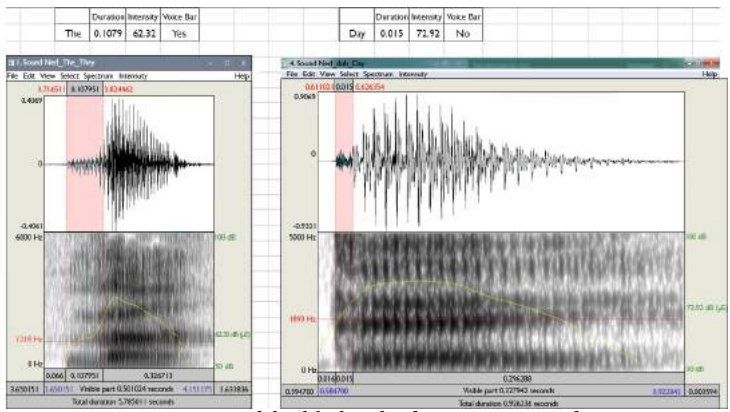

Figure 3. Pink highlights the duration in seconds of the /ð/ on the left and /d/ on the right.

Notice in the difference between these two phonemes that there is quite a variance graphically in seconds, although looking at the raw numbers there is only a difference of 0.0929 seconds. However, in this case, it is this difference in deciseconds that makes one phoneme another phoneme, and, in the case of minimal pairs, makes one word and not another. When the difference is not a minimal pair, it can affect intelligibility, especially if there are other problems, such as stress, or other supra-segmental (prosodic) problems. This breakdown in communication is the case at times even with North Americans when encountering non-standard pronunciation by native speakers from other countries which pronounce *the* as /də/ or /tə/, such as some non-standard Irish and Scottish accents.

Praat also measures in decibels, allowing for the measurement of the intensity of the sound produced. This is important because the higher the decibel with the voiced dental fricative, the more likely it will sound like a /d/ or a /t/ (Figure 4).

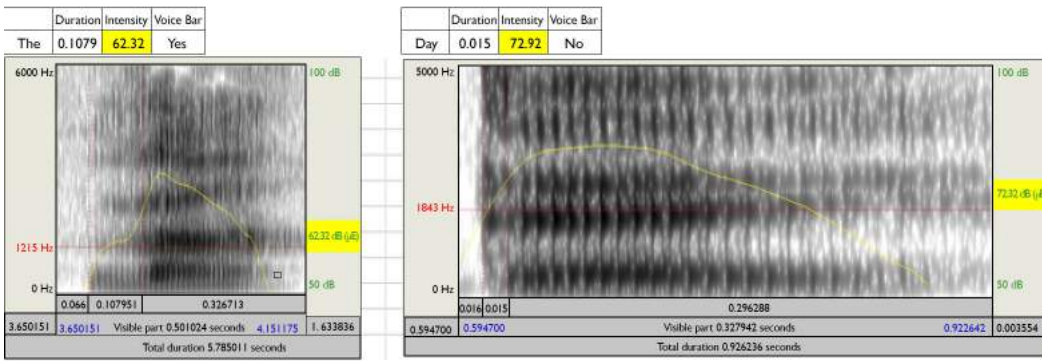

Figure 4. Yellow highlights the measurement
of decibels of /ð/ on the left and /d/ on the right.

Notice that with only a difference of 10 decibels, with the short explosive duration, the /ð/ becomes closer to /d/ or a /t/.

Once these numbers were obtained, a statistical analysis was performed with emphasis on central tendency. The central tendency is the value that represents the entire data set (Weisberg, 1992). The most common central tendency measurement is the arithmetic mean, also known as the average. The arithmetic mean is the sum of all the values in the data set divided by the number of values in the data set. The median is another common measurement of central tendency and can be thought of as the middle value of the data set. The advantage of the median is that, unlike the

arithmetic mean, it is less affected by extremely high or low values. The mode is the most frequent recurring value in the data set.

In order to corroborate these basic means, the harmonic mean, the geometric mean and the quadratic mean were calculated as well. The harmonic mean should be close to the arithmetic mean, and it is also less susceptible to outliers in the data (Xia, Xu, & Qi, 1999). The geometric mean will be close to the other central tendency values, but instead of using the sum of the values as in the arithmetic mean, it uses the product of the values (*ibid*). The quadratic mean will also be close in value to the other means and is the square root of mean square, which is why it is also known as the root mean square (RMS) (Daintith, 2009). Standard deviation was calculated to further verify the data by measuring the amount of variation in values in the groups.

The fact that there must be a standard for this kind of experiment presents some difficulties when dealing with pronunciation. The question of which of all the many accents in English should be the standard is not easily resolved due to many factors, such as cultural values and the desire to resist any form of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2015).

In the end, it was decided that a general American accent would be used. Another way to classify this accent is as a general North American accent, since Canada does not have great variations from a Midwestern accent that is typically found in media in the United States and Canada (Boberg, 2004). The prevalence of this accent in the media is one reason it was chosen as the standard. Students are much more likely to have been exposed to this accent through movies and television programs. Interestingly, even native speakers who have a different accent from this standard who want to be in the movies must reduce their accent, often through accent reduction classes. Another reason this accent was chosen is the proximity of Mexico to this accent, not only geographically, but in business and political interaction. It is more likely that Mexicans will interact with the people from North American countries through tourism and business than accents from other English-speaking nations.

The standard for the calibration of the model included a native English-speaking teacher who speaks general American English (GAE), a non-native Mexican English teacher who speaks with a GAE accent, and a voice sample from Google was downloaded which is also a GAE accent. The mean of these three gave the following parameters:

Duration: 0.1 seconds
Intensity: 63 decibels
Voice bar: Yes. (Meaning that there is a visible voice bar in the spectrogram.)

A helpful comparison between the two similar but different voiced dental fricatives in English and Spanish is revealing. Duration is one important distinction between the English /ð/ and the Spanish /ð/. Another is the typical position in the word in which this phoneme occurs in the respective languages. Spanish rarely uses the /ð/ in the initial position and English quite often does. The English initial /ð/ is longer in duration, as mentioned, an average of 0.1 seconds as compared to 0.032 for the /ð/ in the Spanish word for finger *dedo*. This represents .7 decisecond difference which is a relatively long time in pronunciation.

There is also the grapheme correspondence problem in which Mexican Spanish-speaking students typically will pronounce the (th) as a /t/, in which case the duration will be even shorter. Therefore, any improvement in duration for this phoneme represents progress towards the standard. Improvement beyond the 0.032 second that is typical for the Spanish /ð/ represents a closer correspondence to the duration of the average standard /ð/.

Conversion from Voice Data into Numerical Data

The recordings of the students saying *the* were catalogued based on their level, and whether they were in the experimental group or the control group. They were also organized into categories based on the tests (Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2). They were individually analyzed in Praat, and the numerical data recorded in Excel (Figure 5).

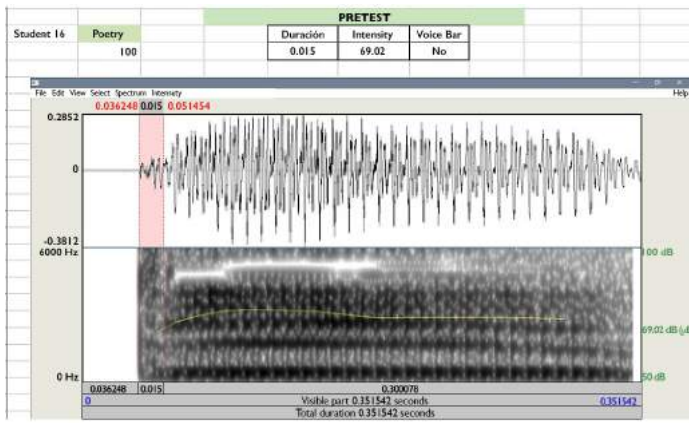

Figure 5. Conversion of voice data into numerical data for the statistical records.

These numbers were then recorded and organized in list form in Excel (Figure 6).

300 J INTERMEDIATE												
	Pretest			Post test 1			Post test 2					
	Duration	Intensity	Voicing	Duration	Intensity	Voicing	Duration	Intensity	Voicing			
1	0.0027	50	y	0.0337	63.02	y	0.0895	61.74	y			
3	0.0072	62.76	y	0.0267	60.73	y	0.0253	62.7	y			
7	0.008	63.86	y	0.0173	64.65	n	0.0118	74.46	y			
9	0.003	60.34	n	0.039	60.67	y	0.0381	59.96	y			
11	0.0068	66.33	n	0.097	58.75	y	0.0964	61.39	y			
13	0.004	63.96	n	0.0814	58.45	y	0.0383	60.75	y			
15	0.0089	63.97	n	0.0287	66	y	0.0228	58.6	y			
17	0.0412	66.91	y	0.0473	64.7	y	0.0144	60.44	y			
19	0.0089	69.5	y	0.0368	62.51	y	0.012	65.85	y			

Figure 6: Showing the raw numerical data.

Finally, the numbers were statistically analyzed with central tendency and standard deviation (Figure 7).

Beginner										
					Pretest					
Duration	X^2				Intensity	X^2				Voice Bar
		N	17				N	17		Yes
0.0146	0.0002	Valor máx	0.0367		79.12	6260	Valor máx	82.85		Yes
0.0101	0.0001	Valor min	0.006		82.85	6864.1	Valor min	50		Yes
0.0097	9E-05	Rango	0.0307		63.5	4032.3	Rango	32.85		Yes
0.0115	0.0001				66.45	4415.6				No
0.015	0.0002	Media	0.0119		69.02	4763.8	Media	66.658		No
0.0197	0.0004	Mediana	0.0099		68.19	4649.9	Mediana	66.39		Yes
0.0123	0.0002	Moda	0.007		63.81	4071.7	Moda	#N/A		No
0.0099	1E-04	Media armonica	0.0098		63.64	4050	Media armonica	65.901		No
0.0076	6E-05	Media geométrica	0.0106		64.62	4175.7	Media geométrica	66.282		Yes
0.007	5E-05	m^2	0.0002	0.0033	61.57	3790.9	m^2	4493.4	76386.95	Y
0.0109	0.0001	Media Quadratica (s)	0.0139		68.46	4686.8	Media Quadratica (s)	67.032		Y
0.0082	7E-05	Sesgo (med-mod/s)			61.82	3821.7	Sesgo (med-mod/s)			n
0.006	4E-05	Desviación Estandar (s)	0.0073	0.02 ± 0.01	73.66	5425.8	Desviación Estandar (s)	7.2909	66.58 ± 7.08	n
0.007	5E-05	Coef de Disp. Rel. (v = (s/x)*1	61.116	61%	67.21	4517.2	Coef de Disp. Rel. (v = (s/x)*1	10.938	11%	n
0.0367	0.0013	Variable normalizada			50	2500	Variable normalizada			n
0.0096	9E-05				62.88	3953.9				Y
0.007	5E-05				66.39	4407.6				n

Figure 7. Showing the statistical analysis in Excel.

As a standard for the target pronunciation of the phoneme, the author, a non-native English teacher, and a Google service with a recorded human voice were used. The population was randomly selected. The variables, such as time, activity and amount of feedback, were controlled to determine the dependent variable by measuring the differences in the changes in the pronunciation of /ð/. A pre-test

and two post-tests were administered to measure the performance of the pronunciation of the production of the voiced dental fricative after the treatment using specialized voice analysis software. Finally, the data was analyzed and is presented following sections.

Data

It can be seen below that the beginner students who participated in the poetry activity were able to perform the pronunciation of the voiced interdental fricative closer to the standard than the non-poetry group. Beginners improved the most, although there was improvement in the intermediate group as well. Both treatments had little effect on the more experienced advanced groups. Students in both of the advanced groups performed about the same with the exception of voicing, which showed slight improvement in the poetry group. However, the poetry groups did not reach the standards given by the author, Google and the non-native teacher. There was improvement relative to where they started and compared to the non-poetry group. In general, for almost all of the criteria of duration, intensity and voicing, the poetry groups improved. The non-poetry groups, on the other hand, did not, and in some cases, got worse after the treatment. These findings are consistent with the literature on the subject which states this aspect of learning less is not uncommon in minimally guided approaches (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006).

Duration is the area in which they all groups struggled to meet the standard of making the phoneme last for 0.1 seconds. However, the tendency is upward; in other words, each level does improve in the poetry groups relative to the standard (Table 1). The effect is diminished as the level and the experience of the students increase.

Table 1. Showing the comparison between all levels for duration in the poetry groups relative to the average standard.

Comparative Duration For Poetry

	PRE	POST 1	POST 2
POETRY BEGINNER	0.011929	0.03839	0.0437647
POETRY INTERMEDIATE	0.008229	0.05127	0.0355323
POETRY ADVANCED	0.012625	0.03362	0.0313083
STANDARD MEAN	0.100000	0.100000	0.100000

For the beginners in the poetry group, there was an upward tendency in duration from 0.012 to 0.044, bringing the duration closer to the standard. This is a 32% improvement with respect to the standard value. The intermediate students in the poetry group added 0.027 seconds to their duration going from 0.008 to about 0.04 seconds, representing a similar improvement as to the beginner poetry group, which is 27% improvement in the intermediate group with respect to the standard value. The advanced students in the poetry group added 0.019 seconds to the duration of the phoneme, going from roughly 0.013 to 0.03, which is not a significant change compared to the beginners and intermediates, representing a 10% change with respect to the standard.

This overall upward tendency in the duration of the data toward the standard clearly shows that the use of teacher-authored poetry focused on one phoneme works better for beginner and intermediate students than for advanced students, which can be seen in the comparative graph below (Figure 8).

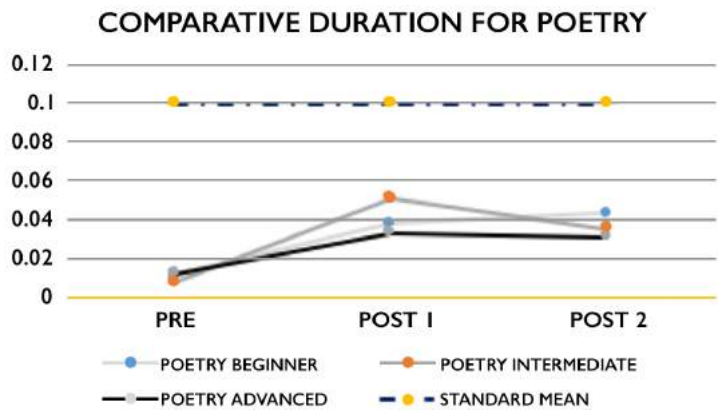

Figure 8. Showing the comparison between all levels for duration in the poetry groups.

The mean duration for the non-poetry groups had a downward tendency for the beginner and intermediate groups, while the advanced groups showed improvement in the first post-test but returned to how they began in the pre-test (Table 2).

Table 2. Showing the comparison between all levels for duration in the non-poetry groups relative to the average standard.

Comparative Duration For Non-Poetry

	PRE	POST 1	POST 2
NON-POETRY BEGINNER	0.02474	0.01828	0.01878
NON-POETRY INTERMEDIATE	0.02558	0.01905	0.01388
NON-POETRY ADVANCED	0.02014	0.02690	0.02157
STANDARD MEAN	0.10000	0.10000	0.10000

The beginner non-poetry group lost 0.06 seconds going from 0.025 0.019 in the duration of the phoneme. This is a 6% decrease in relation to the standard duration. The intermediate students lost 0.012 seconds, which is a 12% decrease in relation to the standard value. The advanced group gained .002 seconds, which is a slight increase of 1.43%. This means that they generally stayed the same, regardless of the treatment given.

The overall downward tendency in the duration of the data away from the standard for beginner and intermediate students, and the slight improvement and return to pre-test values for the advanced group can clearly be seen in the comparative graph below (Figure 9).

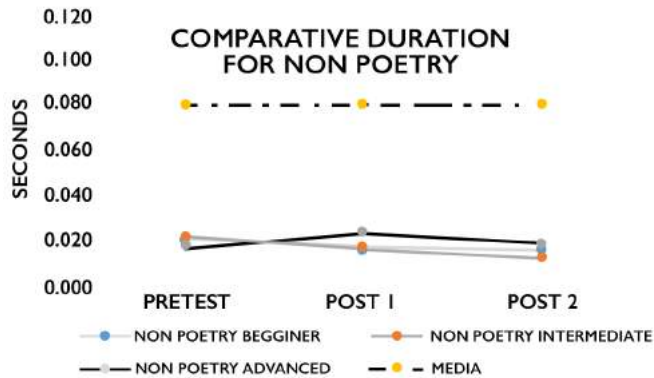

Figure 9. Showing the comparison between all levels for duration in the non-poetry groups.

As far as the intensity, the tendency should be downward as it will be remembered that this phoneme should be produced with less intensity, or a lower decibel output, the standard being 63 decibels (Table 3).

Table 3. Showing the comparison between all levels for intensity in the poetry groups relative to the average standard.

Comparative Intensity For Poetry

	PRE	POST 1	POST 2
POETRY BEGINNER	66.66	67.42	63.62
POETRY INTERMEDIATE	65.53	64.43	65.63
POETRY ADVANCED	65.89	68.40	66.61
STANDARD MEAN	63.30	63.30	63.30

For beginners, there was a 3.04 decibel change in intensity bringing it within 0.62 decibels of the standard, which means that the poetry treatment helped the most in the beginner group. There was almost no change at all in intensity in the intermediate group, staying around 65.5 decibels. Intensity deviated from the standard by nearly 1 decibel in the advanced group, going from 65.89 to 66.61, again showing that the poetry treatment had little effect on the duration of the advanced group.

For the poetry group, this overall downward tendency in the duration of the data toward the standard can be seen in the comparative graph below, as well as the stability of the advanced group regardless of treatment (Figure 10).

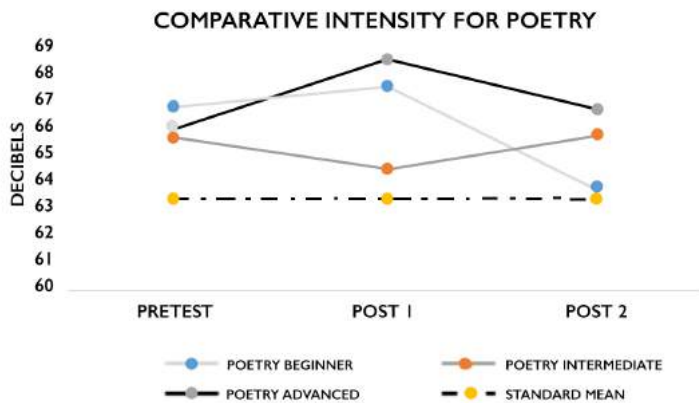

Figure 10. Showing the comparison between all levels for intensity in the poetry groups.

The comparison between levels in the non-poetry group shows that there was not a significant change in intensity for beginners going from 68.04 up to 69.50. There is a slight downward tendency for the intermediate students. Nevertheless, there is a slight increase in average decibel levels (Table 4). It will be remembered that at 70 decibels, the voiced dental fricative is a /d/ or a /t/, so the fact that the values remain around 70 decibels with no change was significant.

Table 4. Showing the comparison between all levels for intensity in the non-poetry groups relative to the average standard.

Comparative Intensity For Non-Poetry

	PRE	POST 1	POST 2
COMPARATIVE INTENSITY FOR NON-POETRY	68.04	69.08	69.50
NON-POETRY INTERMEDIATE	68.04	67.53	67.71
NON-POETRY ADVANCED	65.92	67.51	66.86
STANDARD MEAN	63.30	63.30	63.30

For the non-poetry group, this overall upward tendency in the intensity of the data away from the standard and towards 70 decibels is represented in the comparative graph below (Figure 11).

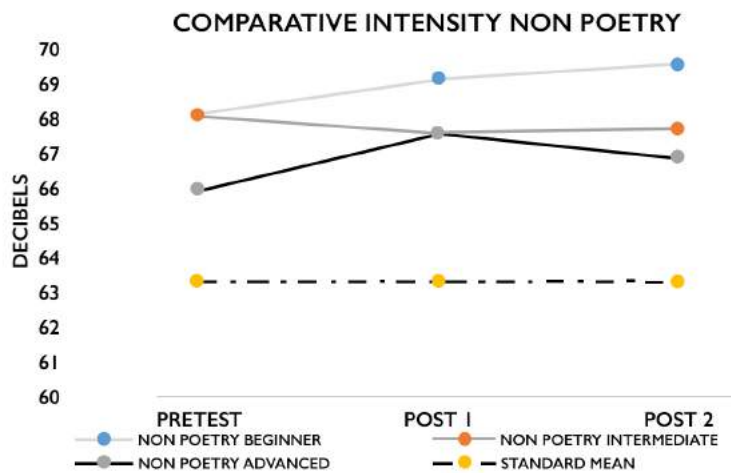

Figure 11. Showing the comparison between all levels for intensity in the non-poetry groups.

Combined with improvements in the duration and intensity, an improvement in voicing can make a significant difference for the production of the voiced dental fricative. Voicing on its own is not enough of a factor to make a difference. If there is voicing, but the phoneme produced is short in duration and high in intensity, this essentially nullifies the positive effects of voicing because it makes the phoneme sound like a /d/ to listeners.

As can be seen overall, the poetry groups increased the most in the beginner and intermediate groups, while the non-poetry groups decreased their ability to produce the phoneme according to the standard set in this study. This is consistent with Derwing and Munro (2005) who argue that English learners at lower levels show more rapid improvement as a result of instruction. For the advanced groups, no treatment has a significant effect on them except for voicing which was aided by the poetry treatment more so than by the minimally guided approach activity. These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed above which has examined this effect in other areas of education when a minimally guided approach is used for any students who are not advanced.

This study was carried out with the purpose of examining the effect of poetry on teaching pronunciation of the individual phoneme /ð/. The perceived need for this kind of study was not initiated because of the notion of the superiority of native speaker pronunciation; it comes from students' desire for pronunciation, whatever their motives may be. It also considers some of the reasons that pronunciation is not taught such as teachers' lack of desire or inability, because of training or technology, to provide pronunciation instruction due to time restraints and de-emphasis in most textbooks and school programs. Teacher-authored poetry may be an effective way to provide a quick and easy tool for modifying the pronunciation of /ð/ in language-learning with these limitations.

To test this, I chose one of the most difficult phonemes not only for Spanish speakers but even for children in an English-speaking household learning the language as their L1–and it is typically one of the last sounds that they master (Nathan, 2008). This led to testing the hypothesis: pronunciation accuracy of the voiced dental fricative phoneme /ð/ through minimal pair practice is more effective for beginners through rote memorization of poetry than through a minimal pair activity using a minimally guided approach.

Summary of Findings

Although poetry is used for suprasegmental instruction for advanced learners, the

use of poetry is underused for pronunciation instruction at the phoneme level, especially for beginners, and to some degree intermediate students. This was proven effective in the Mexican context where the language learners' L1 is Spanish. The treatment in this study was shown to be effective for what is considered the most difficult phoneme for Spanish speakers, the voiced dental fricative, but further research is needed for other phonemes in other contexts with other first languages.

The advanced groups did not benefit from either treatment and tended to return to their pre-test levels. This may be due to the stabilization of the accent over time. Or it may be that advanced students need some other activity to correct pronunciation at the level of individual phonemes. Beginner and intermediate groups benefitted the most from the poetry activity. This indicates that teaching pronunciation of phonemes to beginners right from the start is useful, and that a positive way to accomplish this is through memorizing simple poetry for problem phonemes.

Limitations

By far the most difficult obstacle to overcome in this study has been the justification of the importance of pronunciation instruction. Pronunciation has had a tumultuous history in the teaching of English, first racist imperialism mandating it, and then complete avoidance of it. Now pronunciation is in a gray area where some teachers do not care to teach it, or, if they want to, do not really know what to teach or how to go about teaching it. If teachers do decide to teach pronunciation of phonemes through teacher-authored poetry, which accent they choose could be considered a significant limitation and choosing the GAE accent could therefore be considered a limitation of this study, despite the defense of its adoption by this and other authors. In summary, it is a widely used and consistent accent which every student is exposed to in the media with strong social and business ties due to the proximity of Mexico to the United States and Canada.

Another limitation could be a general resistance to poetry. This comes in two forms. The first is that poetry is not generally used for beginners, but is sometimes used for advanced learners (Rai, 2012). The second is that it may be that of all the arts, poetry is generally the one that is resisted the most, for several reasons. Sometimes this is because poetry is narrowly defined as a set of rhyming verses dealing with difficult, subtle language and emotion –not something that teacher or students are likely to spend limited time on in a second language classroom, especially with beginners. However, in my experience, once students try poetry, they tend to like it. Also, teachers could widen the narrow definition of poetry to include music and

tongue twisters as an introduction to the poetry and then move onto actual memorization of rhyming verse. Or they could use a different term, such as learning verse. Some of the unexciting verse such as the teacher-poetry could be justified to the students by leading up to a verse activity through song with popular music. Even though the students may resist poetry, if they want to improve pronunciation and know that poetry can help with this, they may be more open it. A lot of it depends on how the teachers sell it.

There may be fewer limitations in Mexico, even if poetry is not as accepted by the general public, because of a general appreciation for didactic tongue twisters. These kinds of tongue twisters are, as discussed above, a form of poetry, though they are not considered high art. They have one that is quite well known for the teaching of the rolled r, or the alveolar trill /r/. The beginning is: *R con R cigarro, R con R barril, rápido corren los carros cargados de azúcar del ferrocarril*.

Importance and Significance

There are wider implications of these findings for SLA. One is that this study may lead to more hesitancy about becoming entrenched within one methodology, approach or theory of language. For example, teachers and researchers may believe in minimally guided teaching. They may think, or hope, that pronunciation is something that the students will effortlessly learn pronunciation the way kids do. But it is important to remember that pronunciation is a different kind of linguistic problem, with different ways to successfully deal with it quite apart from grammar or vocabulary. Because the audio-lingual method and behaviorism are out of fashion, especially in contexts where communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching remain popular, listen and repeat exercises may be avoided. Rote memorization is out of favor in general education, especially in cultures where English is the native language, hence the common pejorative drill and kill. Nevertheless, it is not a good idea to throw a theory out with the passing fancy of the experts or the industry, but rather to consider every theory appropriate for some contexts and some students if there is empirical evidence that indicates that students learn from it. It just may be that behavioral listen-and-repeat exercises are great for pronunciation. If this is so, it follows that poetry, even simple rhymes, may be effective for this kind of intensive repetition through memorization.

What is gaining ground is the application of CL and cognitive learning theory to SLA. Although behaviorism initiated the idea, psychologists and applied linguists are beginning to prove the similarities between learning other skills and

learning a language. If they are right, then these theories can certainly be applied to SLA in general and to pronunciation, expanding the possibilities of tools available in the classroom. The principles of learning and CL are also what may make teacher-authored poetry an effective tool for learning pronunciation of specific phonemes.

Cognitive psychologists have known for some time that deductive, minimally guided learning does not work with beginners, and the results of this study corroborate these findings. What certainly cannot be disputed in any learning setting is the idea that the human mind can only learn so much information at a time. Therefore, limiting the amount of information for whatever the teacher happens to be presenting is also a promising idea in language instruction, from vocabulary to grammar. An illustration in pronunciation is that a minimal pair activity involves unnecessary amounts of new information. There are confusing, low frequency vocabulary and confusingly similar sounds. Using poetry has long been used for advanced pronunciation instruction for prosody awareness and improvement. But this kind of instruction is generally for advanced learners while beginner learners are left with minimal pairs, listen and repeat, or nothing. Poetry for beginner and intermediate students, adapted for the purposes of pronunciation, can remove the unnecessary information and focus repetitive, deliberate attention on a limited number of new skills to be learned.

Recommendations for Further Research

Many of the implications of this study involve the beginner and intermediate students, who are often left out as far as pronunciation is concerned specifically and learning theory in general. As seen in this study for language learners, and in studies done in general education (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006), minimally guided learning has been shown to be ineffective for all but advanced learners. However, advanced students may benefit from teacher-authored poetry as well. They may be novices as far as pronunciation, but advanced in other areas of the language. Because of fossilization, they may simply need more time with the intervention, more repetition, and more deliberate practice in order for changes to take effect. Or it may be that this kind of fossilization is difficult to remedy (Karakaş & Sönmez, 2011), and requires more time to remedy. A separate study would need to be performed to determine this.

Due to the time constraints of this research, a longitudinal study could be carried out to examine the delayed effects of teaching pronunciation of individual phonemes

through poetry. The reason for this is that there is often a gap between what students learn in the moment, and the time it takes for them to automatize this learning. A longitudinal study might also include an examination of phoneme production in isolation with scripted speech as compared to phoneme production in natural speech.

As mentioned, choosing an accent to teach is difficult. Some teachers may feel that having an accent is acceptable if the student is intelligible. However, further research is needed to determine the effect of specific phoneme production on various listeners. It has been determined that pronunciation can affect the listener's perception of grammaticality, but it would be interesting to see if this is true for particular phonemes produced according to specific accents, for example, the voiced dental fricative produced by Spanish speakers as a /t/ or /d/.

More research is needed to determine how choosing one accent affects the overall language acquisition of the students. Questions that might be asked for future research are: Does focusing on one accent facilitate the learning of the L2?; Does focusing on one accent make speaking the language easier, and remove distractions when difficult phonemes must be produced? In other words, does having a consistent pronunciation standard for pronunciation help students acquire the language better and faster in all the linguistic features in the long run?

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that teacher-authored poetry, for this context in Mexico with students whose first language is Spanish, helps beginner and intermediate students learn a typically difficult phoneme, the voiced dental fricative /ð/ through poetry. This may be due in part to poetry being conducive to memorization. Rote memorization is conducive to deliberate practice, especially if the poem includes explicit instruction of exactly what to do to produce the sound.

A doubt may arise to why a teacher should use poetry, and not a phrase, or even just have them repeat the same word repeatedly. Students, in my experience, resist word repetition, an understandably boring activity. Words are not expected to be repeated fifty times, but a boring word like *the* was repeated 50 times, maybe because poetry is expected to be memorized by students, and once attempted, enjoyed, or at least the repletion is not noticed as much. Even though it is not as common to do so as it was in the past, students are still aware that poetry was commonly memorized. Moreover, poetry is easier to memorize because of its rhythm and rhyme scheme, which acts as a sort of mnemonic device.

Phrases can be effective for pronunciation, but still inferior to poetry in that the

practice can be mindless, or less conscious. On the other hand, poetry involves the mind in deliberate practice because of the nature of the concentration that it takes to memorize it imitating the rhythm and pronunciation. Explicit instruction of how to pronounce the phoneme can be included in the poem and practice is therefore more deliberate. This explicit information also acts as a way to give feedback to the students as they work with classmates or by themselves. This aspect is what makes this teacher-authored poetry more than a behavioral listen-and-repeat activity. Feedback and error correction can use up much classroom time, and there is not always enough time to apply it the way teachers would like for each student. I noticed that, with the explicit instruction of what to do in the poem itself, students often corrected each other based on the sound or on whether they could see the tongue come out between the teeth in producing the /ð/. In this way, deliberate practice can be achieved with an activity that can take place inside or outside of the classroom, if the students are provided with a recording in which to model their pronunciation of the poem.

