

*Women in Applied Linguistics
in Mexico:
Giving Voice to Their Research*

División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades
Campus Guanajuato

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*Women in Applied Linguistics
in Mexico:
Giving Voice to Their Research*

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INTRODUCTION

The book titled *Women in Applied Linguistics in Mexico: Giving Voice to Their Research* consists of six chapters from women who carried out thesis research for their MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching (ELT) degree of the Language Department at the University of Guanajuato. These chapters represent diverse issues in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Mexico and applied linguistics, such as teaching idiomatic expressions, teacher professional identity formation, English medium instruction (EMI) in a polytechnic university, student views of content and language integrated learning (CLIL), translation activities used in an EFL classroom, and the student views of peer mentorship at a graduate level. This collection of chapters offers readers the opportunity to see a condensed version of their theses using qualitative research in the context of Mexico. These chapters focus on topics which are current and are of interest for readers in and outside of Mexico, such as students, practitioners, teacher educators, thesis directors, and program coordinators in the field of applied linguistics. For those students who want to embark on a postgraduate level of studies, these chapters are worthwhile to read and show what research is carried out in Mexico. The following paragraphs offer a short description of the chapters which aim to guide the readers.

Jacqueline Soto-Jurado contributes her chapter “Mexican EFL teachers’ perceptions concerning teaching English idioms.” She examines how EFL teachers who work at the Language Center in the *Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez* view the use of idiomatic expressions in the classroom. Valuable conclusions are given for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and program coordinators as to how English idioms can be implemented in the classroom and the significant need to use these idiomatic expressions in teaching.

Another chapter is entitled “Once upon a time in Mexico: Teacher tales about identity in an evolving profession” by Amanda K. Wilson. She

provides the readers with the narrative experiences of five EFL teachers regarding their teacher professional identity in a public university. Grounded in sociocultural theory, this qualitative research shows their challenges and growth, revealing common themes of preconceptions about teaching, “falling into the job” and feeling unprepared to teach, and societal marginalization of English language teaching and teachers.

The chapter “Exploring students’ perceptions regarding peer mentorship in a MA program of Applied Linguistics in ELT” by Ana María Becerra Reséndiz analyzes the opinions of mentors and mentees in a peer mentorship program carried out in the MA program. She designed this program at the graduate level, trained the peer mentors on their roles, and then carried out the research to understand the opinions of the mentees and mentors. The author examines the benefits and challenges from both sides providing their voices. While mentoring is often seen at the BA level, the author shows how such a program can be implemented at a postgraduate level with peers to better attend to the needs of students, the program, and the institution.

In Chapter 4, Leslie Diana Castillo-Nava discusses evidence regarding her research project titled “Exploring the implementation of the bilingual, international, and sustainable (BIS) model and EMI at a polytechnic university in central Mexico through the experiences of English and EMI faculty, students, and coordinators.” English medium instruction is growing in popularity in Mexico as a method that provides content classes in English. The author has pointed out that there is a gap of literature regarding the BIS model and EMI in Mexico. This chapter tries to bridge this gap by exploring the views of different participants (students, teachers, and administrators) regarding EMI and their recommendations as how to implement EMI. The results are of interest for administrators, practitioners, and coordinators who are thinking of implementing this type of instruction or those who have experience in giving this type of instruction.

Iliana Carolina Campoy Aguirre's chapter titled "Students' perspectives on integrating arts in the EFL CLIL classroom: An intrinsic case study at a private language center in central Mexico" explores how eight young learners perceived this instruction in their English classes during a summer course. This qualitative research also reports on how the author carefully approached her research of young learners. Like EMI, CLIL teaching is part of our profession in Mexico and this chapter provides valuable insight as to how to approach it at the elementary level.

The last chapter titled "An analysis of perceptual data about implementing translation-related activities in an EFL classroom" by María de Lourdes Martínez Ruiz reports on how an EFL teacher and her students perceived the use of a variety of translation-based activities in their class in central Mexico. The author found that the qualitative data showed a positive impact of these activities demonstrating their value.