Teacher may not have much time. However, teachers can make the poems quickly. The following poem was created by a teacher, a former student of mine who experimented with teacher-authored poetry for her young preschoolers to practice the /h/ sound in Mexico:

I like to hop hop hop
Up and down the hill
All around my house
'Cause I'm a happy kid.

This is a fine poem, and the kids loved it and practiced the sound six times for every repetition. There are some ways to make this even more effective. One is increasing the number of times the target phoneme is repeated. Another is by lowering the cognitive load by reducing the number of new, lower-frequency words. With this in mind, here is one possible revision:

H is How?
It's happy!
H is how?
Ha, Ha, Ha! *(teacher models, showing that it is not ja –the hard Spanish "j", but softer)*
Sshh! *(teacher raises finger to lips)* Sshh! Sshh! *(teacher's voice gets quieter)*

How, how, how?
Ha, ha, ha (teacher directs the kids to do this softly)
Ha, ha, ha! (now louder while checking the pronunciation)
Happy Ha!

In this simpler revision, the target phoneme is repeated 19 times per repetition. In order to lessen the cognitive load, the low frequency vocabulary is removed including the word *hop* which, though fun, is relatively low-frequency word according BNC/COCA combined list by Paul Nation (https://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation) while happy is in the first 500. *Ha* is a cognate word used similarly in Spanish to indicate laughter.

Teachers' time is also limited in classrooms, but simple, didactic poetry is quickly memorized. This kind of poetry really does not have to be memorized word for word. The general idea of what to do and the accurate pronunciation of the target phoneme is quite enough. In addition, this kind of poem is also relatively easy to write and can give the teacher a chance to focus on phonemes that cause problems for their students based on their L1, level, and interest. If there is time, they can tailor poems for individual students if necessary, the way a good coach designs exercises for individual athletes on the team. In addition, having students write their own poetry is a good activity.

Phonemic poetry practice is also inexpensive because it does not require any extra costs in time and money by not having to learn phonetics or phonology in expensive courses or books. Teachers do not have to rely on technology, such as computers, tablets, projectors or monitors. Of course, they may have to come out of their comfort zone if they do not typically teach poetry, but poetry is one more option which is not often considered for phoneme instruction. If they are non-native teachers of English, this may be another source resistance too. I too am a non-native Spanish speaker and sometime teacher of Spanish, and have used this activity with students knowing that, though my pronunciation is not perfect in Spanish, it is better than most Spanish language learners taking my classes. But if this is an issue, there are many options, such as friends or applications, or even services on the internet. Some of them are free, and the applications will read the poem and provide a model for the students, in whatever accent they wish to emulate.

In the end, this study shows that poetry is an effective way to teach pronunciation to beginner and intermediate Spanish-speaking students in Mexico, but more research is necessary to see how teachers react to authoring pronunciation poetry for instruction. Teachers may not believe that guided learning through explicit instruc-

tion is good for other aspects of language learning, or they just may not like pronunciation or poetry. However, if their students need or want pronunciation, teachers can rest assured that, in the case of pronunciation, it was effective for modifying the production of the voiced dental fricative for this study's population through poetry. Though often overlooked, poetry is one more option to implement guided pronunciation learning, which may be effective for other phonemes in other contexts.

To conclude, it should be emphasized that this study is not making any claims for having developed a pronunciation pedagogy for every teacher in every context. This experiment cannot claim that these findings have universal validity. It is a small study outlining the theory, design and initial implementation of an approach to pronunciation instruction through teacher-authored poetry. No single approach can be the final solution to all pronunciation needs. Nevertheless, this approach is based on sound educational principles. I have experienced as a teacher limited time and technological resources for practicing pronunciation, something for which students express an interest in improving. It is also based on seeing the resistance of teachers to teach pronunciation simply because they lack the time, resources or knowledge to do so, and not because of lack of desire. At the very least, teachers will have one more tool to choose from to teach pronunciation, an area of language teaching in which there are relatively few tools available.

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EXPLORING BI-MULTILINGUALISM IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, GUANAJUATO, IN CENTRAL MEXICO

Alma Judith Mendoza Domínguez
Escuela Primaria Bilingüe José Vasconcelos

Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore what growing up with two or more languages implies, with the goal of understanding the complexities of this process. In essence, the language learning process will not be addressed in detail, rather, the research will focus on the individuals that take part in the process. The research was carried out in the city of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato in central Mexico. In order to achieve the aim, the following is the research statement.

> The exploration of being bi-multilingual in a multicultural environment in the city of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato in central Mexico.

I consider that this research is important to the field of applied linguistics because it focuses on bi-multilingual children living in a non-English speaking country. It is important to try to understand how these children live the process of acquiring two or more languages in an environment where the exposure to these languages is limited.

My Motivations

I believe that every research is important to its researcher and every research holds in itself a piece of the researcher's soul. Punch (2013) states that research "is seen as the way of answering questions, solving problems and developing knowledge" (p. 4). For me this research matters in a personal and professional way. As is the case of half of my participants I also grew up in San Miguel de Allende learning two languages.

Bearing this in mind, I will explore how bi-multilinguals live their process of acquiring two or more languages. With the collected information, teachers and parents will have a better idea of how these children experience the process of learning languages. As a consequence, parents and teachers will be able to help these children during the process.

Another reason for my research has to do with my current job. I have been working in a bilingual school for the past eleven years. At this moment, I am the Coordinator of the English Department for preschool and elementary. I am responsible for carrying out the program for both sections. Having been in charge of the coordination for the past seven years, I consider that the English curriculum needs to be renewed, but in order to do this, I need recent and accurate information to support my future decisions towards an adaptation of the program.

Finally, the last motivation emerged when I had already started the study. Six months after I had started the research, a change was announced by the Mexican government in the federal educational program that would come into effect in August 2018. The intention of implementing a bilingual program for public schools throughout Mexico was mentioned. The findings in this research might help in some degree to visualize the possibility of this goal. This may not have an impact on my current job, but it may on my professional life. As an applied linguist, I am interested in issues related with language acquisition, so this research will help me improve my knowledge about this topic and maybe at a certain moment, I could contribute to this government project.

Niche of the Research

Numerous research projects have been carried out in the area of bi-multilingualism (see Auer & Wei, 2007; Baker, 2010; Baker 2011; Block, 2008; Field, 2013; Holmes, 2013; Houwer, 2009; Kemp, 2009; Meisel, 2006; Montrul, 2008; Pavlenko, 2006; Romaine, 1995; Wei, 2000). These studies have been conducted in countries where English is the official language or at least shares a similar status to the official language of that country. In the case of my research, it is conducted in a country where English is not the official language, nor is this foreign language essential to survive. I believe that what increases the importance of my research is the process which the Mexican education system is currently undergoing. The Mexican government plans to implement a new educational reform which will start in the 2018-2019 school year. One of the central ideas to this reform is to put into action bilingual education throughout the country. Based on my professional experience, raising bilingual children is not an easy task. The information obtained from this research may help conceptualize more realistically what nurturing and educating bilingual children implies.

General Context of the Research Site

The research was carried out in two sites: *Escuela Bilingüe José Vasconcelos* and *Escuela Bilingüe Naciones Unidas* in the city of San Miguel de Allende in the State of Guanajuato. I will provide some significant information about this city and the schools. I think it is crucial to mention the background of the city due to its special social context.

It is revealed on the web page *Experience San Miguel de Allende* (2006), that after World War II GIs from the United States discovered that their money had more value in Mexico than in the United States. These people could afford a better-quality life with less money in comparison with their home country. This was a strong reason why they decided to settle down in the old-fashioned and quiet city of San Miguel de Allende.

In 1938, Stirling Dickinson moved to San Miguel de Allende. He became the director of the art school of *Bellas Artes*. By 1951 he opened the *Instituto Allende* and became its first director. The *Instituto Allende* was opened as a language school, and over the years arts have also been included in their program. The web page *Experience San Miguel de Allende* (2006) indicates "San Miguel's role as an artists' and writer's colony became firmly established. And so, it still is today" (par. 3). Plenty of people that came to San Miguel de Allende enrolled in this art school.

Nowadays, according to the web page *History of San Miguel de Allende* (2006), an estimate of 10,000 to 12,000 foreigners live in San Miguel de Allende, most of them from the United States and Canada. They calculate that 15% of the population is foreign. Krause (2011) gives the next review about the city:

> San Miguel de Allende is a historic city in Guanajuato, Mexico. It is a relatively small city, with a population of about 80,000 in the urban area, located about four hours north of Mexico City. Since the 1960s, the city has become a hub of activity for foreigners and tourists. It advertises itself as an attractive retirement destination for American and Canadian retirees, and thus it has an influential gringo population [...] Book clubs, yoga, social groups, and small church congregations created by gringos can be found throughout the city, forming small pockets of Americanness within the greater Mexican culture. (p. 215)

As we could see from the information, San Miguel de Allende has become a perfect place for foreigners to come and live. Krause (2011) explains that "this melding of cultures is striking, and it makes San Miguel an excellent venue in which to observe the concepts of memory and identity, both for the immigrant gringos and the na-

tive Mexican populations" (p. 215). When these foreigners started to come and live in San Miguel, they also brought with them their families, wives and children. These children had no knowledge of Spanish, so they could not enroll into Mexican schools. Between 1955 and 1957 the first bilingual school opened: *Escuela Bilingüe de Capacitación*. In this school both languages, English and Spanish, were taught and treated with the same respect.

A retired teacher from New York, Augusta Irving, opened this school for foreign and local children. The school had more or less forty students and it followed an immersion English language program. The school was not incorporated to *Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP),* so when children finished their elementary education, they had no papers to endorse their primary education. With these kinds of issues on the table, another group of foreigners and locals, some of them teachers, decided to open a school that could suit foreign and local children's education necessities and at the same time meet the requirements of the government educational regulations. They opened the *Escuela Primaria Bilingüe José Vasconcelos* in August 1974. The school program follows a content-based methodology with an enrichment model of bilingual education. The bilingual education ideology that it followed is monoglossic with an additive bilingual education framework. To this moment, this is the oldest bilingual school in San Miguel de Allende. The school follows a content-based instruction program, but they also have Spanish instruction following the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* guidelines. Other bilingual schools have emerged since then, but the only one that follows more or less *Escuela Bilingüe José Vasconcelos's* program is the school *Escuela Bilingüe Naciones Unidas*. The students that I chose for this research come from these two schools. The multicultural background of these schools made me select them for the research. Both schools have students with multicultural backgrounds, parents who come from different countries and speak different languages. I strongly believe that their backgrounds may enrich the findings of my research.

Participants of the Project

My participants were selected from two bilingual schools in San Miguel de Allende: *Escuela Bilingüe José Vasconcelos* and *Escuela Bilingüe Naciones Unidas*. Both schools' programs follow a content-based methodology and they aim to have an enrichment model of bilingual education. The bilingual education ideology that they follow is monoglossic with an additive bilingual education framework. Based on my profes-

sional knowledge, not all the aspects of the model and type are followed as they should. Table 1 shows relevant information from the participants.

Regarding the participants in Table 1, there were seven males and seven females. Seven were bilingual and seven were multilingual, and seven of them had gone through a sequential acquisition of the language and seven had gone through a simultaneous acquisition.

An important aspect to be highlighted from the interviews is the choice of language that the students made in order to be interviewed. One could have expected that they would choose their mother tongue but some of them did not. Houwer (2009) suggests that children's level of proficiency in each language is essential for the decision of using one or another language. He points out that "children may prefer to speak the language they are able to express themselves in and feel most comfortable" (p. 269). In the case of some participants I could notice that this did not apply, for different reasons given in the interview the language that they chose was not the one in which they are more proficient. Another vital aspect that I want to highlight in my chart was parents' nationality. I think this issue is important to be mentioned based on the idea that this could influence the way children view themselves in a cosmopolitan city.

Table 1. Participants of the research.

Participant Code	Age	Genre	Nationality	Parents Nationality	Spoken Languages	School	Lang. of the Interview	Home Lang.	Lang. with Friends
I-1-B-Ángel-8 Id-2-B-Ángel-8	8	Masc.	Mexican	Mexican	Spanish English	J. V.	English *	English Spanish	Spanish
I-2-M-Rebecca-8 Id-3-M-Rebecca-8	8	Fem.	American	Portuguese French	Spanish English French Portuguese	J. V.	Spanish	Spanish English French Portuguese	Spanish
I-3-M-María-13	13	Fem.	Mexican	American	Spanish English	J. V.	Spanish	English	Spanish
I-4-B-Joceline-11	11	Fem.	Mexican	American	Spanish English	J. V.	Spanish	English	Spanish
I-5-B-Jacobo-9 Id-4-B-Jacobo-9	9	Masc.	American	American	Spanish English	J. V	Spanish *	English	English Spanish
I-6-B-Alicia-10 Id-1-B-Alicia-10	10	Fem.	Mexican	Mexican	Spanish English	J. V.	English *	English Spanish	Spanish
I-7-M-Raúl-6	6	Masc.	Mexican	English Hindu	Spanish English Panjabi	J. V.	Spanish *	English Panjabi	Spanish

I-8-M-Karlo-6	6	Masc.	Mexican	English Hindu	Spanish English Panjabi	J. V.	English	English Panjabi	Spanish
I-9-B-Luis-12	12	Masc.	French	French	Spanish English French	J. V.	Spanish *	French	Spanish
I-10-M-Diego-14	14	Masc.	Mexican	Mexican German	Spanish English German	Nac. Unidas	Spanish	German Spanish	Spanish English
I-11-B-Cristina-15	15	Fem.	American	Mexican American	Spanish English	J. V.	Spanish	Spanish English	Spanish English
I-12-M-Marco-5 Id-5-M-Marco-5	5	Masc.	Mexican	Mexican German	Spanish English German French	J. V.	Spanish	German Spanish	Spanish
I-13-M-Montserrat-18	18	Fem.	Mexican	Mexican	Spanish English French	Nac. Unidas	Spanish	Spanish French English	Spanish English
I-14-B-Viridiana-19 Id-6-B-Viridiana-19	19	Fem.	Mexican	Mexican	Spanish English	Nac. Unidas	English *	Spanish	Spanish English

Note: The participants marked with an * were the ones interviewed two times, with the semi-structured and the in-depth interviews.

Literature Review

The topics considered in the research will be: language, bilingualism, multilingualism, childhood bilingualism, code-switching, language brokering, bilingual education, bilingual cognition, identity, and investment.

Language

One of the most influential languages nowadays is English which is considered a *lingua franca*. Holmes and Wilson (2017) report that "a lingua franca is a language used for communication between people whose first language differ" (p. 83).

In response to the need mentioned above, more and more people around the globe are becoming bilingual and multilingual. In order to comprehend the significance of this research, it is important to remark that the percentage of people that speaks more than one language around the world is 50%. According to Grosjean (1982), bilingualism is a worldwide phenomenon "present in practically every country of the world, in all classes of society and in all age groups; in fact, it has been estimated that half the world's population is bilingual" (p. vii). Supporting

Grosjean's statement, Holmes (2013) notes that over half the world's population is bilingual and many people are multilingual. With the goal of supporting this fact, I will define both concepts next.

Bilingualism and Multilingualism

An important issue to take into account mentioned by Baker (2010) is that being proficient in two or more languages is not easy for the individual, therefore we can conclude, that speaking more than two languages would be even more complicated. This is the reason why several aspects of being bilingual or multilingual will be addressed.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism and multilingualism are vast topics which have been understood in various ways by different authors. I will start by explaining the concept of bilingualism then I will continue with multilingualism in order to find a term that fits this research. Liddicoat (1991) expresses his concerns regarding the concept of being bilingual. He states, "bilingualism means different things to different people" (p. 2).

For instance, Bloomfield (1933) defines bilingualism as "native-like control of two languages" (p. 56). This declaration could be questioned in regard to what is considered being a bilingual native or not having a native control of two languages. Baker (2010) critiques Bloomfield's declaration and considers it exaggerated and out of proportion due to the idea that it is not necessary to have a total grasp of the language for a person to be considered bilingual. Cantone (2007) explains that the notion of being bilingual has been overused in an informal way. She explains that people may consider a person to be bilingual if he or she knows more than one language. On the other hand, Haugen (1953) considers a person to be bilingual if he or she is able to produce complete and meaningful words in a language different from his or her L1.

On the other hand, Grosjean (1982) argues that "a bilingual is someone who can function in each language according to given needs" (p. 2). He does not mention the level of proficiency needed in the language in order to be considered a bilingual. He also highlights that the majority of bilinguals acquired their languages at different points during their lives and they rarely become equally fluent in those languages, but this does not prevent them from functioning in the second language or

languages. On the same line of understanding, Liddicoat (1991), Montrul (2008), and Baker (2010) note that in order for a person to be considered bilingual he or she has to have some ability in the usage of a second or even a third or fourth language.

In support of Grosjean's (1982) definition of bilingualism, Baker (2010) asserts that bilinguals rarely have the same ability of language use in both languages. He supports Liddicoat's (1991) and Grosjean's (1982) idea where bilingualism is a process that takes time. An important characteristic of bilinguals related to the abovementioned statements is explained by Grosjean (1989). He opines that bilinguals do not separate their languages in their daily life and these languages are not used in the same intensity.

In regard to this research, I will focus on childhood bilingualism. Haugen (1956) introduced the terms infant, childhood, adolescent, and adult bilingualism. With time, our understanding of bilingualism has begun to take into consideration the complexities of the phenomenon at the same time different types of bilingualism have been classified. For example, Baker (2010) mentions eighteen types of bilingualism. On the other hand, Wei (2000) has identified thirty-seven different classifications. I will mention the ones according to Wei (2000) that I can relate to the participants of the research. I will also provide a short description of the participants. It is necessary to mention that these types are not mutually exclusive, but they might overlap.

1) "Ascendant bilingual: someone whose ability to function in a second language is developing due to increased use" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Jacobo is a nine-year-old American boy, born in the United States. He came to live to Mexico when he was seven years old. His level of Spanish has increased through practice and exposure to the language at school and in his daily routines.
2) "Balanced bilingual: an individual whose mastery of two languages is roughly equivalent" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Cristina is a fifteen-year-old girl. She was born in the United States, and her parents are American and Mexican. She came to live in Mexico at the age of two and learned English until the age of four through formal instruction. Due to this situation, her mastery in Spanish and English is similar.
3) "Compound bilingual: someone whose two languages are learnt at the same time, often in the same context" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Karlo is a six-year-old boy and his parents are English and Hindu. He was born in Mexico; he speaks English and Panjabi at home. He learned his third language, Spanish, at home, at school and also through support from the community.
4) "Dominant bilingual: an individual with greater proficiency in one of his or her lan-

guages and uses it significantly more than the other languages" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Ángel is an eight-year-old Mexican boy whose preference for English has helped him acquire a similar mastery to that of his L1. In some domains his proficiency in the L2 is even superior in comparison with his L1.

5) "Early bilingual: someone who has acquired two languages early in childhood" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Rebecca is an eight-year-old girl. She was born in the United States but came to live to Mexico four years ago. Her father speaks French and her mother speaks Portuguese. Also, because she has lived in Mexico for four years, she speaks Spanish. Due to the usage of the three languages at home, she also speaks French and Portuguese.
6) "Horizontal bilingual: someone who is bilingual in two distinct languages which have a similar or equal status" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Alicia is a ten-year-old Mexican girl and she has family living in both countries, Mexico and the United States. Because of this situation, English and Spanish have the same importance for her. She is fluent in both languages.
7) "Incipient bilingual: someone at the early stages of bilingualism where one language is not fully developed" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Luis is a twelve-year-old French boy who came to Mexico on an exchange program with the goal of learning Spanish and English.
8) "Maximal bilingual: someone with near native control of two or more languages" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Marco is a five-year-old Mexican boy. His mother is German and his father is Mexican. Language planning at home has helped him to be fluent in both languages. He is learning his third language, English, through formal instruction.
9) "Productive bilingual: someone who not only understands but also speaks and possibly writes in two or more languages" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Montserrat is an eighteen-year-old girl. She is fluent in three languages (Spanish, English and French) and she can also write in the three languages.
10) "Secondary bilingual: someone whose second language has been added to a first language via instruction" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Viridiana is a nineteen-year-old girl, who started her English instruction at school at the age of three.
11) "Simultaneous bilingual: someone whose two languages are present from the onset of speech" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Joceline and María are two Mexican sisters, with American parents living in Mexico. Joceline is eleven years old and María is thirteen. Due to this situation, they grew up in similar contact with both languages.
12) "Subtractive bilingual: someone whose second language is acquired at the expense of the aptitudes already acquired in the first language" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Diego, a fourteen-year-old, was born in Mexico. At the age of two, he moved to Germany with

his parents. The family came back to Mexico four years ago. His mother is multilingual in Spanish, German and English. His mother feels he is losing his German due to lack of exposure.

13) "Successive bilingual: someone whose second language is added at some stage after the first has begun to develop" (Wei, 2000, p. 5). Raul is Karlo's twin brother. As well as his brother he is fluent in English but is still working on his Spanish and Panjabi.

It is essential to mention that a person may fit in more than one of these classifications. These types of bilingual classifications can be related to children and adults. Next I will continue clarifying the concept of multilingualism.

Multilingualism

It is known that a multilingual person is the one that it is able to use different languages in different situations and for different purposes. Kemp (2009) gives the next definition of multilingual which I find more precise in relation with my research:

> […] a multilingual is a person who has the ability to use three or more languages, either separately or in various degrees of code-mixing. Different languages are used for different purposes, competence in each varying according to such factors as register, occupation, and education. (p. 15)

Because this research is focused on bilingualism and multilingualism, the term will be coined bi-multilingualism. I will support my decision based on Montrul's (2008) definition of bilingualism: "Broadly defined, bilingualism refers to the knowledge of two or more languages, albeit to different degrees" (p. 17). Supporting Montrul's statement, Field (2013) links bilingualism with multilingualism due to the fact that the person speaks more than one language. He also claims that "the two terms are often used interchangeably because to know more than one language is to know multiple languages" (Field, 2013, p. 3). Following the previous statements, multilingualism will be treated in this research as the acquisition and use of two or more languages due to the fact that multilingualism subsumes bilingualism (Aroni & Bawardy, 2012).

Childhood Bilingualism

This study will focus on childhood bi-multilingualism, which refers to the acquisi-

tion of two or more languages early in life. Academic research concerning child bilingualism began approximately one hundred years ago according to Meisel (2006), and to this moment there are still some gaps between the theories and the real-life situations. This is why it is imperative to keep researching this topic. It is essential to argue that according to Crystal (2012), "two thirds of the world's children grow up in bilingual environments" (p. 17). This gives us an idea of how significant it is to research the idea of bilingualism.

It is crucial to consider the fact that learning a second language is not an easy task. Different factors need to be taken into account when speaking about learning a second language. Ellis (2003) insists that exposure and motivation are necessary in order for someone, whether an adult or a child, to learn language different from the L1. It would not be a surprise to find out that, despite the fact that children around the globe are learning more than one language, the exposure and motivation are not the same in each one of them. As a consequence, the degree of bilingualism will vary from each other. Paradis (2007) explains that the degree of bilingualism is influenced by the amount of exposure of the languages and also by the time when the exposure to these languages began. She also acknowledges that the sociolinguistic context in which the languages are spoken influences the development and acquisition of the second or third language.

Baker (2010) asserts that there are different ways in which a child can become bilingual. One way could be at home with parents, relatives or friends. The second way could be in the street, interacting with native speakers of the language; this includes formal instruction in school or in relation with small children in the nursery. He also suggests that the social context may influence the acquisition of bilingualism. The aspects to take into account are: if the child is a member of an immigrant community, or a member of an elite group, or even if he or she is a member of a majority or minority language group. Baker (2010) believes, "the variety of individual differences and social contexts make simple generalizations about the development of bilingualism difficult and dangerous" (p. 97).

Likewise, Montrul (2008) reveals that there are two common parameters that distinguish bilingualism: the age and order or sequence of acquisition. This refers to simultaneous and sequential bilingualism. Before I explain separately each one of the two types of childhood bilingualism, I will give a general explanation of what makes them different from each other. Baker (2010) gives the following explanation:

> An initial distinction is between simultaneous and sequential childhood bilingual-

> ism. Simultaneous childhood bilingualism refers to a child acquiring two languages at the same time early in life. For example, where one parent speaks one language to the child, and the other parent speaks a different language, the child may learn both languages simultaneously [...] Sequential childhood bilingualism is when the child learns one language first, and then a second language later in life. An example would be where a child learns the language of the home, then goes to a nursery or elementary school and learns a second language. (p. 97)

A significant issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the age of acquisition. The author insists that if the child learns the language before he or she is three years old then it is considered simultaneous acquisition. On the contrary if the language is acquired after the age of three, it is considered sequential acquisition. It is also revealed by Baker (2010) that when the second language is learnt after the age of three then it is named first language bilingualism or L1 bilingualism. It refers to the first language learnt; sometimes this language is the most used or the strongest language of the child. Montrul (2008), on the other hand, confirms that simultaneous bilingualism is "also referred to bilingual L1 acquisition because the two languages develop together as first languages (two L1s)" (p. 17). We can understand that when a language is learnt before the age of three, acquisition happens in a more natural and informal way. On the other hand, a language learned after the age of three usually is acquired by formal instruction and it is related to second language acquisition (SLA). Two types of childhood bilingualism will be explained in detail next.

Simultaneous Bilingualism

Montrul (2008) notes that this kind of bilingualism takes place "before the linguistic foundations of the language are in place" (p. 17), in other words before the age of three. For Baker (2010), there are four basic dimensions along which the simultaneous acquisition of bilingualism in childhood varies. It is necessary to consider: (1) the language that the parents speak, (2) the language that the parents speak to the child, (3) the language that other family members speak to the child, and (4) the language that the community has and the child hear to. This can be observed in the following figure:

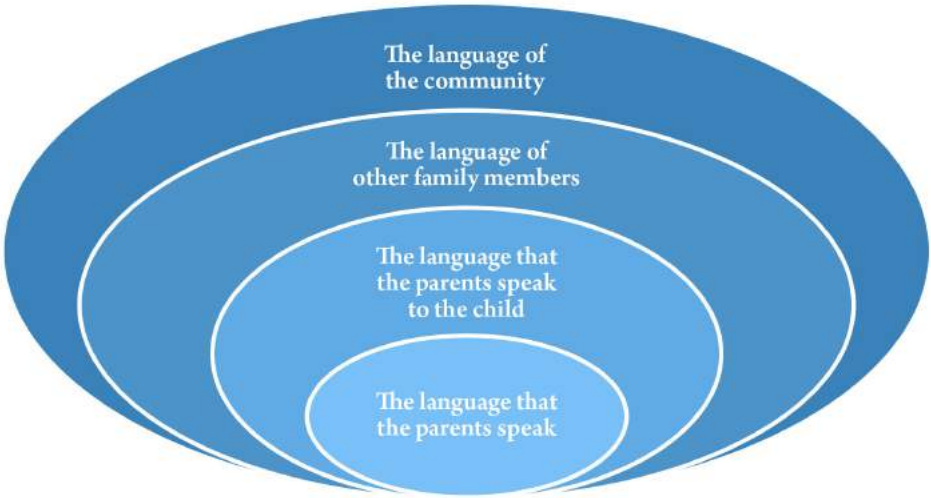

Figure 1. Baker's dimensions of simultaneous acquisition of bilingualism in childhood.

Apart from these dimensions, Romaine (1995) suggests six typologies of raising children bilingually.

1) One person–one language: This means that both parents have different native languages, but each one of them has some knowledge of the others language. At the same time, the dominant language of the community is the same as one of the parents. In this case both parents speak their own language to the child.
2) Non-dominant home language: In this case both parents have different native languages; the dominant language of the community is the same as the one of the parents. What parents do here is that both speak the non-dominant language to the child. The child will be fully exposed to the dominant language outside the home.
3) The non-dominant home language without community support: This occurs when both parents share the same native language and the dominant language of the community is different from their language. They speak their own language to the child.
4) Double non-dominant language without community support: This one can help the child become trilingual. Parents have different native languages and also the community's dominant language is different from the parent's languages. Each one of the parents speaks their own language to the child. In addition, the child is in contact with the dominant language outside the home.

5) Non-native parents: In this case, parents share the same language of the community which is the dominant language. One of the parents speaks to the child in a language which is not his/her native language, and neither is the language of the community.
6) Mixed languages: Finally, this one refers to the parents and the community being bilingual or multilingual. In this case, parents switch and mix their languages continually. This situation occurs in India, where many languages co-exist and are used in different dominions. This typology promotes code-switching and code-mixing.

It is vital to mention one more dimension additional to Romaine's (1995) typology, which is the dimension stated by Field (2013):

7) Post-shift with rememberers: This last dimension is connected with dimension number six. In this dimension parents have the ability of being proficient in both: the dominant and non-dominant language, but they decide to teach the non-dominant language to their children. Due to this decision, children lose not only their heritage language but also their cultural knowledge. This is due to the fact that the first language is not spoken anymore inside the family dynamic. Essentially this dimension explains that the language and cultural roots of these children are in danger because the first language has been put aside and it has become a memory of the parent's past.

As we can observe, the route that a child takes in order to become bilingual is not a straightforward path. I will continue with the second type of childhood bilingualism.

Sequential Bilingualism

Baker (2010) states "The sequential acquisition of bilingualism takes us into the field of second language acquisition" (p. 120). A child that becomes bilingual through this route will probably always have one of his or her languages much closer to him or her (more proficient, etc.). An interesting view that I want to remark on is the one given by Grosjean (1982). This holistic view, proposed by Grosjean (1982), argues that bilinguals have the ability to integrate their knowledge in both languages in order to create something that goes beyond those languages. This view holds that the total of the two languages is greater than their sum, due to the fact that the two languages interact with each other to increase the functionality of each. Both perspectives describe as ideal the development of balanced bilingual competence in speaking, thinking, reading, and writing, which means equivalent fluency in the

two languages. I strongly believe this is the goal of any bilingual person: to become equally proficient in both languages, but it is rarely accomplished.

For this proficiency to occur, Baker (2010) suggests two options. According to him, sequential acquisition could be achieved through formal or informal instruction. Informal instruction refers to the acquisition of the language in the streets, with friends, through interaction with the community. On the other hand, formal instruction is related to school, in other words language instruction in an institution.

This situation occurs in many communities around the world, such as in San Miguel de Allende, where there are many bilingual schools where children emerge in a second language culture relatively young. There are two points of view given by Baker (2010). One mentions the earlier the age at which a second language is learnt, the greater the long-term proficiency gained in that language. The second point of view is that older children and young adults learn a language more efficiently and more quickly than young children do. On the other hand, Liddicoat's (1991) argument is opposite from Baker's statement. He expresses that "a child's bilingual ability does not so much depend on how early a language is introduced as on other factors, such as the relative prestige of the languages, cultural factors and opportunities for use" (p. 6). The usage of the language may also influence the level of proficiency. If the child, irrespective of his or her age, is exposed enough to the language and, at the same time, he or she is part of an effective formal instruction, you can assure a successful acquisition. It is necessary to explain that seven of the participants in this research are simultaneous bilinguals and seven are sequential. Both groups of participants reinforce the language through formal language instruction.

In the next sections I will go deeper into the issues related to bilingual education. Before, I will highlight two issues that are deeply connected to being bi-multilingual; I refer to code-switching and language brokering.

Code-Switching

In regard to code-switching, Romaine (1995) defines code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems" (p. 121). Likewise, Poplack (2001) explains that code-switching "refers to the mixing by bilinguals (or multilinguals), of two or more languages in discourse, often with no change of interlocutor or topic" (p. 1). Different authors, whom I will point out further ahead, give a similar definition of the concept. Auer (2013) clarifies that it is necessary to understand this

phenomenon as part of the bi-multilingual speech. In other words, we cannot view bi-multilingualism without code-switching.

It is vital to state that child bilingual code-mixing has often been interpreted as a sign of incompetence and even confusion (Genesee, 2006; Hamers & Blanc, 2004). This statement cannot be further from the truth; nowadays research has found that code-switching is part of the lives of bi-multilinguals. Hamers and Blanc (2004) emphasize "it has been widely accepted that these phenomena occur with high frequency whenever two or more speakers who are bilingual in the same languages communicate with one another" (p. 258). This makes one think that being able to speak two or more languages gives the bi-multilinguals the freedom to use the code that they have available according to the need or their proficiency.

The choice of a code could also be influenced by the situation, participants, issues discussed, etc. It can be concluded that there are different reasons for bi-multilinguals to code-switch. Baker (2011) lists thirteen reasons for code-switching, and these are: (1) to accentuate a specific point in the conversation; (2) lack of vocabulary in one of the languages or in both; (3) to voice a concept that has no correspondent in the other language; (4) to give a command; (5) to elucidate a concept; (6) to reveal identity, reduce social distance or communicate friendship or family connection; (7) when remembering a previous conversation in another language; (8) with the purpose of interjecting in a conversation; (9) to low tension and introduce humor; (10) to reduce social distance and express solidarity; (11) to maintain the conversation private; (12) with the idea of introducing specific topics strongly related to the target language; and (13) finally, children might code-switch as a reflection of their parents attitude toward the language, if parents code-switch, children will code-switch as well.

All these examples make us understand that code-switching is a complex phenomenon. In the next section, another characteristic of being bilingual, language brokering, will be addressed.

Language Brokering

Weisskirch, Kim, Zamboanga, Schwartz, Bersamin and Umana-Taylor (2011) explain that the term language brokering is given to the act of translating, basically done by children from immigrant families in order to help their parents communicate. Baker (2011) somewhat disagrees with the last component of this definition, since according to him language brokering goes beyond the simple act of trans-

lating from one language to another. He insists that language brokering includes cultural meaning. This phenomenon usually starts in childhood and may continue to adulthood.

There are a number of advantages to become a language broker, but there are also disadvantages. In regard to disadvantages, various authors (Baker, 2010, 2011; Weisskirch et al. 2011) express that the action of translating puts pressure on these bi-multilingual children and, as a consequence, they may feel anxious and may present with psychological distress. Also, Weisskirch et al. (2011) explain that "for children, LB can be stressful [...] among adolescents from immigrant families, those who reported assisting parents (i.e., translating) with official business and at their work also indicated greater psychological distress" (p. 44).

Baker (2010) states five problematic situations that these children may encounter while carrying out the translations:

> First, children may find an exact translation difficult to achieve as their language is still developing. Second, children may be hearing information (e.g. medical troubles, financial problems, arguments and conflicts) that is the preserve of adults rather than children. Third, children may be expected to be adult-like when interpreting and child-like at all other times; to mix with adults when interpreting and 'be seen and not heard' with adults on other occasions. Fourth, seeing their parents in an inferior position may lead to children despising their minority language. [...] Negative attitudes to the minority language may result. Fifth, bilinguals are not necessarily good interpreters. [...] Proficiency in two or more languages is not enough. (p. 114)

According to Dorner, Orellana, and Jimenez (2008), for children and adolescents being able to help their families gives them a sense that they are useful and makes them feel proud of themselves. Baker (2011) also highlights positive aspects. He argues that, first and foremost, parents feel proud of their children. In addition, children are aware of the important role they play in the family dynamic. Second, children mature faster and they also learn how to interact with adults. Third, these children learn to take the initiative. Fourth, parents tend to depend on their children for translating, these situations create a feeling of integration between the members of the family. Fifth, these children develop cognitively faster than their pairs. They develop metalinguistic awareness due to the fact that at an early age they understand that one language will never completely parallel another. Finally, the last advantage mentioned by Baker (2011) is related to their character formation, children tend to gain empathy. Baker (2010) explains it as follows:

> The children are negotiating between two different social and cultural worlds, trying to understand both, and provide bridges between these two worlds. This handling of dialogue may lead to increased maturity, astuteness, independence and higher self-esteem. Being expected to carry an adult role early on may lead to a positive self-concept, and feeling responsible like an adult. (p. 115)

As it could be seen, language brokering has its positive and negative sides. Weisskirch *et al*. (2011) support this idea and they explain that "LB may carry positive or negative personal consequences" (p. 44). This is why parents, teachers and people involved in the education of bi-multilingual children need to be aware of these consequences.

Identity

I include the concept of identity in this research project because of the relationship between language and identity. Norton (1997) uses the term identity "to refer to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 2). This gives us the idea that identity is not only related to the person but also that identity needs to be connected with all those elements that surround the person, and one of those elements is language. We are referring to the different contexts in which the person functions and the people with whom the person interacts. All of these elements help the individual realize who he or she is.

There are also several elements that influence a person's identity. Norton (1997) explains that "a person's identity will shift in accordance with changing social and economic relations" (p. 2). This could be understood that a bilingual would feel and act differently in relation with the language he/she is speaking at the time. It would be necessary to take into consideration the lives of bilingual children, the context in which they learn, and the languages and the people with whom they relate. Another important issue to consider is the fluidity of these children's identity. Norton (2006) points out that "current research on second language identity conceives of identity as dynamic, contradictory, and constantly changing across time and place" (p. 503). This statement could be related with the day-to-day situations bilingual children go through. For example, they speak one language at home, another one with friends or relatives, and then they might use yet another one for school. Based on these ideas, we need to connect identity with language. Martin and Stuart-Smith (1998) explain that bilingual children struggle in their

early years of schooling because the language they are learning does not match the one spoken at home, hence "they have to construct new identities for the classroom" (p. 237). The authors explain that language helps these children construct their identity. The issue here is that because the children are interacting in two or more languages, they need to negotiate between those languages in order to position themselves. They have the language of the community and the one learned at school.

It has been mentioned by Pavlenko (2006) that during the second half of the 20th century, people thought that being bilingual harmed the person's identity. Bilingualism was viewed "as a problem of two incompatible identities" (p. 3). Nowadays this view has changed. Norton (2006) remarks that "language is thus more than a system of signs; it is social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated" (p. 502). Lengeling (2010) mentions that "Identity could be represented by a mirror that reflects who we are; how we see ourselves; how we perceive others and how other people perceive us" (p. 65). Finally, an important issue to be addressed is the one brought up by Matthews, Benerjee and Lauermann (2014). They explain that the age when identity starts to form is during adolescence. It is during this period that individuals begin to reflect in who they are and who they want to be. This idea takes us to the next topic: social identity.

Social Identity

As an important researcher of social identity, Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). Social identity theory was proposed with the idea of explaining why people behave as they do inside a social group. But first we need to understand what a social group is and how it connects with identity. Tajfel and Turner (1979) believe that:

> Social categorizations are conceived here as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action. […] They create and define the individual's place in society. (p. 40)

The idea comes from the necessity of categorizing people into groups in order to simplify our understanding of the world. In relation with my research, I decided to classify my participants based on their knowledge of a second, third or even a

fourth language. What is important to note is that people categorize others in their daily lives. Each one of us knows where we belong, and this shapes our identity. It is also vital to remember that each one of us belongs to different social groups at the same time.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) explain that people tend to categorize themselves and others based on the belonging of different social groups; as a consequence, membership is connected to social identity. Stets and Burke (2000) mention that:

> [...] a social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group. A social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category. (p. 225)

According to Trept (2006), every individual's goal is to have a healthy self-esteem inside the group, given that the aim is to develop a positive social identity. In order to accomplish this goal, people develop different behavioral patterns that make them feel more connected with the group. These behaviors might be different from the ones performed in another social group. Trept (2006) explains that some common behaviors that the members of a group present are solidarity and discrimination against people that are not part of the group.

One can relate these previous statements to bi-multinguals, knowing that they are different from monolinguals, and as a result they sometimes like to show off or hide their abilities in the language. Children that grow up with two or more languages are aware of this ability at a young age. They understand that they are different and that they belong to a specific group. These children might behave differently depending with whom they interact. It is common to observe how bi-multilinguals look for others who share their same abilities in language, not only inside school but also outside it.

As mentioned by Grosjean (1982), "language is not just an instrument of communication. It is also a symbol of social or group identity, an emblem of group membership and solidarity" (p. 117). An issue that needs to be taken into account is when the target language is learnt not in the country where such language is spoken. This is the case of Mexican children learning English in Mexico where most of the contact with the foreign language occurs inside the classroom. Even though the second language is mostly spoken in school, these children understand that they are different from monolinguals and they do not hesitate to demonstrate their abilities with others. They like to be differentiated from others; they know they belong to a specific group. But they might also hide this ability if they do not find others like them.

Bicultural Identity

Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000) give the next definition of a bicultural individual:

> Bicultural individuals are typically described as people that have internalized two cultures to the extent that both cultures are alive inside them. Many bicultural individuals report that the two internalized cultures take turns in guiding their thoughts and feelings. (p. 709)

This quote points out that even though both cultures are present; each one has its own place in the person's life. They are not blended; on the contrary, they live together side by side.

In Mexico many parents who do not speak English send their children to bilingual schools in order for them to receive an education based on a foreign language. Given that, it is not a surprise as to what Ramirez-Esparza *et al.* (2006) mention: "bilinguals tend to be bicultural" (p. 2). It has been observed that bilinguals switch their cultural frames when they go from one language to another. This phenomenon is called cultural frame switching (CFS) and it is related to cultural accommodation. This means that bilinguals respond to situations "in a manner that accommodates or favors the culture associated with the language they are currently using" (Ramirez-Esparza *et al.*, 2006, p. 3). It could be inferred, as Chen and Bond (2010) note, that bilinguals have two personalities, "at least in terms of their verbal production" (p. 1514). Their languages shift in accordance with the community that is involved. But this switch is not performed simply; the change in personality due to language is completed in a subtle way (Ramirez-Esparza *et al.*, 2006). Bilingual education in Mexico has increased in the last years. Children in Mexico are sent to bilingual schools where they not only learn the target language, but they also learn the culture of that language. Children learn that what is seen normal in one language may not be considered appropriate in another. In conclusion, they not only learn the L2, but they also learn to think and act in that second language.

Investment

The final area to be explained and which I consider important to mention is investment. The term investment was introduced by Norton (1997) who claims:

> Because the right to speak intersects in important ways with a language learner's identity, I have used the term investment to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. (p. 411)

Norton (2013) comments how she came up with the term: "I have sought to integrate poststructuralist conceptions of identity and human agency by developing a construct I have called investment" (p. 2). She also mentions:

> In my work, I have argued that if learners "invest" in language and literacy, they do so with the understanding that they will attain a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. By symbolic, I refer to such resources as language, education, and friendship, while material resources refer to such resources as capital goods, real estate and money. As the value of their cultural capital increases, so learners' sense of themselves, their identities, are reassessed. Hence there is an integral relationship between investment and identity. (Norton, 2013, p. 2)

This thought is supported in the actual status of English around the world. People are interested in learning English with the objective that this will give them a better life or more opportunities (jobs, studying abroad, better salary, etc.).

Before we continue, it is necessary to clarify that motivation could be confused with investment. Gardner (1985) introduced the concepts of instrumental and integrative motivation in the field of SLA. Instrumental motivation refers to the desire that language learners have to learn a second language for practical purposes, such as employment. On the other hand, integrative motivation refers to the desire to learn a language in order to integrate successfully into the target language community. For Norton (1995), these concepts do not cover the complete idea of investment. For her, investment has to do with power, identity and language learning. Ng and Wigglesworth (2007) mention that: "From a practical point of view, knowing two languages simply means gaining access to two different worlds and having twice the opportunities" (p. 52). Children who speak more than one language might at some point of their lives think that they have an advantage over monolinguals. They could be willing to keep working on the development of their language skills because they might see learning of languages as a long-term investment.

Next I will explain the methodology used in my research as well as the steps I followed in order to reflect on my research statement.

Methodology and Data Collection / Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach was used in order to carry out this research. Essentially, my research statement had to do with exploring the phenomena of bi-multilingualism. Because of the view of the research, I assumed that themes, such as perceptions, feelings, and emotions of the participants, would arise in the findings; therefore, my research project used a qualitative approach.

In order to understand what qualitative approach stands for I cite different authors. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe the term qualitative research in the following way:

> By the term qualitative research we can mean any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by procedures or other means of qualification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behavior, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations. (p. 11)

The aim of my research project was to shed light on what occurs in the lives of bi-multilinguals in order to be able to have a clearer idea of their language learning process. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) remark that qualitative researchers are interested in "understanding people's experience in context" (p. 45). As support of this statement, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain that one of the characteristics of qualitative research is concerned with studying the individuals in their natural space. Therefore, the research is considered qualitative, due to the fact that the research was executed in the social space of seven bilingual and seven multilingual children between the ages of five to nineteen years old.

Reconsidering the idea of my research in which perceptions, emotions, and identities are involved, it is essential to indicate that this is interpretive research. Punch (2013) describes that interpretivism is strongly associated with qualitative research due to its essence. O'Donogtive (2007, as cited in Punch, 2013) points out that "interpretivism concentrates on the meaning people bring to situations and behavior, and which they use to make sense of their world" (p. 17). Based on this statement, Punch (2013) argues that "these meanings are essential to understand behavior" (p. 17). One way to understand people's behavior is through the interpretation of the data. It is necessary to state that being this an interpretative research I tried to bring meaning through the analysis of the data. It is essential to consider that this interpretation was only mine and others could interpret it in a

different way. As it will be explained, I based my interpretation on the background knowledge that I had of my participants.

Reviewing the past comments and with the intention to carry out my research, I had to interpret my participants' answers based on different aspects. One was the context in which they interacted. The interpretation of the data had to also be completed in relation to the participants' ideas, words, or even their silence. I had the fortune of having information of my participants' background due to the fact that I have been in contact with them since their incorporation to the institution. This knowledge helped me in the analysis of the participants' answers.

Methodology for Research: Modern Phenomenology

One of the variants of interpretivism, according to Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2013), is phenomenology which was used in this research. Different authors support this research methodology; the most important one is Edmund Husserl, whom Titchen and Hobson (2005) consider the founder of phenomenology. Husserl (2012) named phenomenology the science of consciousness. He insisted in separating the study of consciousness from the study of nature. Phenomenology can be understood as "the study of lived, human phenomena within the everyday social context in which the phenomena occur from the perspective of those who experience them" (Titchen & Hobson, 2005, p. 123). If we take into account that learning languages is an activity people engage all over the world, we can understand why such phenomena can be studied through phenomenology. Cohen et al. (2013) provide the following definition:

> Phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocated the study of direct experience taken at face value; and one which sees behavior as determined by the phenomena of experience rather by the external objective and physically described reality. (p. 18)

Titchen and Hobson (2005) explain that phenomena can be researched through the exploration of human knowledge. This exploration should be carried out with research questions with the idea of discovering the individual's inner worlds.

Consequently, Crist and Tanner (2003) state in relation to phenomenology that: "this methodology increases sensitivity to humans' ways of being-in the-world rather than providing theory for generalization or prediction of phenomena" (p. 202). The meaning of the phenomenon comes from the participants' own construction and meaning of their daily lives. They remark that the purpose of this

kind of methodology is to reveal what an experience means to a specific group of people. In the case of my research, bilingual and multilingual children from the city of San Miguel de Allende provided me with information about their experience in growing up with two or more languages in a multicultural environment such as a bilingual school.

There are different ways of looking at phenomenology. In this research I will use modern phenomenology which it is a type of interpretative research. Martin (2003) indicates that "the kind of everydayness that we know and inhabit is a distinctly modern phenomenology" (p. 3). Because the phenomenon of learning two or more languages is increasing in the world due to globalization, bi-multilingualism can be considered a modern phenomenon. The ideas, emotions, daily life experiences that bi-multilinguals experience will be gathered through specific research techniques: semi-structure interviews and in-depth interviews.

Research Techniques / Interviews

In order to obtain my data, I used individual interviews. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006) note that "the interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. It can be a very useful technique for collecting data which would likely not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires" (p. 172). Authors, such as Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013), state that this kind of interview is one of the most commonly used technique in qualitative research due to their ability to place a pure emphasis on the person. They can be used to research people's personal perspectives and the context in which the phenomenon takes place.

Golafshani (2003) indicates that "interviews and observations are dominant in the naturalist (interpretive) paradigm" (p. 600). Given that I am in constant interaction with the participants, I can say that some observation was done in relation to the way they interrelate with their peers and the people that surround them. However, observation was not used formally as a study technique for this research project.

Two different kinds of interviews where used as a media of gathering information; these were semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the fourteen participants. In-depth interviews also were conducted to six of them.

Miles and Gilbert (2005) explain that semi-structured interviews are performed as a simple conversation using a set of questions to ask sometimes, so the

conversation may vary from one participant to another. In this type of interview, the interviewer has some knowledge about the topic that it is being researched and with the use of this knowledge the questions are prepared. Flick (2009) considers that this form of interview is useful in the sense that it helps develop the interview further than it normally would be with a simple interview.

Having transcribed and analyzed all the data from the semi-structured interviews, I decided to do a second round of interviews with some of the participants with the objective of not leaving gaps in the meaning given to the interpretation of the data. Some of the participants that were selected for the in-depth interviews were the ones that did not choose their mother tongue to do the first interview (semi-structured). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explain that "one of the most useful ways of gathering data is through in-depth interviews. They are one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research" (p. 139). The authors explain that this kind of interview is similar to a conversation, but in the case of the research this conversation needs to have a purpose. The interview was prepared with the idea of getting more information about the participants' perceptions and emotions regarding their bi-multilingualism. The data obtained was through audio recording.

Coding Procedures

In order to carry out valid research the data needs to be arranged and categorized in a systematic way. This is why the data should be organized and coded. Blaxter et al. (2006) indicate that in order to manage the data, it must be reduced. They state that those particular extracts with meaning for the researcher must be set apart in order to be analyzed in greater depth. These extracts are called *chunks of meaning.*

This search for meaning is accomplished by first identifying the smaller units of significance in the data, which later served as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning. Each one of these units of meaning, identified in the data must stand by themselves, i.e., they must be understandable without additional information, except for knowledge of the researcher's focus of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explain "this data will give the researcher answers for their research questions" (p. 118). The way I decided to organize my data can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. Organization of data.

Research technique	Samples of raw data	Code (participant)	Theme
Semi-structured Interview	"Ayudo a otros".	I-4-B-Joceline-11	Language Brokering
Semi-structured Interview	"¿En casa no hablas también inglés? Si, con mis papás, sí y con mis hermanos en español".	I-3-B-María-13	Language Choice
Semi-structured Interview	"En mi cabeza, están unas palabras de un idioma a otro".	I-2-M-Reebecca-8	Code-Switching
In-depth Interview	"I speak little Spanish. I knew more words in English than Spanish when I was little so I prefer to speak English and that's why my favorite language is English.[…] Cuz, is really kind of hard for me to talk in Spanish now, I'm so use to English that when I talk in Spanish I feel weird".	Id-2-B-Ángel-8	Language Preference
Semi-structured Interview	"En estos momentos me siento más mexicano que alemán … ya adopte esa forma de vida mexicana, ya adopte la forma de hablar, la forma de expresarme, la forma de … se pudiera casi decir que para actuar".	I-10-M-Diego-14	Self-Identity
In-depth Interview	"Yeah, my dad actually says … if you want to be successful in your life you need to learn more than one language, because if you only know one language you will not be as successful as other people that know more than two languages".	Id-1-B-Alicia-10	Investment

Maykut and Morehouse (2006) explain that the raw data needs to be transferred to a readable form for the data analysis. In the case of my research, all audio-recorded interviews were transcribed, and the raw data was divided into themes according to my interpretation.

The first column has the information of the kind of data collection technique used. The second column has an extract of the raw data. The third column is related to the participant. As stated before, a code was given where the first letter stands for the research technique and the second is a number which refers to the number of interviews. The third one was given in order to separate the bilinguals from the multilinguals. Next a pseudonym was given to the participant in order to protect their identity. Finally, the age of the participant is given in the last number. The last column is the theme that emerged after the analysis of the raw data.

Ethics

An important part of the research is concerned with ethics. In order to conduct ethic research, certain steps were followed. Blaxter et al. (2006) argue that in order to have

ethical research, "it is essential to get signed formal consent from all the people who will be involved in the research" (p. 159). In the case of my research, first I talked to the principal of the *Escuela Bilingüe José Vasconcelos* in order to obtain her permission to interview the students inside the school in my working hours. Later I talked to each one of the children's parents. I explained to them what the research was about, and I asked for their authorization to interview the children. With the children of the *Escuela Bilingüe Naciones Unidas* I did not talk to the principal because I did not execute the interviews inside the school. I talked with their parents and gave them the consent letter in order to have their permission. The interviews of these children were carried out at their homes. I also had two more participants which due to their age, 18 and 19, were the ones who signed the consent letter themselves.

Data Analysis and Discussion

From the analysis of the interviews some themes emerged, so the themes I was able to discover will be shown and explained.

Language

Having analyzed the interviews, I noticed how language preference and language choice are important in the lives of these participants. This is the reason why I decided to put them together in the same category. In the literature, the terms are used indistinctly, but for this research they are distinguished. One may think that preference and choice refers to the same issue, but they are not based on the analysis and interpretation of the data. I could observe that language preference refers to the conscious decision of using one language over another based on the likeness of that specific language. On the other hand, language choice has to do with being aware of what language needs to be used depending in the in the circumstances, situation or context. Both themes will be explained with examples now.

Language Preference

A relevant issue caught my attention in regard to the analysis of the conversations, and it had to do with the language the participants chose to answer the interviews. I noticed that the decision was made based on their preference for the language and not in the situation or context in which the language might be used. The decision of using one language instead of another was based on their

predilection and not on the circumstances of usage of the language.

The first excerpt is from Viridiana, an adolescent whose mother tongue is Spanish. The girl is nineteen years old and has studied English since she was in preschool. We can observe some of the reasons why she prefers her L2 over her mother tongue.

> *Q=De esos dos idiomas ¿en cuál te gustaría que te hiciera la entrevista?*
> *A=En inglés.*
> *Q=Why do you prefer English for the interview?*
> *A=Because I like it more. I like to speak English, and I think it sounds really cool… it is like, I have talked Spanish all my life and everyone that I know speaks it and not everyone that I know speaks English, so I think it is really nice to know another language and it sounds really cool. (I-14-B-Viridiana-19)*

It is curious how Viridiana feels towards English. Even though English is not her mother tongue, she decided to be interviewed in English because of how the language makes her feel. This could have some relation to the idea of wanting to be different. It is common for adolescents to try to find their own identity and being bilingual could be for her something that distinguishes her from other people her age. Being bilingual for her is something positive that she wants to show.

The next piece of data is from Alicia. She is ten years old, and she was born in Mexico. She has family (grandmother, uncle and half-sister) living in the United States. Even though her mother tongue is Spanish, she decided to carry out the interview in English.

> *Q=¿En cuál de entre inglés y español quieres que te haga la entrevista?*
> *A=Me gustaría en inglés.*
> *Q=¿En inglés? Why would you like to be interviewed in English?*
> *A=Because [it] is one of my favorite language. I love to talk English and because all my family, part of my family is from U.S.A and I love to speak to them in English. (I-6-B-Alicia-10)*

Having conducted the interview I realized that Alicia connects the language with her family ties. She has an excellent relationship with her half-sister, and for Alicia her sister is her role model. This makes me reflect that this could be one of the reasons for her to have a preference for English. Her half-sister just finished college in Washington. She studied to be a lawyer. Alicia is immensely proud of her, as we can see in the following.

I want to be like my sister when I grow up because she is such a talented girl. She loves to draw and she has not been with any boyfriends. She is very cool because she finished her studies and she is studying more to be a good lawyer, so I want to be like her. In a few years I imagine myself in college, having my own home. (Id-1-B-Alicia-10)

A fascinating discovery shown in this theme is that 35% of my participants preferred a language in which they are not more proficient in comparison with their L1. For me this could be considered a thought-provoking issue to keep researching. Researchers express that bi-multilinguals prefer the language in which they are more proficient. An example of this is given by Houwer (2009) who observed that children may prefer to speak the language in which they are able to express themselves and feel most comfortable, but this did not happen with my participants.

Language Choice

I was able to differentiate language choice from language preference based on the next idea: bilinguals and multilinguals are aware of what language to use depending on the partner and purpose. Kohnert (2008) explains "Purpose of L1 and L2 are described as personal, educational or vocational, formal or informal, and spoken or written. Partners in these environments are family members, classmates, colleagues, friends, neighbors, community professionals, and other individuals [...] encountered in daily life" (par. 7). One language may be chosen to communicate with a parent or child, or another for a different purpose with someone else. She highlights that "for both older and younger bilingual individuals, motive and opportunities to use language for rich, meaningful interactions tend to go hand-in-hand" (Kohnert, 2008, par. 8).

The next data selections were from the interviews of two girls, sisters, born in Mexico whose parents are Americans. I will start with María, the older of the two sisters. She is 13 years old.

Q = ¿En casa no hablas también inglés?
A = Sí, con mis papás, sí y con mis hermanos en español.
Q = ¿Y por qué crees que sea esto?
A = No sé, porque mis papás casi no nos hablan en español y mis hermanos como están todo el día en la escuela, y con amigos pues hablamos en español y así.

Q = ¿Con alguien más hablas inglés?
A = Con mis abuelos y sus amigos. (I-3-B-María-13)

I was able to notice the clarity of how she decides to use the two languages depending on the people involved. For her, English is the language of the family or close relationships. She shares the same ideas with her younger sister, Joceline, who is 11 years old. It is also clear how languages need to be used and with whom for her.

Q = Español. ¿Por qué?
A = …no sé, es que me gusta más hablar español y con mis papás solo hablo inglés.
Q = ¿Y con quien más hablas inglés?
A = Y con mis abuelos y…bueno con mis abuelos. Y algunos amigos de mis papás. (I-4-B-Joceline-11)

It is interesting how family ties can influence the usage of a language, as we can observe with the two sisters.

The next data extract is from Alicia. One can see that despite her young age, she is aware of the language use with specific people, in this case the English teacher.

Q = And what about with your teachers, your English teachers?
A = I talk every time in English.
Q = It doesn't matter that you know that they speak Spanish?
A = Coz I know that it is in English. They talk in English. (I-6-B-Alicia-10)

I have known Alicia for six years and I have observed this behavior with all her English teachers. Since she was younger, she always spoke to them in English even though her abilities in the language were not the best.

Another participant, María, mentions a similar idea.

Q = Aquí con tus maestros me he fijado. Con tus maestros de inglés, siempre les hablas en inglés.
A = Si, porque si les hablo en español, me siento rara. (I-3-B-María-13)

In this case it is evident that Alicia and María associate their English teachers with the language. They realize that their teachers speak Spanish but because of their academic status, they speak to them in English. Baker (2010) highlights that "bilingual

children (around two years old) know which language to speak to whom and in what situation" (p. 91). This is confirmed with the last extracts and the following one will also support this.

> *Q = ¿Con cuál de los dos idiomas crees que tú te sientes más a gusto?*
> *A = Depende en donde esté.*
> *Q = A ver explícame.*
> *A = Es que aquí es como más en español, pero luego en Estados Unidos es más como en inglés, dependiendo del lugar. (I-3-B-Marìa-13)*

In this case it is clear for María what language to use depending on the context. She makes the difference between Mexico and the United States. She is aware of the language that is used in each country.

As we can observe in these examples, the data shows how bi-multilinguals understand how they should use certain language depending on different situations. These children learn these rules at an early age.

Code-switching

Code-switching is known as a language phenomenon and it refers to the usage of two or more languages in a conversation. Poplack (2001) explains that code-switching "refers to the mixing by bilinguals (or multilinguals), of two or more languages in discourse, often with no change of interlocutor or topic" (p. 1). Code-switching is part of bilinguals' and multilinguals' process of learning and using languages.

In the following passages Ángel expresses how he feels when he switches from one language to the other, in this case from English to Spanish.

> *Like I feel weird, because I'm talking English… like my head gets a little mixed up with the words… Not knowing what word to say… but I'm getting a lot better handling that, before I was not that good really. (I-1-B-Ángel-8)*

It can be noticed that even though Ángel is young, he is aware of the problems he has when it comes to speak in his L2. From his perspective, these problems have to do with finding the words in the correct language in order to express his ideas. This could be considered code-switching. I mentioned that he is aware because he also states that he is getting better at handling this situation. It seems that he sees this as a normal situation, and he has noticed that he is getting better in avoiding

code-switching as he expresses in the following.

Q = So now you know what words to use in each situation?
A = Well, most of the times, sometimes I have to use a word in Spanish, but I mean… almost never I have to use words in Spanish. I know a lot of English. (Id-2-B-Ángel-8)

In the next extract we can see how being bilingual gives these children the option of using either language based on the language they are able to recall at the time.

Sí, porque a veces yo no sé cómo decir algo en inglés o a veces hablo en inglés y no sé cómo se dice en español. (I-4-B-Joceline-11)

In this case Joceline, as Ángel, expresses how she goes from one language to the other looking for the words she needs to use. Alicia also says something similar in the following piece of data.

…and for like that expressions or saying something we don't know in Spanish we say it in English. (I-6-B-Alicia-10)

Alicia explains that there are some ideas that cannot be expressed in a different language than the original because they would lose their meaning. The same idea is shared by Montserrat. In the next piece of data, she was talking about an emotional moment and the language she used to express those feelings.

Y puedo empezar a hablar, de pronto salen frases en inglés, porque son las únicas que suenan correcto en el momento. (I-13-M-Montserrat-18)

In this case although her L1 is Spanish, she feels that certain words have more power than others depending in the language.