To conclude, we would like to thank the six authors who worked hard on their chapters for this book. These women have demonstrated their dedication to the profession and research. Gratitude is also given to the University of Guanajuato for supporting us with this publication. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the work of three academics who helped with the chapter revisions: Dr. Verónica Sánchez Hernández (*Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*), Dr. Alejandra Núñez Asomoza (*Universidad de Guanajuato*), and Dr. Nadia Patricia Mejía Rosales (*Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango*). We hope that you enjoy reading these chapters from six women who received their MA degree in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching and are positive role models for others.

CHAPTER 1

MEXICAN EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMS

Jacqueline Soto-Jurado

Introduction

This study explores the perceptions of five English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers on teaching English idioms in a Mexican university in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. This investigation also examines the participants' decisions to teach or not teach idioms in the classroom. A qualitative paradigm was implemented, falling under a phenomenology research design. One of the data collection techniques was a questionnaire to obtain the participants' academic information as well as their biodata. Also, semi-structured interviews were applied to ask follow-up questions for any clarification needed based on the teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching the language expressions. The following sections include the literature review, research methodology, data results, summary of finding, and concluding remarks.

Literature Review

It is widely known that idioms are common in daily conversations, and speakers tend to use them in informal and formal contexts. They symbolize the history and culture of the English language behind their hidden meanings (Al-kadi, 2015). Researchers have explored these expressions from the following perspectives: teaching idioms (Liontas, 2017; Mansoor, 2015; Nurul & Rochmawati, 2017), L2 idiom learning (Roberto de Caro, 2009; Talib, 2015; Xie, 2017), and learning/teaching strategies (Manzoor & Kiran, 2015; Pimenova, 2011; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013). Although this topic has been investigated from different perspectives, it is necessary to explore more about how EFL teachers perceive the inclusion of these expressions in their classrooms.

Although idioms are known to benefit students' communication skills (Chen & Lai, 2013), the expressions may not be seen as an essential teaching aspect in EFL classrooms (Khan & Can Daşkin, 2014; Liontas, 2017). Furthermore, many English textbooks do not include them or they are often in the vocabulary section, without tasks to support stu-

dent learning (Irujo, 1986). Therefore, if English instructors decide to include idioms in their professional practice, they may need to plan extra material due to the lack of content in the textbooks. This study explores the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the inclusion of idioms in the classroom, as well as the reasons to teach these expressions when they are absent in the textbook.

Definition and Types of Idioms

Idioms are defined as “the patrimony of a culture and tradition; they represent centuries of life in a determined sociolinguistic context and geographical setting and are therefore the heart and soul of a linguistic community” (Pinnaivaia, 2002, p. 2). In the same way, Çakir (2011) mentions that these expressions represent the traditions, customs, and values of a community; for example, the historical background of the idiom *break the ice* (i.e., mitigate tension) is related to the passages that were created for ships to make trade ships by carving the ice. Talib (2015) explains that translating idioms is impossible to interpret literally due to their historical, political, or cultural background. The definitions of these expressions are unpredictable for their figurative connotation (Manzoor & Kiran, 2015; Vasiljevic, 2015; Zyzik, 2011). Therefore, idioms are an essential social aspect of daily interactions because they hold a cultural history linked to their hidden connotations.

There are several categories for describing idioms. For example, Makkai (1972) divides these expressions into *idioms of encoding* and *idioms of decoding*. The former is when the meaning is predictable, for instance, *lend a hand* (i.e., helping someone). The latter refers to the unpredictable connotation, for example, *white elephant* (i.e., something expensive that is useless). Mäntylä (2004) also divides them into three categories based on their predictability: *transparent idioms* (there is a strong relation between the literal and figurative meaning), *semi-transparent* (a possible connection between the literal and figurative connotations), and *opaque*

(the non-existence relation between the literal and figurative meanings). These categorizations are based on the difficulty in understanding the hidden meaning. Furthermore, there are also different areas for classifying these expressions: animals (e.g., *when pigs fly*), body parts (e.g., *cold feet*), colors (e.g., *see red*), history (e.g., *kicked the bucket*), among others (Hümmer & Stathi, 2006). Based on the different categories of idioms, people can encounter them in different communicative situations.