According to Pérez-Bazan (2002), a child will choose the language that he or she prefers when stating opinions or speaking about feelings. In the case of Montserrat, she thinks that certain words or phrases in her L2 sound or fit better to express what she feels. She continues explaining this phenomenon.

…porque también tiene la desventaja que hay veces que solo se te ocurren las palabras o las frases en otro idioma y si las otras personas no conocen el idioma. Pien-

san que lo estás haciendo a propósito para que ellos no entiendan, pero no es eso es que simplemente enserio no te acuerdas de cuál es la palabra o simplemente la frase no suena correcta en el otro idioma. (I-13-M-Montserrat-18)

Montserrat clearly explains that it has nothing to do with showing off or being arrogant about the issue of handling two or more codes, it is basically finding the correct word for the correct expression in the correct language.

I could notice in this section how code-switching has an important place in the lives of bi-multilinguals. Now I will continue with the next theme that emerged in the data analysis.

Language Brokering

Weisskirch et al. (2011) explain the term language brokering as the act of translating, by children from immigrant families in order to help their parents communicate. Children that grow up with two or more languages do not realize at an early age that they may be different from monolingual children. It takes them time to understand that their knowledge of a second or third language can be useful to others. We can observe this situation with the next participants, Joceline and Alicia.

Que si alguien no sabe algo le puedo explicar, como que les ayudo, cuando quieren traducir algo les ayudó. (I-4-B-Joceline-11)

…because I can talk with persons that speak in English. So, when they have a question, I can help them. (I-6-B-Alicia-10)

It seems that both girls like the idea of being useful to others. I could think that there is some relationship with their age in order to have this feeling of being helpful to others.

Cristina's case may be slightly different, as she is already a teenager. One can observe this in the next excerpt.

A = Pues… Me siento también un poco más lista supongo.
Q = ¿Y te gusta sentirte así?
A = Pues sí, porque les puedo enseñar como cosas y así. (I-11-B-Cristina-15)

It seems that Cristina has a different view of language brokering. For her it is more

than helping people. It has to do with showing others that she is different, that she is smarter and, although not explicitly stated, superior. As I indicated before, age could also be an important aspect to take into consideration when looking at this phenomenon.

As one can see, bilingual children use their knowledge about the language to help others in different situations. It could be for translating or explaining. The important issue here is to understand how these children view this help. We could observe how young children like to do it because it makes them feel good, and happy. On the contrary older kids, mainly the ones that are going through adolescence, see it in a different way. It seems that being able to help makes them feel important or smarter. They see themselves as owner of something that others do not have, and this is significant for them.

Identity

Another theme that I was able to notice through the analysis of the data is identity. Lengeling (2010) explains that "Identity could be represented by a mirror that reflects who we are; how we see ourselves; how we perceive others and how other people perceive us" (p. 65). As it could be interpreted, identity is a complicated theme taking into account the way we view ourselves, how others view us and how we think others view us. Based on Lengeling's (2010) definition of identity, I was able to locate three subcategories: self-identity, social identity and showing off my identity.

Self-Identity

The way we view ourselves, sometimes may not correspond to how others view us. Being bi-multilingual implies not only learning an L2 or an L3, but also being able to relate to the cultural and social aspects. Sometimes the way others notice us has nothing to do with how we perceive ourselves. As an example, we have Diego, a German adolescent, who explains his self-identity:

> *Me identifico… podría ser… el alemán o el español, no estoy seguro. Actualmente creo que es el español ya que uno se acostumbra mucho a lo que escucha… pero también por lo que soy bastante reconocido es el alemán. En esto momentos me siento como mexicano* más que alemán…ya adopté *esa forma de vida mexicana, ya adopté la forma de hablar, la forma de expresarme, la forma de...de se pudiera casi decir que*

para actuar. (I-10-M-Diego-14)

It can be observed how Diego relates his languages to emotional aspects. In this case he has a specific idea of how both languages, Spanish and German, can be differentiated based on the way they sound.

> *Cuando estoy muy, muy enojado normalmente hablo en alemán, y cuando estoy con enojo leve hablo en español. Creo que... es que el alemán como que me puedo expresar de una manera más fácil a comparación del español ya que en el alemán [...] todo suena tan fuerte y sientes que estás hablando algo fuerte y sientes que la gente también escucha eso y te sientes fuerte. La gente sabe que estas en un momento fuerte o enojado, más fuerte. (I-10-M-Diego-14)*

As one can notice, Diego considers German to be a stronger language in comparison with Spanish because of its sounds. As a result of these assumptions, Diego has a strong feeling that German is a language in which he can express more anger than in Spanish.

Identities change through time, and what the participant just expressed in the interview is a good example. He has changed his perception about himself because of the time he has lived in Mexico. The interaction with Mexican culture could have influenced the way he views himself now. It is also important to remember that he is fourteen years old. He is going through physical and mental changes, which could also influence his perceptions. On the other hand, we have Rebecca, who despite the time she has lived in Mexico, has not changed the way she feels about her nationality.

> *Q = ¿Pero tu hermanita también habla francés o no?*
> *A = Sí, pero ella se cree la mexicana.*
> *Q = ¿Y tú que te crees?*
> *A = No, sigo siendo la francesa… Porque o sea no estoy como tan, tan mucho acostumbrada al español, al hablar sí, pero como al sentirlo no. (Id-3-M-Rebecca-8)*

Rebecca expresses that, although she lives in Mexico and speaks Spanish, she still feels French, even though she was born in the United States. The reason she gives is that she speaks Spanish, but she does not feel Mexican. I think she refers to an emotional contact, maybe she feels more connected with French because her father speaks it, and she has a good connection with him.

Now I will continue with the next theme which is social identity. It is crucial to mention that I came up with this subcategory based on the idea that all expressions

of self-identity have some dimension of social identity.

Social Identity

According to Wenger (2003), identities are constructed through social participation of meaningful activities. Feeling part of a community helps construct our identity. The next category is related to the way in which the participants perceive themselves as part of a group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) express that "a social group consist of a number of people who feel and perceive themselves as belonging to this group and who are said to be in the group by others" (p. 40). The next excerpt of data is from Alicia, and she identifies strongly with her L2 leaving her L1 aside.

> *Sometimes when we walk on the street and I start to talk my English with my dad and they say, oh that's an American person, but I am not an American person… I like it, because I feel more American than Mexican. (I-6-B-Alicia-10)*

As it could be observed, she has a strong attachment to her L2. Regarding her reasons, I will explain some details. Her father lived in the United States for a long period of time and she still has family in the United States. For her, language is part of her cultural and family ties. Her preference for her L2 makes her feel more part of the American culture, wanting to be identified as a member of that culture. Alicia explains this in her own words.

> *Q=And in this moment you were telling me that you feel more American than Mexican. Why do you think so? Why do you feel this way?*
> *A=Because mostly my family speaks English...because my dad doesn't allow us to watch movies or to watch TV shows in Spanish so we have to watch our TV shows in youtube channel in English, for exception of two or three of them, so I think that's why I think I feel more American. I love the States… it is pretty awesome because all my family is there, and I love them so much! Because I have these moments stuck to my head every time we go to Dallas for Christmas dinner. We all eat turkey on Christmas Eve and I love that. We celebrate all the holidays in the United States: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Halloween. My brother and I feel very, very American. (Id-1-B-Alicia-10)*

The next excerpts of data are from Viridiana, a teenager that studies in *Universidad de La Salle*, in León, Gto. She has lived all her life in San Miguel de Allende. She is aware of the differences between these two cities, and at the same time she knows

that she is part of the San Miguel de Allende bilingual community even if she lives elsewhere. The bilingual community she refers to is the one formed by the children that study and have studied in the *Escuela Bilingüe José Vasconcelos* and the *Escuela Bilingüe Naciones Unidas*. She left the city and went to the *Universidad de La Salle*, but she comes back every weekend.

> *It is cool when I am with my classmates from the 10th level. I feel ok because I can talk to them. They talk the same as me and we all understand each other… in San Miguel almost all my friends speak English, too. (I-14-B-Viridiana-19)*

Here Viridiana compares the contexts where she studies and where she belongs. Although she feels comfortable with her classmates because they share with her the language proficiency, she knows that it is not the place where she belongs. Trept (2006) explains that when people are part of a group, they develop certain behaviors such as solidarity between them. They can also discriminate those that are not part of the group. This idea can be better understood with the next fragment.

> *Q=So, do you think people perceive you different in San Miguel than in León, or do you think is the same?*
> *A=No, I think in San Miguel we are almost the same and maybe the people I know here they are in the same level of English because we have learnt it all our lives and in Leon a lot of them have not studied English for all their life. Sometimes they only know a little bit. When you get to college, you know people from every state and some of them know English but almost anyone else. (I-14-B-Viridiana-19)*

Viridiana knows that she belongs to a specific group of people who speak more than one language, and she is proud of it. We can observe the same situation with the next two participants. Ángel and Cristina express their ideas in the next excerpts.

> *… every single kid in my class talks more than one language. (I-1-B-Ángel-8)*
> *… por ejemplo aquí en la escuela no me ven como diferente porque todos hablan dos idiomas. (I-11-B-Cristina-15)*

For Ángel, being bilingual is a normal thing, and he knows that he is not the only one. He is aware of this ability which he shares with the rest of his classmates. Cristina also reveals this thought stating in the past example her feelings about not being different; this is due to the awareness of sharing her language abilities with others.

Their age does not matter, and they are aware of their condition of being bi-multilingual. Therefore, they understand that they belong to a specific group or groups. Tajfel (1979) explains that, in order to simplify our understanding of the world, we tend to categorize individuals into groups, which makes us feel secure. These children can speak two languages and they also interact with people from different nationalities. Despite these situations, they are aware of who they are and where they belong to.

The next theme that emerged from the data was named showing off my identity. This label was given due to the idea that bi-multilinguals have in relation to how other people might view them.

Showing off My Identity

In some situations, bi-multilinguals may think that people perceive them as different from monolinguals. Therefore, I came up with this category based on the finding of the data analysis. Bi-multilinguals are aware of being different and because of this, they have the idea that others also see them different. Sometimes they like it and sometimes they do not. The children in my research are proud of their ability with languages and they like to voice it. Viridiana explains what she notices when people find out she is bilingual.

> *They are really amazed; sometimes they are surprised. When I tell them that I have a really good level of English, they don't really understand why. They ask me where I learnt it or how I learned so much English. (I-14-B-Viridiana-19)*

It might not be true how she thinks that people perceive her, but this could be related with her own view. She is proud of her bilingualism. She considers herself to be cool, so this opinion may influence the way she thinks others view her. Trept (2011) explains:

> *[…] we not only categorize ourselves and others, but that we evaluate the groups. To get an idea of the superiority or inferiority of our group and of how reasonable and adequate our belonging to it is, we compare it with other groups, their characteristics, members, and benefits. (p. 258)*

The next participants, Joceline and Montserrat, also have a specific idea of how people may see them.

Q = Tú como crees que las demás personas te ven….
A = Como americana.
Q = ¿Por qué?
A = …por mis papás.
Q = Y cuando la gente sabe que hablas más de dos idiomas ¿cómo crees que ellos te ven a ti?
A = Como no sé… mejor.
Q = ¿Por qué crees que sea eso?
A = Por qué sé más idiomas. (I-4-B-Joceline-11)

Joceline is aware of being different and she also has the idea of people perceiving her like this. Her parents are American and she thinks this is the reason why people connect her to the idea of being American and being better than others. She also thinks that knowing two or more languages makes you better than only knowing one language. This idea can be linked with the next excerpt from Montserrat.

Q = ¿Tú cómo crees que las demás personas te perciben a ti, cuando saben que hablas más de un idioma?
A = Pues como que se sorprenden mucho y a veces piensan que es como que es presumir a veces siento que piensan que es presumido hablar muchos idiomas. (I-13-M-Montserrat-18)

One needs to remember that Montserrat is an adolescent. I have noticed, as a mother and as a teacher, that adolescents often try to do things in order to stand out from the rest of the group. Maybe this awareness of being able to speak more languages gives Montserrat the idea of being better than others and this is the reason she assumes others view her in this way.

One could observe that the participants have the idea that people perceive them as more intelligent than monolingual people only because they are able to function in two or more languages. It had little to do with the age. All of them understand that in some way they are different from monolingual people, and they like it.

Investment

The next theme that emerged from the data analysis concerns the effort that someone makes regarding a specific activity in order to obtain a reward or a benefit; in

this case I am referring to language investment. Having analyzed the data, I was able to notice how bi-multilinguals appreciate the advantages of learning two or more languages. In the next piece of data Alicia gives us an explanation of why she likes to learn English.

> *…that's the language that most people speak right now; if you have to work, you have to talk in English. (I-6-B-Alicia-10)*

What I found interesting is that despite the fact she is ten years old, she is perfectly conscious of the advantages of learning English. She has been influenced by her dad's opinions as she expresses in the next.

> *Q = So, do you think that learning languages can give you an advantage over other people?*
> *A = Yeah, my dad actually says…if you want to be successful in your life, you need to learn more than one language, because if you only know one language, you will not be as successful as other people that know more than two languages. (Id-1-B-Alicia-10)*

For her being able to speak several languages can help in the improvement of someone's life.

It must be stated that these children have the possibility to travel abroad in order to study in another country. In the next quote you can note how learning languages has helped Montserrat, an eighteen-year-old student who wants to make her dream come true.

> *Q = ¿Y tú crees que tus idiomas te puedan ayudar?*
> *A = Sí, porque de hecho me voy a ir a estudiar a Francia…fue la ventaja que me dio para poder ir a estudiar fuera.*
> *Q = Entonces, ¿consideras que hay ventajas cuando sabes más de un idioma?*
> *A = Si, si, en efecto, de hecho, te dan muchas oportunidades. Te abren muchas puertas. De hecho, en la escuela fueron a promocionarnos estudiar en Francia, pero yo era la única que tenía el nivel necesario para poder aplicar, entonces yo fui la única que pudo aplicar. (I-13-M-Montserrat-18)*

As Montserrat explains in the interview, she is aware of the advantages of learning languages, but she also gives another reason why languages can be helpful in her

daily life.

> *A = Con otro idioma como que también ves el mundo desde varias perspectivas y me gusta. Las personas que hablan español solo ven las cosas como de una forma y es la* única que existe. *(I-13-M-Montserrat-18)*

I found Monserrat's perception of monolingual speakers interesting. She considers learning languages an advantage because of the idea of traveling. Going beyond that, for her languages open your mind to different cultures and perspectives and they make you see the world with different eyes.

Having analyzed the data, I realized some of the issues bi-multilinguals go through in their learning process. Exploring their bi-multilingualism has not been an easy task, because we are dealing with people. I could notice issues that related some participants with others, and regardless of the difference in age, most of them share the same perceptions about growing up with two or more languages.

Conclusions

This study was carried out with the attempt to understand how children from two bilingual schools in the city of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, live their bi-multilingualism. Through this research I was able to gain an overview of what bi-multilingual children go through in their language process. The information obtained from the research might be useful in the future for pedagogical purposes related to bilingual education in Mexico.

Revisiting the Research Statement

Several authors have indicated that bilingualism is a worldwide phenomenon (Bloomfield, 1933; Grosjean, 1982; Holmes, 2013; Liddicoat, 1991). This phenomenon has been studied since the late 19th century (see Bialystok, 2010), nevertheless I consider that there are more areas that can be further investigated, especially with respect to bi-multilingual children in Mexico. At the moment a vast amount of the research in regard to bilingualism has been focused on countries where English is the official language, such as the United States or England. Likewise, research has been conducted in countries where people need to learn a second or third language in order to survive. In the case of Mexico, English is not the official language, however, for different reasons bilingual education has increased in recent years. An example of this trend is the new educational reform that the government of Mexico

wants to implement starting the school year 2018-2019.

I strongly believe that, if the aim is to implement a successful bi-multilingual education in a country where English is not the official language, different issues need to be taken into consideration, such as programs and types of bilingual education. This must be accomplished with the goal of giving factual information to the agents involved in the process; these agents would be teachers, parents and those responsible for language programs. Two of these issues were considered in this research. One of them is the context and domain where the language is taught. It is not the same to teach English in Chiapas as in Laredo or in the United States, or even in a country in Europe. The second one is related to the individuals that learn the target language.

During the analysis of the data, different themes emerged which I consider are central to the understanding of how language learning can influence the perception of the self in bi-multilingual children. The themes that arose in the data analysis were: language preference, language choice, code-switching, language brokering, identity, and investment. These represent the complexities of growing up with two or more languages. These themes enriched the research with interesting data that can be used to help teachers and parents in Mexico understand bi-multilingual children.

Summary of the Findings

During the analysis of the data, I decided to separate language preference from language choice, even though the terms have been used indistinctly in research (see Baker, 2010). Based on my analysis, I found that they can be understood differently. In reference with language preference, children in the research decided to use certain language centered in their predilection for that language. On the other hand, language choice was based on the circumstance, context, domain or language targets. I was able to notice how bi-multilingual children in my research were strongly aware of these differences.With respect to the theme of investment, it was evident, based on the data analysis, that bi-multilingual children in San Miguel de Allende are conscious of the advantages of knowing more than one language. They have learnt this from their experiences or because they have heard it from their parents, relatives or friends. Mainly bi-multilingual children have in mind that being able to speak more than one language might help them to have a better quality of life. Some of them explained that with the knowledge of different languages they would be able to study in a foreign country in the future. These children, no matter the age, can see the purpose of learning another language.

In regard to code-switching, it is imperative to highlight that this phenomenon is not fully understood by parents or teachers, hence the significance of mentioning it in the findings. It was once presumed that if a child code-switches, he or she is incompetent in the language (see Genesee, 2006). It is vital for teachers and parents to understand that the phenomenon of code-switching is due to many reasons and they need to assume the responsibility of understanding those reasons, which may not be easy to spot. This can be achieved by reading and researching on the topic. Fundamentally, people that interact with bi-multilinguals need to keep in mind that code-switching is part of being bi-multilingual.

Emotions are meaningful for these bi-multilingual children. I was able to determine that emotions are critical in the selection of a language. Some children consider one of their languages more proper or more suitable to express a specific feeling. It is crucial to understand how these children connect their languages with their emotional state. What I could detect is that when it comes to expressing significant feelings, bi-multilingual children tend to choose their mother tongue.

Regarding language brokering, various authors (Baker, 2010; Weisskirch, Kim, Zamboanga, Schwartz, Bersamin & Umana-Taylor, 2011) express that the action of translating puts pressure on bi-multilingual children. Therefore, these children might feel pressured and could present psychological distress. Regarding bi-multilingual children in San Miguel de Allende, it seems that being able to help others with language issues makes them feel useful and proud. For these children, translating from one language to another is valuable in their lives. What was found in the data is that small children experience the language brokering differently in comparison with older kids, specifically, adolescents. According to the data, small children like to feel useful to others when it comes to translation. According to Baker (2010), young language brokers usually like the feeling of being able to do something for others. On the other hand, adolescents view this situation differently. They have a tendency to feel empowered when they help others translate. They feel smarter and important at the same time. Based on the statement given by the authors mentioned above, I can say that not one of my participants expressed feeling pressured or stressed when they performed the translations.

Identity is a fascinating topic when it comes to discussing bi-multilingual children. The experience of growing up with more than one language is an issue to take into consideration when we refer to identity. Based on the data gathered, I was able to observe how these children view themselves and how they think others also view them. Another issue observed in the research was the awareness of these children about belonging to a specific group due to their knowledge of two or more

languages. In addition, I noticed how these children are proud of their ability to speak more than one language. These children are so satisfied with this ability that they have no problems showing it off to others.

Pedagogical Implications of the Research

At it has been mentioned before, nowadays it is common for children to grow up with two or more languages. I consider that this process is not easy, and, as a result, the concept of bi-multilingualism needs to be addressed by teachers as part of their pedagogical training. It is not enough to comprehend how languages are learned. Teachers need to reflect on what goes on in the lives and minds of children that are in contact with more than one language.

As it was stated before, code-switching is part of bilinguals' and multilinguals' process of learning languages. Children that code-switch must not be stigmatized. Teachers and parents need to be aware of this matter in order to understand language learning and be able to provide significant support to these children through their learning process.

In general, I consider that the findings from this research might shed light on the field of bi-multilingualism in foreign countries. The information may be used with the aim of creating courses for training teachers with the intention of increasing the quality of bilingual education. The information could also be used in order to improve bilingual language programs by raising awareness and sensitivity. Finally, maybe publishers can also consider some of the findings when creating textbooks for bilingual education in Mexico or other countries where English is not the official language.

Final Comments

Throughout this research I was able to observe how bi-multilingual children in the city of San Miguel de Allende live their bi-multilingualism. A characteristic that all the children shared was the awareness of being bilingual or multilingual. They are conscious of their ability of speaking two or more languages and they are proud of it. As it was shown through the analysis of the data, different aspects were involved in the process of becoming bi-multilingual. Considering the importance of bilingual education in Mexico, I strongly believe that teachers, parents and everyone involved in the teaching of languages should be informed about these features. Such features should be considered in bilingual schools and homes with the purpose of creating a more appropriate and relaxed environment for the learning of languages.

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PERCEPTIONS OF A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH IN A BILINGUAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Elizabeth Flores Villalobos
Centro Educativo Alexander Bain

Introduction

With the purpose of offering the best ways to succeed, educational centers offer their pupils diverse ways to fulfill their pedagogic objectives, such as setting high expectations, establishing classroom routines, using strategies to aid students to develop abilities, etc. This is the case of the *Centro Educativo Alexander Bain,* a private school located in the city of Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico, where this study took place. This school's main objective is "to allow students to achieve a comprehensive preparation obtaining high academic achievement, appreciation for the arts, a taste for various sports and human formation that aid them to be positive and competitive agents of change" (Alexander Bain Irapuato, 2006, p. 1).

The institution opened its doors in 2006 and is considered an international school which offers students a bilingual education from preschool to high school. However, this research was only carried out at the elementary level. Besides offering the standard teaching curriculum from the Ministry of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública,* SEP), the school also offers an international education from the International Baccalaureate (IB). International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968. The central goal of this organization is to boost learners' natural curiosity (Hill, 2012). Moreover, students are prepared to be caring, knowledgeable, and eager people who understand this globalized world by developing high quality and international education by using a constructivist approach that aims to aid a diverse community of students to make sense of today's interconnected world (Van Oord, 2007).

The school incorporates local and global issues to the curriculum of the SEP, dividing it into six related transdisciplinary themes as an IB mandatory standard (IBO, 2008). First and foremost, the transdisciplinary themes are the guide for teachers to develop a program of inquiry since both, teaching and learning, must take place in a cross-curricular way. The transdisciplinary themes are the following: "who we are; where we are in place and time; how we express ourselves; how the world works; how we organize ourselves; and sharing the planet" (IBO, 2007, p. 12). Learning is planned around these six transdisciplinary themes in six units of inquiry (IBO,

2007), implementing what learners already know with new knowledge. The six units are carried out throughout the school year and they take from five to six weeks each. It is noteworthy that educators from different areas participate in the students' learning process. For that reason, students' learning is not reduced only to traditional subjects, but to their improvement and examination. Each theme has global significance and is supported by knowledge, concepts, and skills from traditional subjects.

For the elementary school, the name of the program is Primary Years Programme (PYP). This program is recognized as a pedagogical model for international primary education which challenges learners from age three to twelve years to develop certain sets of beliefs in order to construct their knowledge (IBO, 2007). According to the PYP, students are encouraged to develop their natural curiosity, and to be critical thinkers while interacting with the environment (IBO, 2007). For that reason, IB schools must utilize an approach that allows learners to construct meaningful and durable learning. The IB considers constructivism as an approach in which learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world by developing creativity, performing certain activities and by reflection (IBO, 2007).

Constructivism in Education

One of the main goals of the PYP is for students to become more analytical and more knowledgeable about their societies by embracing learning through inquiry and frequent student-teacher interactions. The purpose of all IB programs is "to develop internationally minded people, who recognizing their common humanity share guardianship of the planet, helping to create a better and more peaceful world" (IBO, 2013, p. 2). In order to accomplish these goals, IB institutions adopt a constructivist approach to teaching and learning in order to construct self-understanding and knowledge of the world utilizing student's prior knowledge, social skills and reflection. For IB schools, this approach is seen as a model in education which incorporates learning, interdisciplinary subjects, and previous knowledge.

According to Cetin-Dindar (2016), constructivism is "an active process of constructing knowledge based on learner's experiences" (p. 233). In other words, constructivism is an approach adopted to allow students to become active constructors of their knowledge by applying their previous experiences. Based on this idea, there are several authors who have researched this topic (Bodrova, 2004; Broomhead, 2005; Cetin-Dindar, 2016; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Holland, 2015; Uredi, 2014; Yoders, 2014; among others). For instance, Dixon-Krauss (1996) and Yoders (2014) claim that the main contribution of constructivism is the ability learners

gain to construct knowledge utilizing their personal experiences and ideas instead of obtaining a passive acquisition of skills and knowledge. Broomhead (2005) and Uredi (2014) also suggest that this approach is a way in which students can be engaged in the construction of new knowledge or information by utilizing meaningful previous knowledge. Constructivism for these authors is thus seen as a teaching approach to achieve new information through experience and reflection about that understanding. Learners thus bring their personal experiences to the classroom and use them to learn from. Connecting this previous lived knowledge with new information, students are expected to learn in a more meaningful way.

Werstch (1985) mentions that the most important proponents of constructivism are Piaget and Vygotsky. These proponents took into consideration the importance of using self-information, knowledge construction, and human interactions among other characteristics while learning through the constructivist approach (Werstch 1985). According to Vadeboncoeur (1997), "Piagetian constructivism is aligned with an emphasis on education for individual cognitive development while forms of Vygotskyan constructivism are aligned with an emphasis on education for social transformation" (p. 15). In line with this, Phillips (1995) emphasizes that Piaget's constructivism centers its attention on the "biological/psychological mechanisms to be found in the individual learner" (p. 7) and Vygotsky's constructivism "focuses on the social factors that influenced learning" (p. 7). Bodrova (2004) places Vygotsky as its main proponent. She argues that the approach relies on the following four central Vygotskian propositions:

1. Children construct knowledge.
2. The development cannot be considered apart from the social context.
3. Learning can lead the development.
4. Language plays a central role in mental development. (*ibid*, p. 8)

On the one hand, Piaget's perception of constructivism is centered on self-learning because he believed human beings construct knowledge throughout their interaction with the environment and previous knowledge (Pass, 2004). On the other hand, Vygotsky's theory "lies the understanding of human cognition and learning as social and cultural rather than individual phenomena" (Kozulin, 2003, p. 1). In other words, Vygotsky's notions of learning come from a collaborative learning rather than in an individual or isolated way (Moll, 1992). Since the IBO also recognizes Vygotsky's ideas about learning through social interactions, and the IB "emphasizes intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth through

all domains of knowledge" (Bullock, 2011, p. 2), it seemed to be a mismatch on the perception of the constructivist approach and the way teachers at the Alexander Bain School utilized it.

In order to achieve their students' learning purpose, IB institutions adopt constructivism as a way for learning. Moreover, it must be used as an active process in which learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through active participation and achievement of certain activities and internalization. More specifically, in words of the IB, the learner must be an "active and critical thinker, assessor, explainer, inquirer, interpreter, negotiator, social participator, and global citizen" (IBO, 2007, p. 29). Thus, for IB, constructivism is a way to explain how individuals construct knowledge once information comes into contact with the existing knowledge previously gained by personal experiences. According to the PYP, learning should not be done in isolation because eliciting knowledge and understanding is the result of students working together by continually "constructing, testing, and confirming or revising" (IBO, 2007, p. 6) learners' ideas with other peers and adults such as teachers. Moreover, PYP teachers must scaffold learners in order to promote and test their understanding and development of skills. Since the IB schools promote the development of several experiences for knowledge construction through sociocultural learning and inquiries, it is safe to say that IB schools work under the social constructivist approach and not just constructivism as they mention in their documents (IBO, 2009). Moreover, due that IB schools promote students' own responsibility for learning by emphasizing their critical participation in constructing meaning through scaffolding, these institutions' curriculum has the flexibility to easily move into the realm of the social constructivist theory. The IBO identifies that its "pedagogical approaches are based on a constructivist understanding of how children learn" (IBO, 2008, p. 12). Likewise, this organization provides some of the main elements that characterize not only constructivism, but also social constructivism. Through reflective tasks, the use of social constructivism makes it easier to involve learners in class activities to help them built new knowledge from schemata and from the work with more skillful peers. The social constructivist theory, according to Bullock (2011), suggests that learning "is fashioned not only by individual qualities and preferred practices but also by the various contexts of social practice that the learner has experienced" (p. 13). Thus, from an IB perspective, social constructivism focuses on collaborative work due that learning occurs when interaction with others are progressively internalized to become our own processes. Additionally, the IB supports its principles from some constructivist theories such as those of Vygotsky, Dewey, Piaget

and Bruner. This last author, for instance, believes that learning is easier for students if it is "participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative and given over to the construction, rather than the reception of meanings" (Bruner, 1996, p. 84).

The International Baccalaureate Program and its Goals

Since one of the main objectives of the IBO is to create international people who can communicate and understand other cultures and individuals all around the world, it is central to provide learners the opportunity to communicate in more than one language. For this reason, the IB schools challenge their students to learn in at least two or more languages: their mother tongue and a second language. Therefore, IB schools need to make sure a bilingual environment which surrounds students. The IB Organization (2008) proposes that:

> …language is integral to identity, which in turn determines how a person will act. A mother tongue and any other languages used in constructing meaning are intimately connected to a person's relationship with the world and how they come to feel about that world. Social and emotional conditions for learning that value all languages and cultures and affirm the identity of each learner promote self-esteem and additive bilingualism (where another language and culture does not replace that of the mother tongue). (p. 8)

Thus, for IB institutions, the use of a language different from the mother tongue is an important and necessary characteristic to be an international learner. Students must develop certain characteristics and skills necessary to be fluent in more than one language. As a result, IB schools promote bilingualism as a tool for learning and developing an international mentality.

Moreover, bilingual education is becoming more popular in not only IB schools, but also all over the world in order to meet the needs of a globalized world. Bilingual education is seen as "a form of dual-language education that places a balanced number of language majority and language minority students in integrated settings for all or most of the day to receive literacy and content instruction in and through two languages" (Ramos, 2007, p. 1). For instance, Jasanoff (2004) argues that globalism provides the opportunity to be more knowledgeable about what happens in the world and to take part in international, cultural, and political relations. Thus, since globalism provides people with information about different aspects of the world, more and more people may see the importance of becoming bilingual. In Mexico, this kind of education is centered on the development of linguistic and academic

abilities in two primary languages: Spanish, the local language and English, the second language.

Hall, Smith and Wicaksono (2015) distinguish bilingual education as "the programmes in which at least two languages are systematically employed as languages of instruction, including for the purposes of teaching academic content" (p. 178). This view is interesting since it refers to two languages approached as a means of instruction in an institution. This education combines two goals: academic learning and the use of both languages. Through this process, learners gain sufficient understanding of both languages simultaneously. Besides that, this type of learning allows them to acquire knowledge at the same time that social experiences are promoted: characteristic of the social constructivist approach. Understanding both languages provides a significant opportunity to obtain greater learning and cognitive development, which may serve as a scaffolding tool to increase the qualified levels of linguistic and academic proficiency, development of constructive attitudes and performances, and the conservation of academic standards of the less skillful learners (Ramos, 2007). Shin (2013) notices that bilingualism is "a fact of life for most of the world's populations. It is estimated that as much as two-thirds of the people in the world are bilingual" (p. 1). Currently, more and more people are able to not just communicate in more than one language, but to adapt to diverse bilingual environments in order to acquire new knowledge. Therefore, bilingual education in IB schools is not seen as an isolated discipline. It is perceived as "part of social and personal development" (IBO, 2008, p. 4). Thus, language learning is a fundamental way to develop cognitive growth and construction of knowledge. For instance, at some point a learner "has enough language so that in addition to it being a communicative tool, it is also a flexible resource for further learning and cognitive growth. Language itself, rather than direct concrete experience, can be used to negotiate new meanings and construct knowledge about the world" (IBO, 2008, p. 5).

Since the IB is an international organization which offers learners from different parts of the world the equal access to its programs and is committed "to increase intercultural understanding and international mindedness," (p. 1), an IB education must offer learners instruction in more than one language (IBO, 2007). In the case of the PYP, which provides education to students from the ages of three to twelve years, they can be instructed in two languages: the mother tongue and a second language. The ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language is essential to the IB concept of an international education that promotes intercultural perspectives and sociocultural understanding. Challenging IB students to open their minds and become international can be achieved throughout the constant use

of two languages not only in academic classes, but by interacting in social contexts. Baker (2011) supports this idea arguing that a bilingual person must develop the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in a proficient way and in two languages. Thus, the IB's main objective of training learners in a foreign language is to help them to communicate and understand other cultures around the globe while developing certain skills, attitudes and attributes.

In a bilingual education program such as the IB schools, the second language is taught through content instead of learning the language *per se*. Met (1991) and Lo (2014) defend that when learners are immersed in the language, it is easier for them to acquire the language rather than learners that only study the second language to learn to speak it. Pessoa, Hendry, Donato, Tucker, and Lee (2007) support this idea arguing that some foreign language educators defend the use of content based learning approach as a useful way to learn a second language, "because classroom tasks provide a context for language learning, [and they] are more cognitively demanding, and reinforce the existing school curriculum" (p. 103). In their research, Pessoa, Hendry, Donato, Tucker, and Lee (2007) conclude that "an effective content based instruction class includes attention to both content and language through conversations that encourage student language use and development, as well as metalinguistic awareness by collaboratively negotiating form and by the teacher's feedback" (p. 117). Thus, IB schools, by offering a social constructivist approach and providing learners with a sociocultural environment, provide better opportunities to acquire knowledge about not only a language, but different academic subjects. Moreover, by fostering a bilingual education, IB institutions offer opportunities to students from everywhere around the world.

Constructivism and Social Constructivism

From the Piagetian constructivism and Vygotskyan constructivism, two different perspectives emerged: constructivism and social constructivism. Constructivism is seen as a theory that offers knowledge in which human beings are active creators of that knowledge (Araya, Alfaro & Andonegui, 2007). Thus, the use of constructivism is then a way of utilizing an individual's previous knowledge without taking into consideration other human characteristics. Dixon-Krauss (1996) complements that idea claiming that the main contribution of the constructivist approach is the ability that learners gain when constructing knowledge utilizing their own personal experiences and ideas instead of obtaining a passive acquisition of skills and knowledge from a teacher. Thus, this approach focuses on allowing learners to

construct knowledge by connecting self-experience and reflecting about it. Muijs and Reynolds (2005) argue that "the basic principle underlying the constructivist philosophy is that all knowledge is constructed rather than directly perceived by the human senses" (p. 61). Constructivism is, therefore, a process in which learners' knowledge is constructed from experience and personal understanding of the world, making a gap about what learners are supposed to learn and what they have really learnt. In other words, through constructivism students learn differently and in different steps according to their lived experiences (*ibid*). Therefore, some authors (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006) criticize the use of this approach discussing that constructivism benefits those students who possess prior knowledge. Schechter (2001) contrasts this idea arguing that if it is true, this approach offers learners a different way of learning since "learning [through] constructivism involves not only learning new concepts, but also unlearning old habits and preconceptions" (p. 53). According to this argument, it can be distinguished that for some learners it may be better to get rid of traditional learning habits in order to develop learning skills which allow them to acquire new knowledge. For instance, learners who are invited to share from their schemata or previous knowledge may be more willing to participate in class than those ones (in a traditional classroom) who have to provide a correct answer. Von Glasersfeld (1995) also points out that constructivism is:

> …an unconventional approach to the problems of knowledge and knowing. It starts from the assumption that knowledge, no matter how it be defined, is in the heads of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he or she knows on the basis of his or her own experience. What we make of experience constitutes the only world we consciously live in. It can be sorted into many kinds, such as things, self, others, and so on. But all kinds of experience are essentially subjective, and though I may find reasons to believe that my experience may not be unlike yours, I have no way of knowing that it is the same. The experience and interpretation of language are no exception. (p. 1)

Accordingly, constructivism has been seen as a way to build knowledge by using what every individual already knows. Moreover, it might also make it difficult to standardize testing in order to identify or to measure what learners have acquired. Thus, in order to make constructivism a more effective learning approach, some constructivists have offered a variety of strategies (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005). Some of those strategies include the Vygotsky's theory about the use of social interac-

tions, collaborative work, and scaffolding. These characteristics are distinguished in the social constructivist approach.

Social constructivism has been defined as a way to learn in a social environment throughout social construction of knowledge (Araya, Alfaro & Andonegui, 2007). In other words, social constructivism is a way to learn in a collaborative way (Moll, 1992). In this kind of constructivism, individuals play an important and active role while learning since they have to exchange ideas and knowledge. Social constructivists argue that knowledge is a shared experience, which allows students to learn from each other and from the context where they are (*ibid*). Kim (2001) supports this idea arguing that unlike constructivism, social constructivism "is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning" (p. 3). In other words, human beings construct knowledge through interactions between them and their environment. Vianna and Stetsenko (2006) suggest that social constructivism comes from the Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, and that it emphasizes learning through social interactions. Therefore, since social constructivism encourages students to work through a social system, learners are able to negotiate and share knowledge. This offers them a way to learn from others and contrasts the idea of constructivism by learning individually from own previous experiences.

Vygotsky (1978) argues that every human being has a primary social function. This social function allows individuals to develop intellectual skills when these skills are used as learning tools. Human beings have social skills that can be shared with others in order to assist the less skillful learners to learn those skills to internalize them, and to manage higher thinking skills. Thus, the less skillful individuals may learn from the more skillful ones. Indeed, Vygotsky considered that "what children can perform collaboratively or with assistance today they can perform independently and competently tomorrow" (Moll, 1992, p. 3). Ivic (2010) points out that recent research has shown that Vygotsky's theory of primary socialization has been proved due that since human beings are not able to succeed in an isolated way, they are social entities that require social interactions to learn from others and in this case, to construct knowledge.

Social constructivism for Beck and Cosnik (2006) is also a way to learn by sharing. They define it as "an approach that encourages all members of a learning community to present their ideas strongly while remaining open to the ideas of others. It is a passionate approach involving the whole person: thought, emotion, and action" (p. 8). Therefore, some educational institutions, whose main goal is to emphasize learning through social interactions and background knowledge, adopt this type of approach. Thus, its main objective seems to allow each member of the community

to know more about different subjects not only from their own experiences, but also from others' ideas and skills. This kind of constructivism can be an approach utilized to guide learners to achieve new knowledge by exploring their own feelings, believes, and previous knowledge.

Hence, even though both Piaget and Vygotsky have contributed to the constructivists' ideas, they differ in the way they interpret the theory in both the constructivism and social constructivist approaches (Araya, Alfaro & Andonegui, 2007). In this last approach, IB schools provide learners with the opportunity to build new knowledge by developing and utilizing their own social skills from co-constructed knowledge from self and others' background. As mentioned above, this approach is a key part of the sociocultural theory. This theory encompasses Vygotsky's ideas regarding social constructivism.

Sociocultural Theory

Recently, culture has become an important learning factor in which the individual mental functioning and social context influence knowledge construction. Bullock (2011) supports this idea arguing that:

> …over the past 20 years, the influence of the culture in which a child grows and develops has been a focal interest for educators. It has become widely accepted that the environment or situation where an activity takes place has an impact on those who participate. How a group of people interacts with each other, their values, and styles of communication shape their ways of learning. (p. 13)

Bruner (1996) agrees with the notion that culture is an important learning factor since he believes that "learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources" (p. 4).

Bodrova (2004) recognizes the sociocultural theory as a way to afford learners with a more standard context or cultural environment, and that it is more important than students' beliefs. She also argues that it stimulates learning due that a context provides more information about a situation or problem, which allows learners to construct knowledge about it. The sociocultural theory distinguishes individual's interactions as a way of learning and approaching knowledge (Lantolf, 1999). According to this theory, learning becomes one of the main mechanisms of one's development. It distinguishes learning as a social process in which interactions with others enable individuals to develop cognition (Turuk, 2008). The sociocultural theory, then, encourages

students' learning from interactions with others and with their social and cultural environment. Turuk (2008) argues that once learners accomplish a task assisted by teachers or other more skillful peers, then they personalize it empowering them to carry it out by themselves. Thus, effective interactions can serve as a scaffold to learn new tasks. For instance, if students can perform a task in which other classmates will bear most of the responsibility for such task, these students may eventually learn and adopt the necessary skills to take on that task independently. Becoming independent and more skillful might be achieved through social interactions and collaborative work, which is one of the characteristics of the IB funds of teaching and learning (IBO, 2007).

Lantolf (1999) argues that "mental development arises as a consequence of the interaction of two distinct processes, one with biological roots and the other with sociocultural origins" (p. 418). Thus, children who first perform a task under the supervision and assistance of other people may later take the responsibility of other tasks by taking control autonomously. It demonstrates that even though "learning is individual no two students will leave one class with exactly the same understanding" (Sutton, Cafarelli, Lund, Schurdell, & Bichsel, 1996, p. 413). Individuals learn from others while socializing and sharing culture. In other words, the sociocultural theory seems to be a way to aid learners to take responsibility for their own education by learning with others and being aware of how knowledge is constructed. Another recognized aspect of this theory is that it does not only emphasize the role of social interaction, but it also focuses on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact on instruction and learning. This is in line with Lantolf, Thorne, and Poehner's (2015) argument: "while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher mental processes, the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within a social and material environments, including conditions found in instructional settings" (p. 207).

This theory generally proposes that human beings portray a genetic code which is a function of learning when the individuals interact with their environment. Therefore, the sociocultural theory could be a way to explain how learners develop cognition through social interactions. It suggests that the way to acquire thinking and social skills is by internalizing what they see and how they interact with their environment.

Social constructivist theorists maintain that learning is a social experience through which individuals construct knowledge within their own cultural environment (Jaramillo, 1996; Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995; Oxford, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, through social experiences, learners will be able to construct knowledge through language use, which supports the connection between sociocultural

theory and social constructivism. It is due that both of them are drawn within the nature of holism (Jaramillo, 1996). The sociocultural theory, then, bolsters social constructivism through learners' social experiences. These experiences further generate individual cognition and higher structures of mental activity by learning from more knowledgeable peers and adults. This activity is mostly constructed through communication among them and their environment.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Educators need to choose the best strategies from a pool of options to be more effective while assisting their students. The ZPD seems to be one of those strategies, which according to Wass and Golding (2014) has been applied by some educators around the world since the early 1950s. Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

According to this definition, we can assume that there is a relationship between learning and development since after a period of time working with the assistance of the more experienced peers, the less talented learn from them and become autonomous. That is, working with more experienced people provides other learners the opportunity to develop their own skills in order to be able to accomplish similar tasks by themselves. The ZPD is used then to explain the progress in constructing knowledge that learners achieve from interactions with more expertise peers or adults such as teachers, interacting in a social constructivist environment. Dixon-Krauss (1996) sees the ZPD as "encompassing the gap between the child's level of actual development determined by independent problem solving and her level of potential development determined by problem solving supported by an adult or through collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 15). From this point of view, it is believed that the ZPD occurs when students are offered several opportunities to attain new information and they must do it in a social environment. The ZPD describes the area between a learner's stage of independence and the learner's stage of assistance. Thus, proficiency and understanding of new concepts enclosed within the learner's ZPD could emerge by promoting learning among students and sharing internal and external experiences (Jaramillo, 1996).

The idea to implement ZPD in a classroom comes from the notion of allowing learners to work with more skillful peers or teachers in order to elicit a better understanding (Wass & Golding, 2014). In other words, assistance from more ad-

vanced individuals is needed while acquiring knowledge and developing certain skills in a classroom.

The ZPD is in line with the IB Organization's (2008) main goal which is new knowledge is constructed with previous experiences if there is support and understandable input for learning to take place. Thus, using a strategy such as the ZPD, which relapses ahead of the zone of previous knowledge, students may independently construct knowledge. If new information is not understood, it cannot be connected to previous knowledge and without this association, students cannot construct new knowledge. This concept seems reliable since Walz (1982) argues that if new knowledge cannot be understood, it cannot be related to earlier knowledge. In fact, it will not become part of profound learning.

Employing collaborative work and tasks in which students develop curiosity are two of the most essential characteristics requested for IB institutions to apply the ZPD in the classroom (IBO, 2008). Through the units of inquiry, teachers are expected to scaffold their learners in order to take them to a new level of conceptual understanding by moving them through the ZPD. Whereby, more proficient learners facilitate the construction of knowledge for the less proficient. This is where scaffolding may come handy, since it may help to understand how the intended instruction within a learner's ZPD can promote the appropriated learning and development. The next section discusses the way scaffolding can be used to allow learners to work under a social constructivist approach.

Scaffolding

In the ZPD, learners are supported to learn from working with more skillful peers or adults, it is important to provide them with the most suitable activities and strategies to profit their work. According to Fernández, Wegerif, Mercer, and Rojas-Drummond (2015), this can be promoted with scaffolding which is defined as a "cognitive support given by teachers to learners to help them solve tasks that they would not be able to solve working on their own" (p. 40). Lantolf, Throne, and Poehner (2015) define scaffolding as "the amount of assistance provided by the expert to the novice rather than in terms of the quality, and changes in quality, of mediation that is negotiated between expert and novice" (p. 214). Therefore, by scaffolding, the less skillful learners will depend less and less on the assistance from a more expert peer or teacher.

This strategy can be used to provide learners with intellectual abilities first, solving assignments with others and then, on their own by becoming more inde-

pendent. Through scaffolding, students are helped to reach higher levels of comprehension and skill improvement. These are, for instance, activities and strategies that an instructor can offer to learners to build and reinforce knowledge in an IB school. Thus, scaffolding is a worthy way to provide learners with these opportunities for learning and to utilize their prior knowledge (Wood & Wood, 1996). Eshach, Dor-Ziderman, and Arbel (2011) support the use of scaffolding, but as a temporary condition of interaction between a more experienced and a less experienced learner. That is, the main purpose of utilizing scaffolding in a classroom is to transform the novice learner into an expert one, but not just by providing him/her the answers of a problem. In other words, through a certain period, the less skillful student must be engaged in the learning process in order to understand and acquire the necessary skills to solve a problem.

Regarding teaching under a social approach, scaffolding seems to be a great option to allow learners to obtain from the teacher or the most qualified peers the temporary assistance that the learners may not be able to easily obtain on their own to become knowledgeable and independent, if it is used carefully. Through social experiences, which are an essential part of any language, IB institutions promote the use of at least two languages, the mother tongue and a second one.

The purpose of utilizing scaffolding in a social constructivist system is to provide learners countless opportunities for cognitive learning, and to promote independence and personal responsibility to challenge learners to increase their own learning and use of strategies. Learners who become more prepared can be encouraged to share their knowledge with their peers and to assist them to apply this knowledge. Consistent with the IB (2008), applying scaffolding by teachers and peers, some learners feel supported to carry out assignments throughout a concrete context for understanding and avoiding, or at least, reducing learners' anxiety. There is a variety of strategies used for scaffolding. Some of them could be vocabulary activities that should take place before learners read a difficult text, also the use of visual aids, graphic organizers, structured collaborative groups, teacher language, tutoring, and others. Some of the activities and strategies that instructors offer to learners to construct knowledge are based on social interactions, which utilized in a social constructivist classroom can facilitate teachers to gain insight into the child's understanding. The IB Organization (IBO, 2008) claims that by promoting scaffolding, teachers provide learners with the opportunity to interact with more knowledgeable learners or teachers who may take a tutor role. The intention of scaffolding students through a tutoring role is that the less proficient learner gradually matches the expert's level of knowledge.

Methodology

The primary objective of this qualitative research is to understand the perceptions concerning a constructivist approach of a bilingual school community. It is believed that this kind of research is useful to obtain information from "social relations" (Flick, 2006, p. 11). That is, the researcher has the opportunity to obtain information from the participants' daily activities and interactions. Furthermore, it has been argued that this kind of research "can be a powerful source of analysis" (Gray, 2004, p. 320), since data is collected in a "real life setting" (*ibid*, p. 320). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue that qualitative research is the best suitable research for the sociology and anthropology of education because it is concerned with building up explanations of social phenomenon. This kind of research also helps to understand the way the school community carries out the constructivist approach in order to let students to develop certain skills to learn by using their previous knowledge. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), qualitative research is a process to obtain information from people's experiences in the field. Through qualitative research, it was possible to obtain fragments of information about the insights of different individuals working directly or indirectly with constructivism. These insights relate to perceptions, concerns, motivations, preconceptions and attitudes that individuals create or adopt based on experiences from their daily lives. Overall, this kind of research provides the researcher with opportunities to understand and interpret the findings emerged from the investigation in a real-life context. In other words, through qualitative research, the researcher had the opportunity to analyze participants' experiences and to elicit a clearer understanding about their ideas. Qualitative research allowed me to analyze administrators' perceptions concerning constructivism more effectively, and the way some teachers approach it in order to help students' learning in a non-traditional way.

Classroom Ethnography

The approach that supports this qualitative research is classroom ethnography by the researcher being a member of the school's community. Ethnography, according to Brewer (2000), is defined as "the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting" (p. 10), such as it was my case. Classroom ethnography, as its name indicates, is research carried out in a classroom or in a learning setting "with an emphasis on social and

cultural processes [since it] contributes to reconceptualizing what a classroom is and what happens there" (Grenfell, Bloome, Hardy, Pahl, Rowsell, & Street, 2013, p. 7). It refers to the investigation carried out in order to obtain information from the study of behavior, interactions, activities, and conversations from people in an educational place (Popescu, 2010), as the school where this study took place.

This research approach allowed me to study activities carried out in the classroom, interactions, and discourse in a learning setting. It accentuated the participants' perspectives and offered me a complete analysis of the context. Moreover, classroom ethnography facilitated the analysis and interpretation of the data while observing what people did or the way teachers instructed learners. Since classroom ethnography is concerned with the study of a particular human society, it is based on fieldwork that requires the complete immersion of the researcher in the culture and everyday life of the people who are the participants of the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Angrosino (2004) argues that by implementing an ethnographic approach it is possible to obtain information from observation by participating in the researched activities. In this research, classroom ethnography involved peer observations and participation in daily routines and activities. In this case, by being simultaneously a participant, an observer, and the researcher, it allowed me to be the classroom ethnographer. It also made it easier to collect data directly from coworkers, supervisors, and even from their daily work activities. It permitted the researcher to be involved, to listen to other individuals who use the constructivist approach, to have conversations with them instead of just asking questions, and to develop an understanding of the participants' point of view. Moreover, qualitative research and classroom ethnography support the use of some research techniques utilized in this research, such as interviews, researcher's log and observations.

Interviews

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) define an interview as "a conversation that has a structure and a purpose" (p. 3). Regarding qualitative research, one of the most common techniques is the use of interviews since they allow the researcher to collect relevant information about other people's point of view and life experiences (McCracken, 1988). Schutt (2011), for instance, recognizes this kind of technique as one of the most suitable ones to gather data. Interviewing people can be more like a conversation between two people rather than between a researcher and a

participant. Thus, this technique can be useful by allowing the participants to express themselves and their thoughts toughly.

For this study, the use of interviews was a useful technique to analyze people's opinion, due that they allowed the interviewees the opportunity to provide long and complex responses. Opdenakker (2006) remarks the following types of interviews as the most popular ones: face-to-face interviews, MSM messenger interviews, telephone interviews and e-mail interviews. The research for this project was carried out using two kinds of interviews: face-to-face and e-mail interviews.

Face-to-face Interviews

For this research, interviews were used to obtain information in a personal way. Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2001), for instance, argue that qualitative research began from face-to-face interviews. It is probably because this kind of interview situates the interviewer and the interviewee in the same place at the same time. These interviews can be recorded and provide more exact information since the interviewer has the opportunity to encourage the interviewee to formulate a more explicit answer and to ask him/her the foundation of his/her ideas. For this study, face-to-face interviews allowed me to obtain more reliable information from the participants by giving me the opportunity to ask more questions and get deeper in the more relevant topics that came out during the interviews. Furthermore, I was also able to take advantage of extra information by being there, interpret social impressions, such as body language and tone of voice from the participants.

According to Flick (2006), there are different types of face-to-face interviews, but one of the most important is the semi-structured interview. In order to find out relevant information about the way people approach constructivism, three semi-structured interviews were conducted. The first one was with a fourth-grade Spanish teacher, the second one with the school's principal, and the third one with the IB coordinator. These semi-structured interviews provided me with opportunities to discuss the target topic in much more detail and to question these participants about their insights fully.

E-mail Interviews

The purpose of using e-mail interviews in this research was to get an extended access to participants who did not have enough time for a face-to-face interview.

Unfortunately, there was a low response and only five from eleven invited participants responded to the interview. They were the English and Spanish coordinators and three teachers. The written interview was sent through the institutional e-mail account to all the teachers and coordinators (Spanish and English) from the elementary school section and they did not have to be transcribed.

Observation

When it comes to the research process, some authors support observation as a significant data collection tool, and as a way to learn from the participants. Flick (2006) defines observation as "an attempt to observe events as they naturally occur" (p. 219). Consequently, observation allows the researcher to look at daily behaviors and interactions from everyday situations to gather more accurate information. The researcher is able to detect what is happening and to obtain more legitimate data. Observation allows us to know what individuals do and not what they say they do. Because observation techniques are effective tools for achieving insights into situations, this kind of technique allows the researcher to collect valid and reliable data from social events, specific situation, or people's behavior.

In this research, observation was an essential technique used to achieve the purpose of this research, which was to know the way teachers used and approached constructivism. While using this research technique, I was able to observe four of the teachers from the school three consecutive times. The purpose was to obtain more reliable information about the way these teachers practiced the constructivist approach in their everyday teaching. I became a participant observer. This kind of observation attempts to understand the motives and meanings involved in behavior.

Concerning participant observation, Creswell (2013) strongly believes that it is a way in which "the researcher is fully engaged with the people he or she is observing" (p. 166). He also argues that this kind of observation may be useful for the researcher to observe social interactions with people. Being an insider, I was able to better understand what the participants did in their classes by watching, listening and feeling what happened. Moreover, being a participant observer gave me the opportunity to develop a profound understanding of the context by sharing activities with the young students, taking detailed notes and developing a complete analysis from the notes.

Researcher's Log

Another technique to carry out this research is the use of a researcher's log. This is described by Lengeling (2010) as "a tool for reflection to better understand the developmental process" (p. 151) of the research project. The researcher's log is then a technique to identify and record events, experiences and ideas throughout the research. This data collection technique is important because the researcher has the possibility to describe his or her personal experiences.

With a researcher's log, I wrote down personal comments about the face-to-face interviews, my own perceptions about the use of the constructivist approach, and the information obtained from the observations. The researcher's log was a valuable resource to record ideas and my own comments for later analysis. This technique provided me a way to keep memories fresh with details that otherwise would be hard to remember. Moreover, since I was an insider at the Alexander Bain School, it was possible for me to write my own insights and concerns about the use of the constructivist approach.

Data Analysis Procedures

As mentioned before, this research attempted to understand the school community's (teachers, coordinators and the elementary school principal) perceptions concerning the use of the constructivist approach as a way of teaching in a bilingual school. Thus, the question that guided this research was the following one:

> What are the community perceptions of the use of a constructivist approach in a bilingual elementary school in central Mexico?

The data collected from the first two mentioned techniques was analyzed through a content analysis. This kind of analysis, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), is a "widely used qualitative research technique" (p. 1277) used to classify information for further analysis. For the present research, I first read each interview and observation several times in order to distinguish the most common themes. Then, I used a color-coding system to identify and select those different themes. Finally, the information was classified and stored in columns in a text program (Word) to be analyzed.

The researchers' log was first typed into a text program and saved in an electronic folder in order to avoid losing information and to better understand my own words, which sometimes were written in a hurried way. Finally, this information was also

read several times in order to make connections with the already selected themes.

Finally, because some participants, such as the Spanish teachers and Spanish coordinator were not proficient speakers of English, and that the IB coordinator felt more comfortable speaking Spanish than English, their interviews were conducted in Spanish. However, I decided to report these participants' data in English by translating the excerpts from their interviews.

Ethics

Although, students are one of the most important elements of the school, they were not used as participants for two main reasons. The complexity of the process to obtain the parents' consent forms, and the challenge for the kids to interpret or understand the questions and terms such as constructivism.

Since the interviewed people can be named as a teacher, principal, or coordinator, it was not necessary to use their names during this research. They were identified according to their title, differentiating teachers by the grade and language they teach. Likewise, in the case of the coordinators they were classified by the language or program they were in charge of, such as Spanish, English or IB. Besides this, the principal, coordinators, and teachers signed a consent form in which they provided their permission to be interviewed, observed, and to utilize the information gathered from the research techniques previously explained.

Data Analysis

After analyzing the data, four main findings emerged: benefits teachers have seen in students; constructivism vs. social constructivism; difficulties with the use of constructivism; and teachers' training about the way to teach with a constructivist approach.

Benefits Teachers Have Seen in Students

Results from the data collection analysis suggest that participants perceive constructivism as a positive approach to enhance students' potential, since it facilitates learners' understanding through meaningful knowledge by taking advantage of what they have learnt before. The following excerpt from the Spanish coordinator shows this.

> Constructivism involves students learning in an active form. Constructivist classes result more interesting and useful for students because they develop their curiosity and the ability to solve problems. Constructivism promotes critical judgment, among other things.

This coordinator seems to perceive constructivism as a way to provide learners with more interesting and dynamic lessons. She suggests that constructivist activities may encourage meaningful learning. When students participate in an activity or game, they may feel more encouraged to express an opinion or to participate. Students become more engaged because they may be willing to participate in the activity.

Brooks and Brooks (1999) support this idea explaining that since a constructivist classroom fosters students to construct knowledge by asking, participating, inquiring, utilizing previous knowledge, and more, constructivism allows students to develop critical thinking and to be more motivated to learn than in a traditional classroom. Henry (2002) also agrees with this notion and argues that constructivism is a way to aid learners to become more critical because "when students interact and question sources, they will confront conflicting ideas and positions. As they weigh evidence, they will question their classmates, their teacher and themselves" (p. 69). Thus, by reflecting and trying to find answers, learners can develop thinking skills, which can be noticed when they ask correct questions, inquire about something, solve problems, and organize information.

Another piece of data that supports this finding is the offered by the English coordinator. She suggests that using constructivist classes, learning may become more significant:

> It makes learning meaningful and useful for students.

From this quote, it can be assumed that learning can be more effective if learners are active participants while sharing their own knowledge or lived experiences. Thus, connecting or combining class work with learners' own ideas and knowledge, it may make learning more lasting and interesting for them.

In the following extract, the IB coordinator observes the important advantages of using this approach:

> Mainly because learning is more significant, so it becomes durable and personalized, because it gives time for reflection in the classroom to perform constructivism.

According to the above quote, we can see that this participant believes that one of the best aspects of constructivism is the opportunity students have to create long-lasting meaning and knowledge by being reflective people. In other words, learners who reflect and make connections with their previous knowledge may gain more meaningful knowledge.

Besides the principal and the coordinators of the school, some teachers have also seen positive aspects utilizing this approach with their students. For instance, in the following quote, a fourth grade English teacher describes how her students take advantage from the use of the approach:

> The advantage is to create inquiring students that always want more information and want to learn more about the inquiry lines and themes.

In agreement with this teacher's words, a benefit is that learners may become more willing to learn, ask, and explore by themselves. Moreover, becoming inquiring learners is one of the main aims of the PYP program (IBO, 2007). Allowing students to utilize what they already know or have experienced may be a way to motivate them to learn. Constructivism seems, then, to be an approach that encourages learners to be enthusiastic for learning.

In the following quote, the sixth grade Spanish teacher discusses about other improvements she has observed in her students while conducting a constructivist approach as a learning process:

> Because it takes into consideration the social aspect and the environment in which the students develop. Besides that, it lets them learn at their own pace, respecting their individuality and strengthen their relationships.

According to this teacher, constructivism aids learners to develop understanding from their social and cultural environment. This approach may enhance students from different backgrounds to develop social skills and interactions while facilitating teaching (Barton & Tusting, 2005). From this quote, it can be also understood that through constructivism students can have the opportunity to learn with and from other peers, which may make their learning more meaningful and long-lasting. The fourth grade Spanish teacher supports this perception in the following quote:

> Constructivism is a means for kids to learn how to develop new skills and also gain

knowledge. The idea is that they develop an analytical mind by reflecting and questioning ideas and situations.

From both previous quotes, the data suggests that constructivism is beneficial for the learners since this approach allows them to achieve skills such as social ones, which can be seen as important tools to build human relationships. This is in line with Holland (2015) who suggests that group work is a significant part of constructivism because it provides learners with the advantage of knowing how and when to interact with other peers, future bosses, employees, or how to manage a situation. Thus, with the social constructivist approach, learners are able to gain more knowledge from working with others than working alone (ibid). Social constructivism, then, offers learners the opportunity to encourage them to work collaboratively and to exchange ideas, helping them to carry out more effective tasks while working with others. By developing social interactions, students can be more reflective while negotiating with others and while evaluating whether their contributions are socially acceptable or not. From the same excerpts, it can also be inferred that both teachers and students work in a social way.

Constructivism vs. Social Constructivism

As previously mentioned, IB schools promote the use of the constructivist approach as a teaching procedure. However, it seems that a discrepancy exists due to the way it is carried out at the Alexander Bain School. For instance, most of the everyday class activities take place under a collaborative way by giving learners the opportunity to learn from the interaction with their peers. For example, in my researcher's log, it can be observed how students have the opportunity to share ideas, knowledge, and experiences in the classroom:

> After observing several classes, a pattern in the classroom desks arrangement was found. To promote interaction among students, all but one of the observed classes in the whole elementary school had the desks arranged in a horseshoe shape, this to allow more students to sit together, even though each desk is designed to fit only two students. Thus, there is usually four to six students working together.

Based on this observation, learners spend most of their school day working with peers instead of just with teachers, and the school furniture's arrangement promotes collaborative work. Consequently, the current system resembles more of a

social constructivist approach than pure constructivism. Even when some activities may be intended to be achieved in an individual way, learners are encouraged to interact with their peers sitting next to them. In this way, learners seem to be exposed to a social learning environment which relies more on the social constructivist approach than on the constructivist one, and which is the mandatory approach by the school.

Palincsar (2005) points out that what distinguishes constructivism from social constructivism is that in the second one, learning is achieved through social interactions. In the following excerpt, the IB coordinator discusses some of the reasons behind collaborative work at the Alexander Bain School:

> The desks can be arranged differently, but most of the time it is in groups of four because that is the way to foster teamwork, share materials, ideas, reflections, and to tutor each other. Social, communication and self-control skills are specially promoted by this kind of work.

Consistent with the IB standards, this coordinator suggested that students develop certain skills by interacting or working with other peers. Therefore, through each unit, teachers allow learners to work with different classmates by sitting them in teams. Thus, the main purpose of collaborative work for these participants is designed to encourage students to acquire knowledge and to develop specific skills.

Kozulin (2003) argues that learning, according to Vygotsky's theory, occurs when there are "social and cultural [conditions] rather than individual phenomena" (p. 1). Since group work seems to be a learning pattern at the Alexander Bain School, students might learn through a social constructivist way.

In the following quote, the IB coordinator mentions that it is relevant for learning to have students working in collaborative way with peers and teachers:

> Teachers should always be aware of what their students are doing, for this reason, they are constantly walking around the classroom. Moreover, they are located close to the students; teachers are not isolated at a separated desk. This is important because the teacher is a facilitator and not the owner of knowledge.

According to the previous participant's excerpt, it can be deduced that collaborative work with both teachers and other peers is a way to enable students to construct knowledge instead of letting learners to work individually. Moreover, since teachers are knowledgeable and their main function is to facilitate learning, work-

ing side by side with their students may offer them more opportunities to develop cognitive growth. By working with their students collaboratively, teachers are fulfilling one of the main purposes of the social constructivist approach which is to provide learners an environment in which they become the center of education rather than the teacher (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998).

At the Alexander Bain School, learning seems to be elicited through collaborative work rather than individual work. For that reason, it is important to emphasize that the approach at this school is social constructivism rather than constructivism.

In the following excerpt, a sixth grade Spanish teacher discusses the way students work in class. She considers socialization as an element to enable learning and it also seems to boost learner-centered activities:

> ...providing students with different materials to form figures, which will be presented to their peers. You, as a teacher, guide students by asking them questions. Students have to reflect, to deduct what the class is about, and to solve cognitive challenges by interrelating with peers, sharing ideas, inventing problems and by solving them together, etc.

As stated by this teacher, one of the most suitable ways of learning in class seems to be through social activities. Thereby, students may be engaged in their own learning while sharing responsibilities and solving problems with others. Regarding the IB Organization, learning is better elicited when students are provided with meaningful, authentic, and social experiences (IBO, 2007). Thus, by adhering to the procedures of the IB, this teacher may carry out more a social constructivist class than just a constructivist one.

Furthermore, in this previous excerpt, the teacher also suggests that her role in the classroom is more as a facilitator than a provider of knowledge, which is another characteristic of the social constructivist approach (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) also supports this notion. He argues that students improve their learning when it is stimulated by the cultural context in which individuals work simultaneously with other children and adults.

In the quote below, the English coordinator provides examples of how teachers work at Alexander Bain. She mentions that some of the class activities are carried out in a collaborative way:

> Students carry out team projects, centers of work, analysis of videos, graphics, group reflections, etc.

In this excerpt, the English Coordinator recognizes that learners work in a social way by executing group projects structured by teachers. Group work reinforces the development of social and communication skills while giving and receiving feedback, explanations and reflections. Moreover, this kind of work also coincides with Vygotsky's notions of social context in which he stated that learning is maximized when there is interaction with others, through discussion and collaboration (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992).

Another participant who supports collaborative and social work at school is the IB Coordinator, who mentions that students have to carry out team assignments.

> The PYP Exhibition, for example, is one of the major team projects students have to accomplish during the school year. It is the way they show what they have learnt and developed by working with a group of teachers and mentors for about 6 to 10 weeks.

On the one hand, teachers, coordinators and the school's principal support collaborative work. They consider it as a meaningful way to learn and to encourage students to develop different skills. These participants not only promote interactions among students but also with teachers, who may take on the role of a guide. On the other hand, the IB encourages teachers to allow their students to interact with their environment and with other people in order to construct knowledge. This organization states that each learner needs to work with other people in order to learn and ensure social activities between learners (IBO, 2007). For these reasons, the approach utilized at the Alexander Bain School is social constructivism instead of pure constructivism. However, it is important to consider the way teachers challenge their students to construct knowledge and whether class activities are under the constructivist frame.

One of the key differences between constructivism and social constructivism is that the first one, according to Piaget, is self-constructed individually. Social constructivism instead, is created from the interactions with others. In constructivism, the student's curiosity and creativity allow the student to explore new ideas. In social constructivism, group work, culture, and language are the three main pillars to construct knowledge. In the following data excerpt, the school principal mentions the way she would work in class if she were a group teacher.

> I think I would design a project and explain it to the students, ask a main question about it, let them work in teams and establish roles and functions.

Thus, for the principal of the school, the best way to carry out a project is through group work. In addition, the IB Organization (2007) discusses that by developing social skills learners can be able to observe other people's differences and to better understand their needs while taking them into account. In other words, by allowing social interactions in a constructivist setting, learners may develop specific features, such as tolerance, respect, empathy, teamwork, among others that they otherwise would not. For instance, in the following quote, it is possible to observe that the sixth grade Spanish teacher perceives socialization as a way of learning.

> It is important to allow students to makes use of different tools like exploration, manipulation, inquiry, and socialization to build their own knowledge.

Constructivism enhances learners to develop thinking skills while reflecting about their previous experiences and connecting them with new ones. This approach helps students to place different sets of information together to create something new and to explore their own selves and others' ideas.

Difficulties with the Use of Constructivism

At the Alexander Bain School, there are certain teachers who perceived some disadvantages regarding the use of the approach. The second grade English teacher mentions the following.

> Constructivism is not always the appropriate method for all the children because we have students with special needs.

According to this English teacher, one of the main difficulties regarding the use of constructivism seems to be that not all the students are capable to learn through this approach, especially, those with learning disabilities. Ertmer and Newby (2013) argue that we, human beings, construct knowledge instead of acquiring it. Consequently, students learn at their own pace and for some of them it may take more time to interpret the learnt knowledge. For some educators, such as the previous participant, it may be more difficult to learn for some students "since there are many possible meanings to glean from any experience, we cannot achieve a predetermined, 'correct' meaning" (*ibid*, p. 55). Moreover, individuals construct knowledge from their own interpretations. For that reason, not only minor learners' groups, but also mainstream students, acquire knowledge at their own pace.

In the following the English coordinator refers to another important drawback of the use of the constructivist approach:

> For some teachers it is hard the transition from traditional to constructivist changing, previous teaching habits.

This participant identifies constructivist teachers as people who may modify their teaching since constructivism involves a process in which students must take an active role while learning, instead of a passive role (Mayer, 2004). Thus, people who are used to different ways of teaching may find this approach challenging to understand and/or to carry out. Schechter (2001) identifies constructivism as a difficult approach to manage, due that in order to learn or to teach through it, it is necessary to ignore earlier ways of knowing.

In the following quote, the IB coordinator mentions the difficulties she has seen in the school, concerning the use of the constructivist approach.

> Sometimes the teacher is not prepared to carry out constructivism in the classroom. I think it is a challenge to change from the traditional way of teaching to the constructivist. It is more comfortable for the teacher to keep students quiet, organized and doing the same thing.

As discussed by this coordinator, some teachers may perceive constructivism as a difficult approach to use since teachers may allow learners to be active participants in the class. Moreover, constructivist teachers aim to encourage learners to discuss their ideas, choose the most suitable strategies to learn, and expand their ideas by sharing their previous knowledge (Hein, 2002).

Another participant who perceives how hard it is for some teachers to become constructivists is the school principal. In the following quote, she explains this difficulty.

> People that come from traditional education do not understand constructivism at the beginning. So, they can feel it as unstructured.

In the previous quote, it can be seen that the school principal considers it essential to know how to utilize the constructivist approach. Thus, in order to obtain better results from the students, teachers should know how to manage this approach. Holland (2015), for instance, explains that it is necessary to provide guidance

to facilitate children to acquire the basic skills for constructing new knowledge.

A key issue to address is teacher training and how to manage constructivism so that students are provided with the most suitable ways of learning and the most appropriate environment. Moreover, teacher training may aid educators to avoid traditional teaching strategies, such as the sole use of textbooks, teacher lectures or presentations, among others (McCarthy & Anderson, 2000). The following quote from a sixth grade Spanish teacher suggests that teachers must be well prepared to avoid learners failing to fulfill the class objectives.

> If the teacher does not know or does not have clear guiding objectives, students can get lost and do not understand what was intended.

From this quote, it could be assumed that teachers must be aware of understanding the main objectives of the class, what their students are expected to learn and the way they will do it. Otherwise, the aim of the class may not be focused, and students may not be successful in the construction of new knowledge.

Even when teachers are prepared for a constructivist class and they are knowledgeable about the way to manage the constructivist approach, there is another difficulty they may face while carrying out this kind of class. For instance, in the following quote, a sixth-grade teacher who works directly with the approach states that time is an important factor affecting the use of the constructivist approach.

> There are difficulties when the groups are numerous and the time is so short, and there are many contents or concepts for this short time.

For this teacher, time is a constraint to develop a proper constructivist class because time is insufficient to allow tasks to cover the amount of class content. A fourth grade English teacher supports this in the following excerpt.

> Sometimes time is a problem because there are a lot of contents and there is not so much time.

It is believed that students learn better when they can experiment new things, be creative, and work under minimum limitations (Holland, 2015). In other words, since constructivism avoids direct instruction, students actively participate in the class and they must interact with other classmates, carry out some projects or execute certain tasks. Thus, some learning activities may take more time than

the expected one. There is never enough time, and activities must be interrupted. For instance, the fourth grade Spanish teacher shows this idea in the following data excerpt.

> I think the problem here is time, especially because with the second group you do not have enough time to be sufficiently inquiring and reflective, and teachers hurry students to work fast. So, after being a super constructivist teacher in the morning, in the afternoon you become, if not the opposite, at least less constructivist.

For this teacher, time is considered an important factor to take into consideration in order to optimize their students' learning opportunities, since utilizing the constructivist approach students may accomplish long assignments and there is not enough time. Frequently, time is insufficient to conduct proper discussions or to carry out extended social tasks with a group. From this quote, this teacher perceives it easier to carry out the class activities in the morning shift instead of the afternoon one. This can be also seen in the following extract from my researcher's log, in which I, as a teacher researcher, discuss possible problems in my work:

> I decided to examine the perceptions of the teachers who work with me, by thinking about possible areas of opportunity as a teacher, I realized that sometimes I am not the same teacher with both groups I teach. Sometimes, I feel that with one group the class flows normally, and students feel confident to express their ideas and to work with others. Moreover, some of the activities or evidence of work that students carry out in the classroom seem to be more beautiful with one group. Thus, I recognized that with one of the two groups it was just easier to let them work and learn more freely, utilizing reflective strategies, group discussion and group tasks. I also noticed that by having more class time with one group, it was more feasible to let students to achieve more varied and thoughtful thinking.

Thus, in my opinion and personal experience, sometimes there is not enough time to carry out the same constructivist class with the two different groups that the teachers at the Alexander Bain School have. For that reason, to optimize their classes, the teachers from this bilingual school perform several different tasks which may help them to facilitate their students learning. However, it may be more difficult or challenging for some teachers who have not had a formal training. In other words, not all participants have an official constructivist training. This lack of training is the last main finding.

Teachers' Training about the Way to Teach with a Constructivist Approach

Regarding teaching through a specific approach, it seems imperative to count on teacher training in order to explore how professors should teach classes. This is to understand what the most suitable ways to facilitate students learning are and to offer more efficient lessons. Teachers must identify how to properly use the methodology of the discipline they impart (Hogan, Rabinowitz & Craven III, 2003).

In the case of the Alexander Bain School, where learners must be taught through a constructivist approach, some of the participants perceive they have been properly trained. Nevertheless, other teachers suggest that they have not been benefited from the school training. Thus, working at an institution where the main learning system is based on the constructivist approach, it seems imperative to fully know and understand how to use and manage this approach through proper training. In the following quote, the English coordinator considers herself as a knowledgeable teacher regarding the proper way to carry out the constructivist approach.

> I have been trained in college and my master's. I studied constructivism and I learnt about Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories, among others.

From this quote, it can be noticed that the participant feels she knows about the proper use of the constructivist approach. This teacher was taught constructivism while at the university. However, the Alexander Bain School has not really offered her a formal instruction on the way to use the approach. Therefore, she relies on her previous knowledge in college and graduate school.

The school principal shows a similar situation. She perceives herself as a trained person, but mostly, because of her own academic development:

> When I was at the university, I studied about Vygotsky which is the main author that started constructivism. Then, in my master's degree that I am working on, they mention him and complement his theory and ideas with other actual new theories. And I work in this IB school where teachers have to work with that methodology.

The principal perceives herself as a trained person who knows about the theory behind this approach. However, this might be primarily because of her position as a principal in which she has the commitment and responsibility of being knowledgeable and properly educated to guide others. This does not necessarily mean that the institution taught her or offered her formal training.

Other participants have recognized they have the necessity and responsibility to be trained. For these reasons, some teachers at the Alexander Bain School have gone out of their ways to learn and be ready to teach through this approach. This is shown in the following quote of a fourth grade Spanish teacher.

> I think the most important feature that a teacher should have relates to vocation ...thus, since I got here, I have been reading about constructivism and asking other teachers about some ideas and examples. So, once I started teaching here when I had to face my first group of students, it was when I started to read and try to learn about how to teach my children.

It is important to understand how to carry out the constructivist approach and what the most suitable strategies are to fulfill the institution's goals of using constructivism. Therefore, some teachers, such as the one from the previous quote, believes that self-training could be a way to learn and succeed as a teacher. I believe that teachers need to be well prepared and educated, and one of the ways to achieve this should be through a continuous learning process, such as professional development, which in this case is teacher development. Johnson and Golombek (2003), for instance, support this idea. They argue that in order to become a more proficient teacher, educators may exploit beneficial strategies to increase their teaching approach and to take control of the available resources to regulate their own class activities through a resource named teacher development.

Teacher development is more than using strategies in the classroom. It is to understand the teaching practice as well as to increase or acquire the proper needed knowledge to achieve long-term goals to enhance the teaching knowledge (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In this specific case, teacher development applies to the personal motivation teachers may have to learn about how to approach constructivism in an institution that does not always train its personnel properly. Moreover, through teacher development, educators may take advantage of strategies to help their teaching approach by taking control of the resources they have to regulate their own class activities (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Thus, through teacher development, teachers can move from unawareness to awareness in order to understand how to teach a constructivist class. In the following excerpt, a fourth grade English teacher shows her experience of using the approach.

> I have been working in this system for ten years.

From the previous quote above, it seems that this teacher has learnt about constructivism from her everyday experience teaching throughout the years. According her, this experience helped her to gain the necessary knowledge and/or the ability to properly manage her class. This educator, like others who also work at the Alexander Bain, has learnt constructivism through testing diverse strategies with experience.

Contrasting to the previous participants insights, the Spanish coordinator shows the training she has had from the Alexander Bain School in relation to constructivism:

> ...personalized education training of Pierre Faure and mathematics with the methodology of the Educational Models Research Center, personalized education...with a follow-up of four years.

Unlike other participants from this school, the Spanish coordinator suggests that she has been trained during a period of time. She has learnt how to manage the constructivist approach and how to teach mathematics through this approach. Since this participant is responsible for other individuals under her, this may be one of the reasons why she was trained by the school. Because she supervises others, she must be able to identify and evaluate whether a class is carried out through a constructivist approach or not.

In the following quote another coordinator supports the idea that the school has trained her to teach under a constructivist way. The IB coordinator also discusses that she has been through a training process:

> I have been in two workshops on how to teach science constructively and on the teaching of mathematics workshop from the Educational Models Research Center.

This participant and the previous one agree that they have not learnt constructivism by themselves, such as the other ones. They have had the opportunity to expand their knowledge by attending training workshops which may have aided them to speed up. I consider that being trained may offer not only the teachers, but the institution, a great variety of opportunities. For instance, whether a teacher receives training on the use of the constructivist approach, he/she may be better able to perform his/her job.

A trained teacher would be more aware of the practices and proper procedures

by building or developing self-confidence in what the teacher does. Teachers who are aware of the way to carry out the approach and the number of existing strategies to increase their teaching may place emphasis upon to carry out their own class activities or tasks.

Conclusion

Regarding the participants' perceptions concerning the constructivist approach, they believe that this approach offers students some advantages by becoming more informed, creative and critical thinkers, as well as reflective about their education.

Based on the analysis of the data provided by the participants, it was also evident that the Alexander Bain School integrates social constructivism instead of constructivism principles in everyday classes. Teachers and administrators perceive themselves as a constructivist community that encourages learners to construct a solid knowledge from previous experiences. Allowing social interactions among students and educators, teachers seem to favor collaborative work and sociocultural principles, which are some of the main features of the social constructivist approach.

The participants also pointed out that the approach they follow is different from other traditional ones. For this reason, there are some disadvantages with the use of the constructivist approach, such as being a non-traditional approach and time consuming. Finally, the participants mentioned they have not had formal training on how to carry out the constructivist approach from the Alexander Bain School. Some of the participants were trained while there prepared to become teachers, but this may not be enough to be constructivist teachers.

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EMOTIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS OF EFL STUDENTS

Darcy Elizabeth Stock
Universidad de Guanajuato

Introduction

This study is concerned with the emotional experience of English as a foreign language (EFL) students while developing their speaking skills. The study was conducted at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato with students who studied general English at Level 700 (upper-intermediate). I will first present the introduction to my research where I will discuss the background and context of the study, identify the gap, explore the purpose of the study, and the contribution of the study.

Research Motivation

When considering my motivation for my topic, the main reason that comes to mind is my own experience and the experience of classmates in attempts to speak a foreign language. I have always had an interest in wanting to speak another language and starting in the eighth grade, I took formal Spanish courses. Throughout my studies and even into the present day, I can remember feeling excited, motivated, curious, nervous, and at times anxious.

Foreign language anxiety can be debilitating, and it affected me at times by making me question myself and my ability to be successful at speaking in a foreign language. Positive moments helped me to strive to be successful and motivated me to participate more frequently in class, and to study harder in order to get better grades. Because of this, it is important to understand and research emotions in the development of oral language skills of foreign language students to be able to identify these emotions in the classroom in order to minimize the negative emotions and capitalize on the positive ones. Ultimately the purpose of this research is to understand these emotions so as to help students feel comfortable and motivated while speaking in a foreign language and to facilitate learning oral language skills.

Identification of the Gap

Based on the research conducted in the area of emotions and EFL, it has been possible for me to identify areas which may be expanded upon regarding emotions in speaking. Three areas where I consider that there are potential gaps are in research related to positive emotions, the Mexican context, and emotions and speaking (Stock & Zimányi, 2017).

There is a large body of research (see Scovel, 1978; Young, 1991) which relates to foreign language anxiety; however, there are few studies which make mention of positive emotions. Regarding this research, the focus is related to experiences with negative emotions. This is the first area in which I have identified a gap that my research fills.

Additionally, within the context of Mexico, there are not many studies which are related to this area. The exceptions to this are the studies conducted by Méndez López (2003, 2012) and Méndez (2007) in Chetumal and Puebla respectively. These authors researched emotions in speaking and foreign language anxiety within their contexts. It is of importance to fill this gap in the research within Mexico so that more information is available which can be applied within this context. While there may be some similarities between the Mexican context and others, at the same time context-specific research can point out the differences between one context and another. Furthermore, regarding similarities, being able to identify them can also help to establish characteristics and experiences which may be common between two or more contexts.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of my research was to explore the emotional experience of EFL students while speaking a foreign language, English. The research question which I sought to answer was the following:

> What emotions do upper-intermediate level EFL students at the Department of Languages at the University of Guanajuato experience while developing their speaking skills?

The emotions that students experience in relation to when they speak are of importance for research because as Mahmoodzadeh (2012) states "one of the indispensable and crucial aspects of learning English for NNSs [non-native speakers] in this

respect has been to develop a good speaking ability" (p. 466). Because of this, if emotions hinder students' speech, this could cause a potential problem for them in practice, especially if they require English for future job prospects.

Regarding positive emotions, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012a) observe that "positive emotions tend to broaden people's attention and thinking, leading to exploration and play, new experiences and new learning" (p. 197). Conducting more research regarding positive emotions, which is suggested by these same authors, is one of the purposes of this study. Additionally, this will also provide further research on emotions, both positive and negative.

Background and Context of the Study

The academic area which I researched pertains to concepts related to emotions, motivation, and identity. Concerning emotions and education, research has been conducted within this area by Do and Schallert (2004) and Pekrun (2000). Relating specifically to the field of EFL more recently MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012a) have conducted studies related to emotions and speaking. The most extensive research which has been done within this field, however, is related to foreign language anxiety (see Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Imai, 2010; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012a, 2012b; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is related to emotions, and in the case of speaking, there is a special relationship between FLA/emotions and performance.

In order to understand the complex relationship between emotions and speaking, it is necessary to briefly examine the other areas which are related and linked to this research, such as motivation and identity. Motivation has also been highly examined by authors, such as Dörnyei (2005, 2009) and Dörnyei and Ryan (2015). In this case, the research that has been conducted which developed the motivational theory related to L2 self-identity is of importance. This is due to the fact that this theory draws upon other theories related to motivation and identity.

Potential Contribution of the Study

By researching emotions that EFL students experience in reference to speaking, a better understanding of these emotions and their implications for teaching may be reached. In addition to this, there is the potential to explore a different perspective of the learning processes which students go through in learning English as a foreign language. By understanding these processes and their implications, it may be

possible to suggest different classroom practices which can assist students in their learning, especially regarding speaking.

Literature Review

In this section I will discuss literature pertaining to topics which are relevant to my research. I will begin by surveying what has been done in the past in the area of researching emotions when speaking in a foreign language, and later move into other categories, such as more recent studies and models. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject of emotions and language learning, the literature reviewed in this section comes from different areas of research, such as psychology and identity.

Emotions in EFL Research

Research carried out in the past concerning emotions and EFL has focused on studying foreign language anxiety and its effects on language learners. In the history of this area, a general approach was taken to observing and attempting to pinpoint the factors which affected these learners; however, as time went by more attention was placed on scales and models of measuring these findings. Within the last ten years, there has been somewhat of a shift to recognizing the role of positive emotions in EFL and particularly within the topic of speaking. Various authors (MacIntyre, 2002; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012b; Pekrun, 2000) have pointed out that past studies lacked a focus on these emotions. While this is the case, studies related to emotions in general (including negative and positive emotions) and those focused on positive emotions are still a topic of development and a relatively new subject of research within the field of emotions and affect for EFL.

Regarding the study of emotions in the field of EFL, this topic has been examined in various forms over the last fifty years. Emotions within the field of general education have been examined (see Do & Schallert, 2004); however, emotions within foreign language learning have been under researched (Méndez López, 2012). Méndez López (2012) suggests that this may be due to the criticism of the humanistic approaches during the early 80s. While this may be the case, she keenly points out that "we cannot ignore the fact that students' emotions, feelings, and attitudes shape the process of learning a foreign language and help to determine the degree of success students may experience in this process" (Méndez López, 2012, p. 12). In other words, the emotions that students experience are a key fac-

tor for students' achievement in the language classroom; therefore, they should be taken into consideration by teachers and researchers. This suggests that further research should be conducted in this area.

It has also been proposed that distinguishing emotions from feelings or moods may present to be a difficult task. According to Reeve (2005), emotions "are short-lived, feeling-arousal-purposive-expressive phenomena that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events" (p. 294). Moods also appear to be more easily distinguished from emotions in that they are "longer-lasting, more diffused experiences" and "do not carry the potential for specific action that emotions do, partly because moods operate in the background and emotions in the foreground of conscious experience" (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012a, p. 197). Feelings, on the other hand, seem to be closely linked to emotions and moods in that they are a component of both (Ekman, 2003, as cited in Méndez López, 2012). As previously mentioned, this may mean that they are more difficult to distinguish from one another or that they are frequently linked together.

Basic emotions, or first-order emotions, include those of interest, enjoyment, happiness, contentment, sadness, anger, and fear, among others (Izard, 2011). These basic emotions "require only the minimal cognitive processes of perceiving and imaging in order to trigger a rapid and sometimes automatic action" (Izard, 2011, p. 372). Regarding positive emotions, Frederickson (2003) has proposed a broaden and build theory which states that emotions expand learners' horizons and resources "ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources" (p. 219).

The implications that this theory has for positive emotions and their effect on students learning a foreign language may be significant as they could be found to facilitate language learning especially in terms of speaking. Regarding the "physical and intellectual resources" Frederickson (2003) proposes that this could refer to speaking strategies, such as circumlocution or resources including other speaking partners or tutors. Frederickson (2001) lists five examples of the effect of positive emotions:

1. Joy creates the urge to play, expand boundaries, and creativity.
2. Interest generates an urge to explore, absorb new information, and develop the self.
3. Contentment allows one to savor positive events, relive them, and integrate them into our worldview.
4. Pride is associated with an urge to share accomplishments with people who are im-

portant to us, and to imagine future achievements.

5. Love is an aggregation of positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, contentment) that leads us to deeply meaningful relationships with others, and relationships with loved ones predict all of the specific tendencies for joy, interest, contentment and pride. (p. 220)

In relation to these examples, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012a) observe that "positive emotions tend to broaden people's attention and thinking, leading to exploration and play, new experiences and new learning" (p. 197). This suggests that there is a possibility for positive emotions to help students learn or at least to increase the likelihood for learning. Additionally, within this broaden and build theory, another possible outcome is that positive emotional experiences may promote the construction of resources, "such as social bonds built by smiles and intellectual resources honed during creative play" (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012a, pp. 197-198). The building of resources in the case of foreign language learners may involve strategies which could help them cope with other negative experiences or emotions that occur.

On the other hand, when discussing negative emotions, the majority of studies that can be included underneath this umbrella are related to foreign language anxiety, especially those concerning test anxiety and speaking performance in the classroom. Therefore, the importance of understanding other emotions within the education field is reiterated by Pekrun (2000) in stating that "more than 80 percent of our students' emotional life [the emotions experienced while going through everyday life] is made up of other emotions, including not only negative emotions, but a number of positive emotions as well" (p. 146). MacIntyre (2002) further supports this statement in observing that "emotion has not been given sufficient attention in the language learning literature, with the exception of studies of language anxiety" (p. 45). Taking this assessment one step farther in later literature, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012b) also state that anxiety is possibly the most widely studied emotion within research in second language acquisition (SLA).

As a consequence, it can be clearly seen that studies which are related to foreign language anxiety are also related to emotions in the EFL context. It is for this reason that in the next section, I will turn to examining foreign language anxiety and its development in the literature over the last few decades.

Advances Regarding Research on Emotions of Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is referred to as a specific anxiety reaction which is in contrast with more general descriptions of anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). General anxiety is defined as being "characterized by excessive, uncontrollable and often irrational worry about everyday things that is disproportionate to the actual source of worry" and that "symptoms must last at least six months" (Cukor, Ver Halen, & Fruchter, 2013, p. 266). Contrastingly, foreign language anxiety is defined by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) as being "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 31). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) define it as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (p. 284). Within this definition, the emotions felt by those who experience FLA are related to tension and apprehension in the specific case of speaking, listening, and learning. This definition suggests that there are specific instances or events which cause this anxiety.

More recently the same authors, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012b), have redefined FLA as "a term that encompasses the feelings of worry and negative, fear-related emotions associated with learning or using a language that is not an individual's mother tongue" (p. 103). In this case, the addition of a broader range of emotions is of note. This more recent definition takes into account that for FLA, the focus is on negative emotions, especially those of worry or fear. There is also a contrast with the previous definition in that the triggers for FLA are more general, "learning or use of a language that is not an individual's mother tongue" (MacIntrye & Gregersen, 2012b, p. 103).

In this last definition, the inclusion of the term emotion is of importance in relating foreign language anxiety as an emotional phenomenon within language research. Furthermore, an important component of this definition not included by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012b) is mentioned by Oxford (1999) as she notes that this anxiety is connected to performing in the target language. Included within the emotions of foreign language anxiety are "tension, nervousness, worry, dread, upset, and similar terms" (MacIntyre & Gregrson, 2012a, p. 195). For this research, I will use the definition by Macintyre and Gregersen (2012b) due to the use of the term emotions over other definitions. I will also take into consideration Oxford's (1999) component related to performance in

the target language. While this anxiety is related to any second language context in which the use of the language occurs, this literature review will concentrate on speaking given the subject of this research.

Considering Positive Emotions in FLA

Regarding the last decade of research concerning FLA, there was not much research conducted. Literature from this era seems to still have a focus on foreign language anxiety; however, there is a recognition that more research needs to be conducted about the effect of positive emotions on foreign language learners, (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012b) and that the importance of speaking as a skill is recognized (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). The re-examination of FLA and consideration of both positive emotions and speaking has opened the field to new possibilities and a new dimension which needs to be examined.

In MacIntyre and Gregersen's (2012b) chapter concerning the affective domain within language learning, an examination of recent foreign language literature is performed. This chapter recognizes that there is a lack of studies pertaining to positive emotions in language learning; however, in an article published by the same authors the same year (2012a), it is interesting to observe that positive, facilitative emotions are discussed. Recently MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012a, 2012b) have attempted to fill in the gap of research from one article to another.

Discussing other studies concerning foreign language anxiety, Mahmoodzadeh (2012) observes that many of them are connected to examining anxiety factors "in relation to the macro-skills included in the broad notion of learner language proficiency" (p. 466). This notion of proficiency for learners concerns productive skills: speaking or writing. Specifically concerning speaking for EFL students, Mahmoodzadeh (2012) states that speaking skills are of utmost importance for non-native speakers due to the fact that they are may be essential for their lives and "probably tend to perceive their speaking ability as an important criterion for their success" (p. 466).

Here Mahmoodzadeh (2012) draws attention to the importance for NNSs to speak well, and thus, speaking well is crucial to the success of learners in this context. While other authors have examined foreign language anxiety and various productive skills, Mahmoodzadeh (2012) emphasizes the importance of speaking in his study as a key to success for future learners. In this case, speaking well may include different values for every speaker as this is a personal perception. For the purposes of this study, this includes two larger issues: making oneself understood and pro-

nunciation. Specifically, the later of these issues is related to the topic of "native like competency" or the use of received pronunciation (RP) and general American (GA) as models of pronunciation to attain or evaluate NNSs. It is argued that these notions can be a cause of psychological distress (see Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006).

Selected Foreign Language Anxiety Models

Because of past research focusing on FLA, there was an evolution of conceptualization of emotions, which appeared to focus on quantitative or test-based manners of measuring FLA. The first study to quantitatively gage this anxiety was Gardner's (1985) attitude/motivation test battery (AMTB), which was based on research concerning student's affective and motivational factors in learning French, and wherein there is a section dedicated to language anxiety (see Gardner & Smythe, 1975). Similar to this research is also Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS). In the case of both these studies, the language student takes a test and then a score is given to measure the students' anxiety. This is correlated to an aspect of the foreign language classroom. The importance of including these models of examining FLA is to see a small part of the evolution of different instruments used to measure the types of emotions which fall under the category of FLA.

Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

Examining the AMTB developed by Gardner (1985) in Canada, it was designed to fill a gap within language testing where linguistic elements and goals were the only ones being measured. It was created with Canadian English-speaking students learning French in mind, and therefore the majority of the items included are related to French and are context specific.

Some applications for the outcomes of this battery of tests have involved investigation into "the correlations of sub-tests and composite test scores with indices of language achievement and behavioural intentions to continue language study, the effects of specific programs, excursions, etc., on attitudinal/motivational characteristics, and the relation of attitudes and motivation to classroom behavior" (Gardner, 1985, p. 5).

It is also important to point out that in the sub-tests in the first section only item number 7 (French Class Anxiety) is related to language anxiety. Within this section there are only five scales included for the students to consider. These five items encompass the questions of: embarrassment when volunteering in the class-

room, insecurity in speaking in the classroom, inferiority in speaking compared to other classmates, nervousness and confusion when speaking in the classroom, and fear of being laughed at when speaking in the classroom (Gardner, 1985). While all of these elements are related to speaking in the class, the scope of what is examined in respect to foreign language anxiety in this case is limited.

In the next test that will be discussed, there is a higher quantity and greater variety in the questions presented to the participants.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's FLCAS

The FLCAS consists of thirty-three items which are answered by participants using a Likert scale with five options: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Within this scale, the items pertain to areas, such as "communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 129).

There have been studies which have sought to replicate the use of this scale in other contexts, and those which have sought to evaluate the scale, such as Aida (1994). Regarding the reliability of the FLCAS and cases of the relationship between anxiety and performance, she found that the results of her study correlated with those of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986).

While some authors have found FLCAS results reliable, there are still several scholars who question what the scale is measuring. Sparks and Ganschow (2007) criticize the content of the items within the FLCAS "because many of the items appear to be tapping students' perceptions and attitudes about language as well as their feelings about anxiety" (p. 261). These authors also suggest that native language skills and proficiency are also important factors in considering foreign language anxiety. They found that students in elementary school experienced anxiety related to their native language years prior to encountering a foreign language class. Regarding this, the authors astutely point out that if the scale were measuring FLA, there would be no reason for it to show anxiety related to the students' native language (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007).

Concerning this, Sparks and Ganschow hypothesize that the FLCAS may measure perspectives and attitudes related to the foreign language. While Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) FLCAS contains a more thorough view of items concerning language anxiety than that of Gardner (1985), there are still elements which appear to be missing or overlooked within their model.

In contrast, other studies have examined foreign language anxiety within a qualitative framework and used techniques, such as interviews and opened-ended questions to gather data. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012b) critique these types of studies in admitting they "are valuable but both give partial answers; they are not well suited to studying ongoing processes, as they evolve" (p. 109). It is important to remember that studies that are based purely on numerical values do not allow for the rich and detailed description which qualitative studies provide. Studies which make use of interviews allow for the reader to understand the student participants in a first-person like manner.

Imai (2010), for example, examined two previous case studies (Imai, 2007) that he had conducted with several Japanese learners of English. He explored their emotions in collaborative learning using video logs, emotional temperature questionnaires, and stimulated recall interviews. From the collected data, Imai (2010) discovered that the learners "attempted to employ their own emotionality to their advantage rather than succumbing to it" (p. 288). Furthermore, he suggests from this conclusion that the labels researchers give emotions, such as language anxiety, are not of importance but rather "the *sense* that each language learner interactively constructs, negotiates, and appropriates regarding an emotional experience within a goal-directed activity" (Imai, 2010, p. 388). This is to say that the name or identification of the emotion is not as important as the experience the learner has while case constructing or negotiating communication using the language.

Imai (2010) also analyses recent research into emotions in SLA in that "SLA investigations have prioritized a particular type of negative emotion (language anxiety)" and have ignored others, such as "enjoyment, relief, anger, happiness, hope, gratitude, jealousy, love, and so on" (Imai, 2010, p. 280). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012b) also come to the same conclusion and mention that further research in this area is necessary in stating that "much more work needs to be done to focus on the process by which positive emotions facilitate language learning" (p. 113). This research is important, as it analyzes both negative and positive emotions associated with speaking a foreign language in Mexico.

Facilitative Anxiety

Facilitative anxiety, or eustress, is a type of anxiety which has a positive effect upon language learners by helping to keep them more alert (Ehrman, 1996). This

phenomenon was explored in mice by Yerkes and Dodson (1908) and later became known as the Yerkes-Dodson law, or the inverted-u function of arousal.

Williams (2008) questions the existence of facilitative anxiety altogether by arguing that Yerks and Dodson's experiment was conducted with mice and not students. Moreover, the mice were also delivered an electric shock as a stimulus. These conditions are not normally found outside of a laboratory. Williams (2008) points out that in real-life scenarios, oftentimes the reactions that students have to outside stimuli are not as simple as "up or down" as in the case with the mice (p. 4).

Regarding studies in favor of facilitative anxiety, Brown (2000) proposes that facilitative anxiety may keep learners "poised, alert, and just slightly unbalanced to the point that one cannot relax entirely" (p. 106). While at a glance, this description may seem negative, Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) claim that facilitative anxiety benefits "students who accept risk as part of their language acquisition process; thus, anxiety motivates the students to learn more about the foreign language" (p. 96). Having examined facilitative anxiety, it can be seen that this concept has a link to motivation and therefore, it may be a factor in emotions in foreign language learning.

Motivation

In the field of foreign language teaching, motivation has been extensively linked with the learner's success. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) observe that motivation "provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long, often tedious learning process; indeed, all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent" (p. 72). This concept in relation to language learning is related to internal or external factors, such as attitudes and beliefs about the target language or needs for achievement which have either a positive or negative affect on learning (Dörnyei, 1990).

One of the first motivational models of interest in foreign language learning appeared in Gardner and MacIntyre's (1993) socio-educational model of SLA. This model looks at four different aspects (antecedent factors, individual differences, language acquisition contexts, and learning outcomes) that are related to motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). A relevant aspect within this model is, as Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) observe, that Gardner and MacIntyre's (1993) model opened the way for new possibilities for future research. What is of importance in this model is that it holds historical value in research within its approach within models representing motivation.

In contrast to Gardner's model, Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self-system

is a different approach in viewing motivation in learners of a second language. A salient concept within this model is self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), which presents two different selves: the ideal and the ought self. The ideal self in this case is what a person sees as traits they would like to possess, and the ought self is seen as traits which the person ought to or should possess according to external expectations (Higgins, 1987). Within this theory what motivates people is the desire to match their ideal and ought self with their actual self (Higgins, 1987).

In terms of applying Higgins' model to SLA, the three dimensions of the self will unfold as follows: the ideal L2 is the type of second language learner the student would like to be and the ought-to L2 self concerns traits that the learner should possess in order to be successful in learning the L2. (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). These authors further explain the former concept by saying that it:

> ...may bear little resemblance to one's own hopes or desires since these represent someone else's vision for the L2 learner in question and thus they concern an 'imported' image of the future that the learner will then internalize to some extent. (p. 88)

However, the L2 learning experiences, which are the classroom environment and its effect on motivation, are not necessarily concerned with the language learner's self-image, but rather with his/her current experience (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The concept of L2 learning experiences refers in this case to the classroom environment and its effect on motivation. In this model, just as in Higgins' (1987), the discrepancy between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self and their actual state motivates language learners.

In addition to this model of the L2 motivational self-system, the role of teachers in motivating their students can also be taken into consideration as having an integral role in language learning. Dörnyei (1994) includes a list of strategies that teachers can use in various situations within the classroom. Some include "developing students' instrumental motivation", "developing students' self-confidence", "promoting favourable self-perceptions of competence", and "decreasing student anxiety" (Dörnyei 1994, p. 281). By presenting teachers with effective strategies and suggestions that they can use in the classroom to promote motivation, this provides an opportunity for them to create a positive, motivational environment for the students and to also an opportunity create this within the students themselves.

Complexity Theory of Emotions

Considering previous research literature, there are links to other themes concerning emotions. Within this section, I will consider that these other links are a part of the complexity theory or a network of related themes. I will focus on the discussion of networks related to good language learners (GLLs), affect and the role of language teachers, and language identity.

Good Language Learners

Over the years, GLLs have been of interest to researchers in SLA. There seems to be an understanding that teaching struggling learners the strategies or skills that successful students have used may help improve the lower achievers' performance in the classroom. Regarding past research about GLLs, Méndez (2012) compared three pioneering studies: Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978), Rubin (1975), and Stern (1975) and found that all three propose that there are a number of different manners for success in the classroom.

According to Rubin (1975), good language learning is affected by the three key factors of aptitude, motivation, and opportunity. Of these three variables, language aptitude is the most difficult to manipulate and, therefore, may not be of as much use to a poor language student in order to help them to learn (Rubin, 1975). This author suggests that there are strategies that good language learners possess that could help struggling students. This could include good guessing and the ability to infer a strong desire to communicate and learn from communication, and paying attention to form when speaking, among possible others (Rubin, 1975).

Norton and Toohey (2001) take a different approach to the analysis of the success of good language learners. They consider that this success is acquired by factors, such as having access to conversation in their own contexts rather than on linguistic form or speed of acquisition of the language. In other words, they assess that good language learners should converse with different partners and communicate with different communities.

Student Emotions and the Role of Teachers

Regarding the network of emotions, language teachers also have an important role within this construct. For example, Bown (2009) conducted a study on the regulation of emotions of Russian language learners and found that emotions affected

the students' cognitive appraisal of teachers among other things. Concerning this same issue, Dewaele (2011) further observes that "students' relationships with teachers and the power relations that emerged were particularly salient features of the learning environment and acted as significant emotional antecedents in the individualised instruction setting" (p. 26). From these observations, the importance teachers have on students' emotions in the language classroom appears to emerge as a key theme.

Arnold and Fonseca (2007) also highlight the role of teachers, where the environment that teachers help construct with their students and the chemistry that the students have with their teacher and their classmates have an effect on their learning progress. This can be linked back to motivation in that pedagogical practices have been seen to affect students' motivation levels (Dewaele, 2011). Therefore, teachers' classroom behavior and the student relationship may be an important factor in language learning.

Regarding other ways in which language teachers play a role that affects student emotions in the foreign language classroom, Bolitho *et al.* (2003) state that teachers' sensitivity to their students' emotions may affect their lesson planning and course design. More specifically they state that this could be in their course material selection process in order to facilitate learning for struggling students or to help the students use the full extent of the brain's resources (Bolitho *et al.*, 2003). These same authors further state that "Positive attitudes, self-esteem, and emotive involvement help to fire neural paths between many areas of the brain, and to achieve the multi-dimensional representation needed for deep processing of language" (Bolitho *et al.*, 2003, p. 252).

This has a practical implication for language teachers, because if they are able to recognize or have an understanding of their students' emotions, this may help them to encourage their students. In turn, encouragement may have positive effects on the students' success in learning the language.

Having discussed emotions and the role of the teacher in the language classroom, I will now discuss language identity and its role related to emotions of language students because these two dimensions can be linked.

Language Identity

Stroud and Wee (2006) define language identity as a space "where an individual may be more concerned with maintaining his or her relationship with particular groups than with his or her language abilities" (p. 300). In this case, the inability

of language learners to express themselves as they normally would cause anxiety and thus, affect the students' identity as they cannot voice their personality (Burden, 2004). This may cause the language learners to experience foreign language anxiety and emotions of frustration.

In examining language identity, first it must be made clear that this topic links both motivation and good language learners through investment in the language. Norton (2013) makes this observation in referring to the concept of power. She argues that if language learners invest in the language they are learning they are also acknowledging that "they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money), which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power" (p. 6). This is a factor in motivation for foreign language students. By acknowledging the acquisition of these symbolic and material resources, we can establish a relationship between identity and Dörnyei's (2009) concept of motivation of the ideal L2 self or ought-to L2 self.

According to Norton (2000), "identity references desire –the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation and the desire for security and safety" (p. 8). In reference to this desire for security and safety, Guiora (1983) argues that language learning may threaten the learner's world view and for this reason may be traumatic. Additionally, Beebe (1983, as cited in Pappamihiel, 2002) mentions the risk factor of language learning because "the risk to the learner's national identity may be seen as greater than the perceived benefits of acquiring better, more proficient second language skills" (p. 331). In this instance, it may be argued that this hinders the learner's progress, or the learner decides not to produce language in the classroom.

However, not all experiences are negative regarding the learners' identity in the foreign language. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) state that in some cases "ordinarily self-conscious and inhibited speakers may find that communicating in a foreign language makes them feel as if someone else is speaking and they therefore feel less anxious" (p. 127). This is a key observation acknowledging that positive experiences occur in regard to language identity.

Research into Emotions and Speaking: The Mexican Context

In reference to literature on emotions and foreign language anxiety specific to Mexico, there are few studies which were undertaken within this context. Méndez (2007) carried out an investigation specific to the context of Mexico which pertains to an alternative qualitative method to the FLCAS in identifying students

with foreign language anxiety. This research consisted of a questionnaire to identify students who experience foreign language anxiety and then interviews with an EFL student who experienced foreign language anxiety.

Perhaps the most prolific writer on research related to emotions in the Mexican context is Méndez López (2003; 2012) who has conducted research on emotions in this area. Méndez López (2012) used a qualitative research approach with 18 participants in an English language teaching (ELT) program. In order to collect her data, she made use of personal narratives, students' emotional experiences journals (SEEJ), and semi-structured interviews. The main purpose for this study was to find a link between emotional factors and motivation within the EFL context. Two of the themes which arose out of this research were related to emotions in contexts, such as the experience of English Language Learners (ELLs) and the implications this has for language teaching practice. Research into this area is critical due to the limited amount of research there is about this topic, especially within the context of Mexico.

Regarding literature pertaining to emotions concerning speaking of foreign language learners, I have reviewed topics pertaining to emotions research in EFL. Without a complete view regarding these themes, a full picture of the concept of emotions may not be possible. These studies inform my own study in serving as a basis and as a point of contrast.

Research Methodology

Within this section, I will elaborate upon the methodology which I used to carry out my research. Additionally, I will provide a summary of the pilot study that I conducted, techniques that I applied to collect data, and a brief description of the research site and the participants involved in my research. Within the last sections, I will discuss ethical concerns, as well as the method I used to code and analyze my data.

Qualitative Paradigm

Taking into consideration my research topic and the type of data that I collected, the study that I conducted falls under the umbrella of the qualitative paradigm. The qualitative paradigm is defined as consisting "of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). Qualitative research examines facets of everyday life which cannot be seen or measured such as the case with my research topic of emotions. Emotions are generally a highly

sensitive topic which tends to not be seen or even intentionally hidden from others due to their nature.

Additionally, "qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). This is a wide scope with the potential for many research topics which concern society and people in general. It is not the aim of this study to explore the emotions of all speakers of a foreign language or even all EFL speakers. Instead, I am looking to describe and investigate a smaller piece of a larger puzzle. This research paradigm enables me to observe and explore the diverse types of emotions EFL speakers possess while speaking and in what types of situations these emotions occur.

Research Methodology

The methodology that I will use to tie together the paradigm and data collection techniques is phenomenology. Phenomenology as a methodology seeks "to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of the individual lived experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). This coincides with the qualitative research paradigm in that it is also concerned with the lived experiences of its participants.

In order to accomplish this, phenomenology seeks to explore and understand the phenomenon through the researcher's interpretation of the participants' data. In order to maintain a separation of my own past experiences and my participants' data, I made use of bracketing in the introduction and motivation sections of my research. Tufford and Newman (2010) state that "bracketing is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material" (p. 81). Related to this concept is that of epoch which Richards (2003) defines as "the resulting suspension of such elements and uncontaminated access to the essence of the phenomenon" (p. 19). Within my own research, phenomenology allowed me to explore the emotions of my participants and this provides me with a "common meaning of several individuals of their lived experience" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). In other words, I come to an understanding of the phenomenon which, in my case, is the emotions experienced by EFL students while developing their speaking skills.

Pilot Study: Techniques and Results

I conducted a pilot study with Level 100 (beginner) English students at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato in Guanajuato, Guanajuato.

In the pilot of my investigation, I chose three techniques which were a questionnaire, FLCAS, and semi-structured interviews. After completing the pilot, I realized that for various reasons most of the initial techniques did not produce viable results. I realized three things about the FLCAS: one was the limitation of the difficulty of scoring the FLCAS, two was that some of the statements had confused the participants, and three was that they did not give me much information concerning their emotions.

Because of this, I decided upon trying new techniques to conduct my final research. When considering what techniques might produce reliable results, I decided that prompted journals and a focus group would be a better fit for my research project. As research techniques, prompted journals allowed me to choose the topics, and focus groups filled the need to still speak to my participants in person. Speaking to my participants was especially important for two reasons: first, as a society Mexicans tend to be oral and prefer speaking over writing, and second because the journals were written in English, I felt that it was important to corroborate the data orally in the participants' native language, Spanish.

Final Research Site

The site where I chose to conduct my research was at the Language Department. Within this school there are two undergraduate degrees and one master's degree program, as well as various language classes which are available to all students. The Language Department offers several languages, such as English, German, Japanese, Italian, French, and Spanish as a foreign language, to name a few. The students who I wanted to study fall into the category of those who took English language classes at the upper-intermediate level. The reason behind choosing this location is that this is a school where many English language students may be found. The levels of English classes that are taught in this school range from 100 (beginner) to 800 (beginner-advanced).

Final Participant Profile

The participants for the final study only differed slightly from those who participated in the pilot. I choose Level 700 (upper-intermediate) students as my participants because I believed that the context of the students at this level would provide more insight into their emotions than Level 100 students. I had a total of

sixteen participants. When I asked the class teacher for a breakdown of the class gender, she told me that nine are female and seven are male.

I obtained relevant biographical information on the participants' backgrounds by administering a biodata questionnaire. The questions were related to where they live, their age, their gender, their prior experience with English, and their occupation, among others. The reasoning behind asking these questions was to get a general idea of who my participants are.

Prompted Journals

Within this section I describe and explain how I applied the prompted journals. In defining the term of journals for use within my research, they are text-based documents written by the participants which "capture writing that includes emotion, introspection, and self-reflection" (Smith-Sullivan, 2008, p. 213). The generation of documents by qualitative researchers or by their participants can prove to be as useful and meaningful as an interview and may be a more fruitful data collection technique depending on the topic and context of the researcher's project (Mason, 2002).

The bulk of the data that I obtained during my research project was collected through this technique. I applied a series of five prompts over fourteen weeks to elicit responses pertaining to various situations and experiences dealing with emotions while speaking English. I asked the participants to write between a half of a page to one page for each prompt. When deciding on the frequency of the journals, the participants and I agreed on every two weeks. The journal themes were based on a wide variety of emotions experienced in situations when speaking English. By asking about different topics related to emotions, I obtained a more complete picture of the experience of my participants over the course of the data collection period.

The use of journals as a technique for data collection provides the opportunity to collect data that may be sensitive. Written journals were the next natural choice for data collection techniques as "journals often allow participants to feel comfortable with their degrees of self-disclosure" (Smith-Sullivan, 2008, p. 213). Instead of talking directly with another person, the participants are given a sort of third space (the journal) in which to organize and present their thoughts to the researcher.

Journals have been used by psychologists to act as a therapeutic aid due to the cathartic function and the sense of order and coherence it gives to the lives of their patients (Janesick, 1999). This same author points out that "the clarity of writing

down one's thoughts will allow for stepping into one's inner mind and reaching further into interpretations of the behaviors, beliefs, and words we write" (Janesick, 1999, p. 514). Through this inner clarity of writing a journal, it was my hope to allow the participants to organize their thoughts in a more cohesive manner than what was presented in interviews. This can be attributed to the fact that they were given time to think about and reflect upon the prompt for the journal for almost two weeks before the next prompt was given to them.

Another problem that may present itself with journals is the form in which the participants turn in the journal to the researcher. It may prove to be difficult for the researcher to read the handwriting of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Regarding this issue, I left the decision up to the participants to either handwrite or type their journals. About half of the participants chose to type their journals and half of the participants chose to handwrite them. While some of the handwriting was tedious to read, I felt that leaving the decision up to the participants was important, so they could choose the method of writing which was the most comfortable and convenient for them.

Focus Groups

The second technique which I implemented is a focus group, which was conducted in Spanish. Focus group interviews are defined as "a form of qualitative interviewing that uses a researcher-led group discussion to generate data" (Morgan, 2008, p. 352). I use this definition loosely to differentiate it from those focus groups associated with the field of marketing. While these two focus groups are similar in nature, the execution of focus group in my research was closer to a group interview.

Discussion is one of the elements which defines focus groups, and one of the advantages to this is that the members do not need to come to a consensus about any of the presented topics, but only to have a conversation about it (Morgan, 2008). In this way, the data I collected was the discussion of the themes presented to the participants in the focus group. The main objective that I had was to make sure the information that I collected and analyzed in the journals coincided with the participants' emotions and to gather additional information which may have been missed otherwise.

In applying this technique in my research, I scheduled the focus group to be held in the last week of the data collection so that it could be used as a summative activity. I decided upon what questions to ask after I analyzed the main themes within the journals. The reason for conducting the focus group in Spanish instead

of English was to provide the participants with an opportunity to more clearly express their emotions and clarify any difficult concepts in their native language.

Data Coding

Data coding serves the purpose of labeling the data so that readers can trace it back to the source. The methods that I used to code the data from the prompted journals and the focus group are similar. I used a combination of letters and numbers which refer to the data collection technique, the participant number, and later the paragraph number from the journal or the utterance number from the focus group. To demonstrate this point, I will explain the code of J1P17-PG1. This code refers to journal prompt one, the participant number is 17, and the paragraph where this piece of data can be found is within the first paragraph. Regarding the codes for the focus group, I is the abbreviation for interviewer and P represents participants, including the utterance number.

From here, I will discuss the method that I used to analyze the data. I utilized the constant comparative method mentioned in Maykut and Morehouse (1994) in order to analyze my data. This method of analyzing and organizing the data allowed me to condense my data into what these authors call "units of meaning" or smaller comprehensible units which will later be given a theme or category. As I collected and categorized these units into themes, I compared them to other existing categories in order to determine whether they fit into one of them or if it was necessary to form a new category (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). These categories along with the corresponding data chunks were copied and pasted into individual Excel cells in the corresponding Excel sheet for the journal. Organizing this data into themes allowed me to create data categories. When creating the categories or the themes which I identified for each piece of data, I decided upon a set of common characteristics which the data shared in order to decide whether to include it in the group.

Ethics

The first ethical consideration that I took was to design an informed consent form. The informed consent should provide the participants with sufficient information pertaining to what the research entails, so they can make the choice whether or not they wish to participate in the study. This includes the purpose of the study, what activities the participation will involve, and whether and how data would be kept anonymous (Webster & Brown, 2014). At my first meeting with the students,

I also explained to them the purpose of my research, and how the data would be kept anonymous. I answered any questions that the participants had at the time and provided them with my email address in case any questions should arise.

Regarding gatekeeping and consent, I first had to ask the English Department Coordinator and then speak with a teacher of an upper-intermediate English class to gain access to my participants. After a teacher agreed, I discussed my research with her and we considered what schedule would be best for her class.

When mentioning ethical concerns pertaining to the journal, it is important to state that within the data analysis, I edited the journal excerpts for clarity by fixing grammatical and orthographical errors. My justification for doing so was that these errors distract from the information from the participants. By editing the data excerpts, the reader is able to better focus on the content and ideas that were expressed by the participants.

Data Analysis

In this section, I discuss the outcomes from the data of the journals and focus group. The data analysis is grouped into themes or sections from these two techniques. The prominent themes which emerged were affective domain, speaking strategies, judgment of teacher traits, and identity

Affective Domain

Regarding the theme of the affective domain, within this research I have defined it as being related to emotions. It was the most salient theme throughout the journal writings of all the students. Emotions were mentioned by almost all the participants within one journal prompt or another. If the emotions were to be placed on a spectrum, the gamut runs from fear and nervousness to curiosity and enjoyment. Additionally, not all the emotions were purely positive or negative but instead could be found in an in-between space.

In addition to this spectrum, several subcategories of emotions emerged that were experienced regarding either different speaking partners or technical aspects of speaking**.** The emotions experienced by these students in the subcategories fell into various places throughout the spectrum. At times the students also expressed emotions that fell into both the positive and negative end of the spectrum in the same journal. The experience of these emotions and their shift, from positive to negative in certain circumstances, can affect the perception of students' success

and their willingness to speak with others. As was mentioned in the literature by Méndez López (2012), students' emotions related to learning may affect their success. Within the next section, different emotions will be discussed throughout this spectrum with this relationship in mind.

Context and Speaking Partners

In reference to the range of emotions that presented themselves throughout the journals, the emotions of nervousness, insecurity, and enjoyment all appeared in the data concerning contextual issues. Several of the participants mentioned that they felt nervous when speaking in certain contexts or with different speaking partners. One student mentioned:

> I feel very bad about my speaking capabilities because I can't speak very well or very fast. All the time I'm very nervous in class or when the teacher asks me anything. (J1P9-PG2)

The student feels that being in class with the teacher has a negative effect upon her emotions before being required to speak. Possible reasons for this may be because the teacher is an authority figure or because the student is required to use the language in front of other classmates. Another possibility is that this student could be afraid of losing face in front of other classmates.

Additionally, other contexts emerged where emotions seemed to play a crucial part in speaking. Following the last example, nervousness was also expressed by another participant, but she states that different contexts affect the way she feels. Here she compares speaking in the real world with speaking the context to school:

> When I leave school and I have to use English in ordinary life, I just get nervous and it is like I've forgotten every single English word and I just can answer yes or no. (J1P17-PG4)

In this case, the participant expressed nervousness in speaking with others outside of the classroom and linked it with forgetting. This is moving one step beyond the context of the example of the students who felt nervous. This participant felt nervous and then forgot words when putting the language into practice outside of the class. The environment or context of speaking seems to be important for this student depending on what situations are comfortable or normal for her. In this case,

being in ordinary life, which I interpret to be in the outside world or in a real-world context, seems to trigger nervousness. It may be that this participant feels a sense of security or comfort in the classroom which the outside world does not provide or she is not comfortable speaking with unknown people.

While a large majority of students had expressed negative emotions, there were just as many who expressed positive ones in reference to their speaking. Other students seem to feel positively while speaking and even seek out opportunities to speak with other discourse partners to practice their skills.

> I see myself as a good speaker of English. I try to speak English every day and not just with my classmates or my teacher. Also, I try to speak with people in the streets of Guanajuato and in some bars or cafes. (J1P11-PG1)

Examining this data along with the previous example, one might suppose that while a lack of practice may make students feel insecure, practicing with others has the opposite effect in creating the possibility for students to feel *good* and confident about themselves as speakers of English. It could be that seeking out opportunities to speak with other partners has a positive impact on this student. This is because he gains more opportunities for practice and by obtaining more practice, the student feels more comfortable in speaking with others. Perhaps for this participant this is a positive feedback cycle.

Following up on other positive emotions that students elaborated upon within their journals, enjoyment is an additional emotion which emerged in the data.

> It is great learning this language because I love languages… I want it to be easier for me and faster, because I need to speak fluently and I spend a lot of time thinking about all the information I know and have learned. There are many words and in the structure at the moment I don't process [the words] fine and that is sad and maddening because I am impatient, but I must understand it and continue trying to improve... (J1P23-PG1)

While there is a mixture of what would seem to be negative emotions, such as feeling "sad" and this being "maddening", this is within the context of wishing to become a better speaker and wishing to improve. In terms of literature, Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self-concept can be seen in this excerpt because for this student it is "maddening" to not have the vocabulary and grammatical structures that the student wishes to possess. This represents a discrepancy between the stu-

dent's ideal and ought-to self. It could be that this student expresses a degree of perfectionism and due to this, experiences these emotions. This may also imply that having a *love* or enjoyment for languages may be motivational factors which give students the desire to improve their speaking skills.

Similarly, another participant reiterated feeling a sense of enjoyment as well as excitement for their English classes.

> I really like learning English. It is very exciting for me to understand a song that I didn't understand years before, and it is also exciting to think that I can communicate with more people. (J1P17-PG3)

In this case, the student mentions that she "likes learning English" and that it is "exciting". She attaches these positive emotions with understanding and being able to communicate with others. The desire to communicate with others is important and of interest for this participant. Earlier the same participant stated that she felt nervous speaking in the "ordinary world", which refers to her world outside of the English classroom. While this student felt nervous speaking with others outside of the classroom, this does not stop her want and even excitement at the prospect of being able to speak with other speakers of English.

Emotions vary greatly for these students with reference to discourse partners when speaking English. While some express nervousness when speaking with other classmates, with their teachers, or in the *real world,* others feel positively about these same situations. This seems to indicate that there is not a one-size-fits-all speaking partner who will make every student feel comfortable or less nervous. Because of this, it may be possible to infer that personality traits are a factor which affects whether students feel nervous when speaking with others.

Emotions Experienced in Reference to Technical Aspects of Speaking

When referencing emotions, another subcategory has emerged from the varying aspects to which these students attribute the emotions of nervousness and fear. Different technical aspects of speaking may also affect emotions or make students feel a certain way. I will define technical speaking aspects to be elements in the classroom that are associated with speaking, such as pronunciation, intonation, and grammar.

Similarly, to the subcategory of speaking partners, the sentiment of nervousness when speaking is expressed about technical aspects of speaking.

> When I talk with someone in English, I feel nervous because I do not know if I'm using the correct pronunciation, but I try to do my best. (J1P7-PG2)

This last piece of data expresses the emotion of nervousness but in two different contexts. The topic of pronunciation appears to be important for this student. Not having or knowing what the *correct* pronunciation is causes this student to experience nervousness. This could be related to perfectionism for her in that she wishes to have the *correct* or appropriate pronunciation.

There are some students who feel differently about these technical speaking aspects. Other students seem to see them in a positive light or do not avoid them as much because it may improve their speech.

> I think that participating in class can help you to pay attention and to try to not be shy and to speak more so your pronunciation starts to become better and you feel more comfortable doing it [speaking]. (J3P12-PG5)

According to this student, participation in class is one method of helping her improve her pronunciation which is a technical speaking aspect. Many students mentioned that they feel negatively about this in their journals. This student believes that practicing is a way to improve this skill. As a result, the implication may be that some students ignore or do not feel negative emotions about some of these technical aspects. This may signify a cause for them to participate more freely in class.

In describing other technical speaking skills regarding the emotions of the participants, intonation also appears to affect the emotions of students while speaking.

> I really don't like to talk in class because I don't have a very good form of speaking. This is the consequence of taking four languages last semester. In all of these classes, I must change every form of intonation. (J3P21-PG2)

This participant mentions various aspects of speaking which factor together in how he feels about speaking. While no specific emotion is expressed by the student, there is a difficulty or uncertainty for this student related to changing intonation patterns. Due to this, it may be that he is not happy or that he does not feel comfortable with his speaking form and intonation. The different languages created a problem among English and the other three languages that the student took last semester. It could be that having multiple languages at his disposal causes insecurity and confusion or it makes the process of speaking harder for him.

Other technical speaking aspects which students seem not to feel satisfied with are their accent and fluency.

> I don't usually speak very much in class because I don't like my accent and my fluency. I only speak when I'm sure about what I have to say and if it is correct. (J3P14-PG5)

Since the above student does not find her accent pleasing, she decides to only speak when sure of herself and know what she says is correct. Other students within their journals expressed this same sentiment that they did not like one aspect or another of their speech, and thus they avoided speaking. It is not just the opinion of others that the students are worried about, but also what they think of themselves. These students do not want to make a mistake, and this appears to cause some insecurity about their technical speaking aspects.

The last aspect which causes students to feel negative emotions that I will discuss in this section is grammar. One student seemed to feel strongly about her skill in grammar.

> I don't like to participate in class a lot because I feel scared about my grammar. I just participate when I feel secure about my answer. (J3P10-PG4)

Fear is expressed by this student about her grammar. Not being able to express what she wants to say in a manner which is grammatically correct scares her. This participant also states that she needs to feel secure in her answers and by extension, she needs to feel secure about her grammar before participating in class. Fear would appear to be another emotion that affects whether students speak in the class which is something similar to what was mentioned by the previous student in the last journal excerpt.

In general, in analyzing the emotions experienced by these students with respect to technical speaking skills, the majority appear to feel negatively about their abilities or about what the specific skill entails. This does not seem to be caused by others, but rather by something negatively about themselves. Further analysis of these themes also brings another common thread together in that feeling negatively about their speaking skills affects whether they participate in the classroom. Because of this, negative emotions may limit the amount of time that the students potentially have for speaking in the class.

Speaking Strategies

The strategies that students use to help facilitate or improve their speech is another theme which repeated itself throughout the journals, even though they were not always tightly focused. Strategies are important since they are the methods which students create for themselves based on their needs. Regarding a student's speaking strategies, each student has his/her own set of strategies. While some elements may overlap or may seem similar, the strategies are student specific. The strategies within this section are the use of the university's self-access center, use of speaking tools, taking advantage of having a speaking partner, and translation.

For example, one student's strategy enlists the help of the university's self-access center.

> Sometimes I feel like I can speak with everybody, but sometimes I can't express myself. In that case, I feel like I need more practice and I go to CAADI [*Centro de Auto-acceso de Aprendizaje de Idiomas*] to do it. After that I have more confidence to speak with anybody. (J1P11-1)

In this case, speaking with others appears to be dependent on various undisclosed variables; however, overall this student looks for more opportunities to speak the language. The student simply states that sometimes he can speak with everyone, and other times this is not the case. This student has found that when he does not feel comfortable in his abilities that the self-access center is helpful because it provides valuable practice for him. Afterwards, the student feels more confident in his abilities. The situation could imply that more practice will allow for the student to become more self-assured and confident about his speaking skills. This can be linked in the literature to GLLs because the student is looking for opportunities to practice and has found a strategy to do so (Rubin, 1975).

Another student also mentions that he goes to the school's self-access center; however, he goes with a specific purpose in mind.

> My participation is very inconsistent with the need in the class and because of this I go CAADI three days per week to level up my vocabulary and my intonation. (J3P21-PG6)

While these two students have the same backup plan of going to CAADI for more

help, they have different reasons or motivations for doing so. This student uses CAADI to improve defined aspects of his language, specifically vocabulary and intonation. Finding resources is important for this student to help him build his knowledge. At the self-access center, this student seeks out the help of others instead of practicing by himself. He takes control of his own language learning by spending extra time practicing the language. This represents a participant who is motivated to learn more and spend time perfecting his speaking skills.

Not all students make use of the school's resources or those of another person. This may not necessarily be because these strategies do not work for them, but rather that they have their own tools or prefer to work alone. As for the construction of these speaking strategies for the students, Frederickson (2003) reports that potential effects from positive emotions can be the construction of intellectual resources in speaking. In this case, through experiencing positive emotions, such as feeling confident, students construct resources that assist them in speaking.

> Something that really helps me is that if I don't know a word, I try to change it. I mean I try to explain what I want with the words I know. That is a double-edged sword because sometimes I have to use a lot of words instead one, but I can communicate what I want. (J1P12-5)

In this example, the student relies on the use of a strategy as a tool to help facilitate communication with others. This strategy is based on using cognates and the use of circumlocution. While this is helpful on the one hand, this participant also mentions that it can be a "double-edged sword" or counterproductive because the utterance becomes more verbose than she had originally intended. Either way by using this strategy it shows resourcefulness on the part of the student.

Other students seem to take advantage of having a speaking partner as a strategy for finding ways to improve their speaking skills. The speaking partners provide the corrections that the student needs.

> I don't really feel embarrassed when someone corrects me. I really appreciate it. I prefer that. I don't like when people just let me talk because I think I did it well and I repeat a wrong pattern. I know that people do it because they don't want to interrupt me, but I think that it doesn't improve my English as much as feedback. They could tell me what I said wrong at the end. (J1P12-PG3)

This student takes the aspect of practicing speaking with others as a strategy for

bettering her speech. The preference for having constructive feedback appears to link to the idea of a wish to improve and learn more about her foreign language. Furthermore, this student also expresses the lack of the generally negative emotion of embarrassment or fear of interlocutors interrupting her. As mentioned in the theme of affective domain, not every speaker is comfortable enough with others to speak, let alone seek out corrective feedback from them. Additionally, another aspect present within this quote is fluency. By stating that others "don't want to interrupt me", this participant believes practicing fluency of the language does not help them as much as receiving corrective feedback.

A somewhat similar thread to this previous strategy relates to the idea of being conscious when selecting speaking partners for in-class activities.

> I could say that it is helpful for me to be with classmates that have the same level [of English] because when somebody does not have the same level [of English], the rest of the students can get stuck. On the other hand, when somebody is at a lower level than they deserve, that person can feel stuck. It is also useful to talk about easy topics when we do not have a very large vocabulary because it can be difficult to try to say something without the necessary tools. (J2P17-5)

The choice of speaking partners in this case is not necessarily something that the participant always has direct control over because sometimes the teacher selects the partner. The strategy in this case is specific to contexts where the student has the freedom to pick her own partner. Relating to choosing her partner, this student appears to keep in mind the level of her partner. She would decide to choose one near her same level due to difficulties that arose while speaking with someone with a lower or higher level. Because this is a strategy that the student does not always control, it could also be that this student is pointing out an important factor that teachers should keep in mind for partner selection for speaking activities. Depending on the selection, the pair might not be compatible partners.

Other strategies are not as successful as the ones that are previously mentioned, and thus are viewed negatively. A student mentions the strategy of translation as not as effective or *good* as others.

> …frequently I think in Spanish to know how I would something say in English or to translate. Comparing between two languages then is not as good. (J3P15-1)

In this example, the student states that she thinks about what she wants to say in

Spanish and then translates that into English. It could be that the student thought that this strategy would facilitate her speech but later states that this is not that case. The comparison of languages is "not as good". It may be inferred that the comparison is "not as good" as other strategies or that it is "not as good" as thinking in English instead of Spanish and then translating into English.

In examining these different speaking strategies, some are more effective than others. Some students also seem to seek out school-based resources to use as a supplement to their class. These students search for others in order to help them improve their speaking skills. Other students prefer to rely on themselves and on tools that they have in their repertoire to help facilitate communication. For one student, a curious thought about her translation strategy is that she realized that it was not working for her. It would be interesting to see if and in what way she changes that strategy.

Judgement of the English Teachers' Traits

The students' judgement of English teachers' traits was a theme that emerged from the data which was salient within their writings. As can be expected, there were two sides when judging the traits: those that were seen as *good* traits (the ideal teacher) and others which were seen or labeled as *bad* traits. Along with these traits, the students also felt that there was a relationship between the way they were addressed in the classroom or how the teachers presented themselves as well.

Some of the positive or *good* traits of the teachers seem to be related to being kind or *nice*. One student describes teachers that she had in the past using this adjective.

> My other teachers were very nice. They always try to motivate to the students to speak. They were very patient. They always try to involve the students. (J2P9-PG1)

Within this excerpt from the journal, the student expresses her preference to teachers who were "nice", "motivating", "patient", and that they "try to involve the student". Taking this description one step farther it may be that these would be the ideal traits for a teacher for this student. These teachers from the past are described in a positive light with words that normally have a positive connotation associated with them. This may be because these teachers create a positive environment which is conducive to speaking by being patient with the students. According to research

conducted by Dörnyei (1994), there are several pieces of advice related to motivating language learners for teachers. This list includes the suggestion of helping to promote self-confidence and positive self-perceptions. By doing this, the teacher creates a favorable environment for the students which motivates them to learn.

Another description of positive traits of teachers include having a positive relationship with their students. According to this student, this is an important factor among others.

> My relationship with my English teachers has been very good. I feel I've had very good teachers since I started with this language at Level 300 [beginner intermediate]. So far they are prepared people who dominate their language and also Spanish to understand us better as students (sometimes, that means when it's necessary [to use Spanish] for any reason) or even to know about the context in which we [the students] want to speak. (J2P15-PG2)

Further traits that this student describes for ideal teachers are that they should be "prepared", "dominate their language and Spanish", and "know about the context in which we [the students] want to speak". These traits give the impression of another important value that this student has of the ideal teacher. This student believes that *good* teachers will be familiar with both Spanish and English so that they are familiar with the context. The value of this is that the student believes that the teacher will be able to better understand the students or explain things if the students do not understand in English than a teacher who does not speak Spanish.

In regard to other judgements of teacher's traits, the students seem to have ideas related to the ways teachers should or do teach.

> The teachers should teach the class with a combination of theory and practice and involve some jokes so students do not feel that taking English is like a class and they feel it is a time to learn, speak, read, write and listen to a new form of communication. (J2P4-PG3)

This student gives some ideas for what he thinks teaching methods should be in the classroom and how the teacher should act. By providing this description, he could also be describing traits of his ideal teacher as well. This student's ideal description for English teachers is that teachers should be knowledgeable about theory, be able to translate that knowledge into practice, and be funny. I explored this topic further in the focus group, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

I: Okay. ¿Y ustedes creen que hay una relación entre sus habilidades de hablar y la motivación que les da el maestro?
Participants: Sí.
I: ¿Y podrían elaborarlo un poco?
22 P (male): Es que realmente yo he notado en esta clase y en otras clases depende mucho de los profesores en el ánimo que da.
23 P (female): Creo que también lo que influye mucho es el comportamiento del maestro o sea la actitud con la que imparta la clase porque me ha tocado si igual maestros que llegan a clase…con un problema anterior de la clase van como molestos o tristes… esto mismo lo transmiten, entonces creo que eso es muy importante el entusiasmo en el que el profesor imparte su clase porque esto es lo que estás transmitiendo en este caso del lenguaje, o de la personalidad que estas transmitiendo a los alumnos.

Regarding other trait judgements, there are participants who have ideas of teacher traits that are not as desired or suitable for teaching.

> In Level 600 [intermediate] I had a nice teacher. She was a good person, but she allowed us to use too much Spanish during her classes, so I felt like all the progress I got in Level 500 was lost in Level 600. (J2P15-PG5)

In this excerpt, the participant states that the teacher she had in an upper-intermediate class was nice and a good person, but later elaborates upon an undesirable trait that appeared during her classes. This student believes that speaking too much of the L1, in this case Spanish, does not help her to improve her speaking skills. Rather, this trait has the opposite effect which made the student regress in her speaking skills.

In an account about a different negative experience, one participant names a teacher as being *bad* because of the way he was treated.

> My next teacher was [name]. She was a bad teacher. I say this because she would get angry very quickly and she always quarreled with me about topics that we saw in class. (J2P21-PG4)

The student specifically names two traits which can be interpreted as the reason that he believes a teacher is *bad*. The first trait is that she would become "angry very quickly" and the other being that she quarreled with the student. According to this student's idea of what a *bad* teacher is, these traits fall into that category. Throughout

the journals and the focus group a common thread which kept appearing was that a lack of patience is a negative trait for English teachers. The implication behind this is that traits that would be positive are not becoming angry very quickly and not quarreling with the students about the classroom topics. This influences students' speech because it does not motivate them to speak in the classroom. In the focus group, when discussing how harsh treatment affects their speaking, students said:

> I: …algunos de ustedes escribieron sobre maestros que no les trataban bien o que dijeron que se enojaron muy rápido y me gustaría saber más como otros tipos de cosas que hace el maestro les afecta en su forma de hablar o en la clase para participar.
> 27 P (male): Su impaciencia. Como de [falta de] pasión, como que siento que hay algunos profesores que están aquí para llenarse los bolsillos por lo mientras, y conseguir otro trabajo en otro lado, donde gane más dinero.
> 28 P (male): Sí, es que viene del interés que el maestro les ponga a los temas que está tratando de estos temas igual.
> 31 P (female): Sí, creo que mucho influye el respeto que se tienen, tanto del alumno al maestro, como el maestro al alumno. Porque creo que sin respeto no hay nada, y pues va de la mano junto con la paciencia, porque uno como estudiante obviamente tiene errores, y a lo mejor un maestro tiene que explicar las veces que sea necesario para que el alumno pueda aprender otro lenguaje y no es como muy sencillo que se pueda entender como a la primera vez.

Considering the judgements that students have about their teacher's traits and practices, there appear to be several traits which make a teacher *good*. These traits include patience, kindness, understanding, and dominance of the L2. Following this same idea, there are practices or methods that the students also feel that the teachers do or should use that also put them in the category of being an ideal teacher. Some of these traits include knowing when and how much of the L1 to use in the classroom, combining theory and practice, and including jokes in the class. In contrast, these students also have a general opinion on what types of traits make teachers *bad*. Among these unfavorable traits include using too much of the L1 in the classroom, becoming angry very quickly, or quarreling with the students. Because it appears that the participants have a clear opinion about their teacher's traits, it would suggest that they all have an idea of what their ideal teacher would be like and what this ideal teacher would do in the classroom. This in turn has the possibility of affecting the students' learning and participation in class. Therefore, teachers should be educated about how to encourage learners' experience of positive emotions.

Identity

Identity as an English speaker was another theme I found in the first journal prompt. I find this theme particularly interesting as an outcome because I was not researching identity and thus, it was unexpected.

> It makes me feel like if I were someone else when I'm speaking, and don't misunderstand me, it's not like as if I would like to be someone else, it's just the possibility to forget my problems and restart like someone new. (J1P10-PG4)

This statement implies that the participant sees herself as having a separate identity when speaking a foreign language. While this concept is not new, it is nevertheless interesting. Being able to "restart like someone new" appears to give her a sense of rebirth where she can partition her Spanish-speaking self from her English-speaking self.

The concept of identity was also expressed by another participant who believed speaking in English provided him with another identity.

> 4 P (male): Cuando yo hablo en inglés, me sentía un poco más—no sé si es por malinchismo o de la sensación de inferioridad… más importante o un poco más—no sé con la voz un poco más segura o además de que un poco más fresa. Me sentía más formal al hablar.

For this student, their English-speaking identity made them feel like they were "something more" as if they had a tool or an edge over others by having this ability. What is also of interest in this quotation is that he expresses that he feels "malinchismo" or an inferiority compared to when he is speaking in Spanish. This contrast between these two language identities is expressed again when the students says that he feels that his voice is "more sure" and "more formal" when speaking in English. In these two instances of contrast, it can be implied that this student places a higher value or prestige on his English-speaking identity.

The idea of language identity and prestige when speaking in English was also expressed by one student using metaphors.

> Every time that I talk in English, I feel better. I feel like somebody else, like a powerful person, a person who can do everything. It's a mask…that changes when I talk to another person. I feel like a superhero, like a superhuman, because speaking about feel-

ings, I feel more comfortable with myself in a way that I can say anything. (J1P6-PG1)

The notion of identity here is related to the last excerpt in that the student feels like someone else. The student in this situation takes identity a step farther in specifying that he feels like a superhero. Speaking English seems to give this student a sense of power along with prestige. This "mask" allows him to slip into the identity of someone who has a superpower, which in this case is the language, and feel more comfortable when speaking. This implies that the "mask" of his English-speaking identity provides the opportunity for him to feel like he is another person different from who he normally is.

Additionally in the focus group, another student touched on the metaphor of a mask when speaking in English.

6 P (female): Yo cuando hablo en inglés depende de la persona, pero cuando hablo con maestros, por ejemplo, me siento más pequeña y no puedo decir lo que siento, pero por ejemplo cuando hablo en público es como pongo una máscara y puedo decir todo entonces es como un disfraz porque, no sé es en español es más vulnerable y todos me entienden…

This student not only expresses a positive but also a negative identity regarding her speaking identity depending on who she speaks to. In this case, as could also be seen in various data excepts in the section related to context and speaking partners (4.2.1), this participant states that she feels "small" when she speaks with teachers because she "cannot say how she feels". This could be due to the inability to accurately express her personality which causes foreign language anxiety (Burden, 2004). However, when speaking in public, the participant relates to the previously mentioned "mask" in that she feels like she is wearing a "costume" when speaking English. This "mask" or "costume" helps her to feel less vulnerable than when she speaks in Spanish because not everyone understands English.

One other participant stated how she felt both a positive and a negative identity while speaking. The student writes about how different aspects of speaking made her feel with respect to her identity.

When I think that I'm using the correct words and my pronunciation is the best, I feel like a queen. If it isn't I feel like a little baby who doesn't know anything about language. (J1P17-4)

In this last instance, the student explains how using the correct words and pronunciation makes her feel like the "best". When these two criteria are met, this causes this student to "feel like a queen". Feeling like a queen in this situation may indicate that this student, similarly to the last participant, feels powerful. However, not being able to have the right words and pronunciation makes this student "feel like a little baby who doesn't know anything about language". This has the opposite effect of the regal identity that the participant associates with being correct. The choice of comparing herself with a baby could signify that she feels underdeveloped and ignorant about the language she has been studying. This is clearly not the case because she has been placed in an upper-intermediate level class. This suggests that the mistakes make this participant feel deficient in her speaking abilities.

Identity is expressed by these students as making them feel like other people: superheroes, or a queen. What these participants have in common is that their identity changes while speaking English. While all these students express that they feel like different people, they also all express this sentiment of an alternate identity in varying ways. In the case of some students, they described this identity in terms of people who are powerful. Perhaps it is that this alternate identity provides these students with a superpower or gift which makes them see themselves as being of a higher rank than those who do not speak a second language.

This powerful identity may also indicate that English serves as an alternate mouthpiece for these students. It acts as an extra tool they can utilize which some others may not have access to. This is to say, as one student stated, that English is a "mask" that they can put on which allows them to express their ideas more comfortably without fear of losing face. While on one hand identity works in favor of the student, on the other it may also provide negative consequences. In the case of one student, it could also be implied that this identity is also affected by how close to native-like or mistake-free speech she can attain when speaking. In other words, the alternate identity that some students experience may work against them by making them feel as if they are inferior.

After examining the data that I collected from the participants' journals, there were numerous themes which presented themselves which were expected and unexpected. Emotions was clearly a theme which dominated the journals. What is interesting about this theme is the variety of contexts in which they appeared, the types of emotions which presented themselves, and the variance of the students' responses. Not every student felt the same way in the same context.

Conclusions of the Research

In this section, I will present conclusions, pedagogical implications, implications for further research, and limitations based on my findings in the data analysis.

The aim of this research was to explore students' emotional experience of speaking English as a foreign language. From this exploration several conclusions became apparent from the data collected by the journals and focus group. These conclusions are:

a) English speakers experience both positive and negative emotions while speaking their foreign language.
b) These emotions may vary depending on different speaking aspects in which the students either believe to possess strong or weak skills. Emotions are not limited to speaking but cross over into other areas of language use.
c) Students employ a variety of speaking strategies, which are viewed as either facilitative or as a hindrance, in order to help them speak.
d) The teacher has an impact on the emotions students experience and the decision to speak in the classroom.
e) Identity is an important factor and influences emotions in speaking English.

Positive and Negative Emotions of EFL Speakers

In discussing the first finding, I found that students experienced both positive and negative emotions when speaking English. Negative emotions appeared in contexts when students spoke with authority figures, such as teachers, with native English speakers, or while giving a presentation in front of the classroom. Not every student felt the same emotions in every situation; however, I found that speaking with these three groups tended to produce an emotional response. This could have an implication for classroom practices in grouping (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). Teachers may have to reconsider what types of groups to use, such as pairs or small groups. In addition to this, the type of activities in the classroom can be modified to help facilitate speech in the classroom. In place of individual presentations in front of the whole class, individual students could instead present in small groups of classmates (Stock & Zimányi, 2017).

While past studies relating to emotions and speaking have primarily investigated negative emotions (see Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre & Gregersen 2012b; Young, 1991), I found that the fo-

cus on these emotions may leave out positive emotions which should be taken into consideration. Regarding positive emotions, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012a) list Frederickson's (2001) five examples of the effect positive emotions and tendencies. Students tended to experience positive emotions regarding situations and contexts where they experienced success in communicating, while speaking with smaller groups of classmates, or if they perceived progress in their speaking abilities. Opportunities for small group speaking activities should be taken advantage of in the classroom which may provide situations where students experience more positive emotions and benefit from their affects.

Emotions Vary According to Skill Level in Speaking Aspects

Regarding the second finding related to speaking aspects, students also expressed varied positive and negative emotions when they believed to either possess strong to weak skills in their pronunciation, intonation, use of grammar, and knowledge of vocabulary. Generally, if the students considered that they did not possess what they believed to be a *good* pronunciation, this triggered negative emotions, such as *feeling bad* or being nervous. Conversely, when students believed that they did have a good oral pronunciation, they seemed to experience positive emotions, such as *feeling good* or feeling a sense of accomplishment.

Teachers should take this into consideration in the classroom and not expect students' speech to be perfect. Taking the pressure off students to have a perfect pronunciation or grammar in the classroom could help students to feel more positively about their speaking abilities. Presenting an encouraging attitude towards these students when they are working on these skills is important and the manner in which teacher's correct students regarding grammar and pronunciation may influence their emotions. In addition to this, while accuracy is important, not placing so much emphasis on it (especially in terms of pronunciation) in the class could help students experience fewer negative emotions and feel less discouraged.

Different Speaking Strategies Implemented by Students

I consider that in order to remedy or build on these speaking aspects, students use different strategies to help them with their speaking. These strategies seem to be based on either seeking out the help of another English speaker or making use of a communication strategy such as circumlocution. The use of these strategies might

be in response to feeling a desire to improve or feeling that their speaking skills are inadequate.

In this case, these emotions act as a motivator for students to seek out additional assistance to help advance their skills or in other cases adapt skills in order to assist them while speaking. Considering this in the classroom and perhaps introducing additional strategies to students could be beneficial to supporting student speech inside and outside of the classroom (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). Teachers can also provide encouragement for using these skills in the classroom, demonstrate how they work, and present the strengths of using each one.

Teachers' Impact on Students' Emotions and Speaking

Regarding the fourth finding, in the classroom educators have an impact on both speaking and emotions related to speaking. Students expressed that in past experiences while speaking, teachers' positive and negative attitudes and emotions reflected in class can have either a detrimental or facilitative effect on them. This means that teachers may need to be more conscious of the emotions and attitudes they bring with them into the classroom. Bringing emotional baggage from home into the classroom would seem to negatively affect students' emotions regarding their willingness to speak in class. Moreover, expressing misplaced frustrations and anger towards students may be detrimental as well. The classroom environment and what the educator does to create a positive atmosphere to encourage learners are key to facilitating speech.

Besides this, the manner in which teachers communicate with their students may have an effect on them. By expressing frustration over a perceived lack of progress in speaking or incorrect use of grammar/vocabulary, this can produce negative consequences related to emotions in respect to how students feel about their own speaking abilities. Journaling to reflect on what happened during class may help teachers become more aware of what emotions and attitudes they bring into the classroom with them.

Finally, a general picture may be outlined of what an ideal teacher would be for students related to speaking. This ideal teacher would be patient with the students, encouraging for them to speak, and knowledgeable about both the language and teaching methodology.

Identity Is an Influential Factor Related to Emotions and Speaking

I found that identity influenced the emotions of the students when they spoke English. In this case, students seemed to identify with being a superhero or being another person different from themselves when they spoke English. This superhero identity appears to express the emotion of empowerment and would seem to act as a type of motivation to speak English. It may be said then that emotions are related to identity which should be taken into consideration by teachers and researchers. Because of this, it may be crucial for teachers to be aware of this other identity. Awareness of another speaking identity or feeling like a superhero can be useful for teachers in order to be more sensitive towards their students to encourage them to speak more in the classroom. Alternatively, if negative identities present themselves, this will be another delicate issue which teachers will have to think about as well and navigate in the classroom. Considering the results of this study, I will now present some pedagogical implications.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study have provided information which appears to confirm that emotions are an important factor in speaking English as a foreign language. As a primary pedagogical implication of these findings, I consider that an application for the results of this study would be to educate teachers about the emotions students feel when speaking their foreign language. By doing so, they can be conscious of situations which should be avoided or promoted in order to help reduce negative emotions experienced by students. This may be accomplished through a seminar or a workshop. Strategies, such as grouping techniques or alternative activities, can be presented to the teachers (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). As an example, it may also help to take students on small field trips outside of the classroom and provide them with opportunities to speak so that they can gain confidence speaking in other settings (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). Teachers can also present and teach different speaking strategies, such as circumlocution, use of dictionaries and thesauri, and visits to learning centers, to their students so that they have a larger repertoire to draw from when speaking (Stock & Zimányi, 2017).

Gaining an awareness of students' emotions within the classroom and more specifically within interactions they have in the class may help teachers in their everyday practice and hopefully help the students to be more participative in the

class. This may help encourage students to speak with more frequency in the classroom.

Further Research

Considering areas where further research could be carried out, I suggest several modifications which can be applied to my research. The first of the suggestions is to repeat this study in other contexts, both outside out inside the context of Mexico (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). Undertaking this research in other contexts may provide results which can identify similarities in emotional experiences between different cultures, countries, or types of schools. At the same time, conducting this research in other contexts can also provide information regarding differences in emotions in those contexts. As well as in other contexts, more research could be conducted in Mexico. Moreover, as mentioned in the literature review, there has been little research conducted within the context of Mexico (see Méndez, 2007; Méndez López, 2003; 2012). Providing more research within Mexico in other regions can also present more information where similarities and differences may be seen within the same country.

A second suggestion entails the inclusion of EFL students in beginner and advanced levels of study, with perhaps an emphasis on beginners since it is the most turbulent period in language learning (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). The addition of more students in varying levels may also provide a contrast to what students at intermediate levels experience. It may also help to identify a pattern of development between the three levels. On a similar note, this same idea could be carried out but in the form of a case study with one or two students which are followed over a few years (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). This may provide a map of the emotions that these individual students feel throughout their course of studies. The value of this could be that between various individual students, different patterns of emotional development related to their speaking may become apparent.

Limitations

Considering the limitations which presented themselves during my research process, the most significant was scheduling issues with the participants' English teacher. Due to the program that she was required to follow over the course of the semester, at times it was difficult to schedule the journals. In addition to this, occasionally the participants would not hand in their assigned journal until one

week or two weeks after the due date. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the participants in this study were not only studying English, but also their own bachelor's degrees in other campuses. Furthermore, because I was an outsider to this class, it is possible that the students did not open up to me as much as they would have with someone who is familiar. Because of this, there may be more emotions that these students experienced, but they felt uncomfortable writing about them to me. Finally, because I allowed the participants to either type or handwrite their journals, from time to time, it was difficult to decipher some of the participants' handwriting.

Concluding Remarks

There are several factors which should be taken into account which may affect students' speech. From these factors, this presents a picture of what the emotional experience of these students is and how they feel while speaking. EFL students feel both positive and negative emotions which are affected by who they talk to and the context (authority vs. classmates, small groups vs. in front of the whole class, and within the classroom vs. outside contexts) and how they perceive their speaking skills related to technical aspects, such as pronunciation or grammar (either being strong vs. weak). These emotions range from excitement and nervousness to enjoyment and frustration. Additionally, due to experiencing emotions of a desire to improve or communicate, these students employ various speaking strategies or seek out others which can assist them. Teachers also affect how students' emotions change during class and whether they decide to speak. Identity also plays an important role in how students experience emotions in speaking English as a foreign language.

Finally, for practicing teachers, considering the situations in which emotions occur may have implications in the classroom in areas, such as grouping and activity planning (Stock & Zimányi, 2017). In the practice of technical aspects, such as pronunciation or use of grammar, it may help to lessen nervousness or other negative emotions by having a relaxed, non-threatening environment. Furthermore, EFL students should not be compared to nor expected to have perfect pronunciation. Encouraging students or taking the pressure off them by mentioning this fact in class may help to lessen negative emotions. While some students employ speaking strategies as a reaction to a desire to improve their speech, not all students have a tried and true method which works for them. Teaching various speaking strategies in the classroom and making students aware of resources available to them

could help them to be aware of different methods and find ones which best suit their needs. Teachers must become aware that their emotions and attitudes have an impact on their students' emotions and their desire to speak in the classroom. A reflective journal could be a solution in helping to provide awareness of what types of negative baggage teachers bring into class with them. Identity and how they students perceive themselves while speaking their foreign language is an important factor. Being aware of this identity may help to promote a sense of empowerment in the students with their foreign language.

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