Reasons to Teach Idioms

Idioms are used in everyday communication; therefore, learners will encounter them either in formal or informal speech (Çakir, 2011). These expressions may be heard while playing video games, watching movies, or even reading books (Brenner, 2003; Manzoor & Kiran, 2015; Nurul & Rochmawati 2017; O'Dell & McCarthy, 2010). Pollio et al. (1977) carried out an investigation to analyze speeches from political debates, written compositions, and psychological therapies and they discovered that English speakers use 4.08 of idioms per minute in their speeches. According to this study, Copper (1998) concludes that “the use of idioms would be 6,860 per week and 356,720 per year. Over a lifetime of 60 years, a person would use about 20 million idioms” (p. 255). Brenner (2003) estimates that English has more than 10,000 idioms. There is evidence that idioms are frequent in any type of discourse.

Considering the above, they should receive more attention in EFL programs to help students improve their communication skills (Al-Houti & Aldaihani, 2018; Chen & Lai, 2013; Roberto de Caro, 2009). Cowie et al. (1975) indicate that “the accurate and appropriate use of English expressions which are in the broadest sense idiomatic is one distinguishing mark of a native command of the language and a reliable measure of the proficiency of foreign learners” (p. 4). One benefit of teaching idioms is the improvement of students’ communication skills. This idea is confirmed by Cooper (1999), who states that the “use of idioms gives the language a

bookish, stilted, unimaginative tone. Learning to use idioms is therefore extremely important for achieving command of authentic language” (p. 258). Although reasons to teach idioms exist, there are probably some teachers who prefer to avoid them in their teaching practice. This might be due to the possible challenges they encounter while teaching these expressions.

Teachers’ Reasons Not to Teach Idioms

Even though teaching idioms help students to improve their communication skills, some instructors might prefer not to teach them. Teachers may believe that students can learn these expressions outside the classroom by interacting with native speakers. They consider that it is not necessary to spend time teaching idioms when they can acquire them in the real world (Çakir, 2011; Liontas, 2017). Another reason to avoid these expressions in the classroom is that teaching idioms requires extra time, preparation, and materials (Doganay & Maksut, 2013). Moreover, some authors mention that idioms have been avoided as a topic in textbooks (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2016; Khan & Can Daşkin, 2014; Wray, 2000). The teachers who use only the textbook content may not incorporate these expressions. Irujo (1986) states the following regarding the lack of material in the instructional books:

Many second-language teaching materials either ignore idioms entirely or relegate them to the “other expressions” section of vocabulary lists, without providing exercises or other aids to learning. Typically, an idiom will appear in the introductory reading or dialogue, a definition, translation, or example will be provided in the margin or notes, and the idiom will then appear again in the vocabulary list. These are obviously not sufficient aids to learning unless the teacher provides additional exercises and practice. (p. 237)

Thus, the primary reason for teachers to avoid idioms is due to the lack of idioms in the textbooks. However, when these expressions are in printed materials, there are not sufficient activities to practice. Even when idioms provide benefits to students' communication skills, some teachers avoid them in their teaching practice.

Research Methodology

This section has the objective to describe the methodology implemented to develop this study. The research questions that guided this study were the following:

RQ1: What are the EFL teachers' perceptions of teaching English idioms in a Mexican university?

RQ2: What are the factors that influence the EFL teachers' decisions to teach or not to teach idioms?

These research questions were created to explore and understand the participants' perceptions concerning teaching idioms in the language classroom and the reasons behind their decisions to include or not include these expressions in their teaching practice.

This research followed a qualitative paradigm, which "is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences, and feelings of individuals, and thus the explicit goal of the research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). This study implemented a phenomenology method that represents people's perceptions based on their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2007). The objective of this type of method is "to penetrate to the essential meaning of human experience, to focus on the phenomenon or "thing" to generate understanding from within" (Richards, 2003, p. 18). Two data-collection techniques were used: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires

contained seven questions to obtain information regarding the teachers' English proficiency, teaching experience, and other biographical information. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions to guide a natural conversation covering the topics of language teaching and culture, idioms in the classroom, and teaching strategies.

Context

This study was conducted at the Language Center at the *Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez* (UACJ), located in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. This city borders with El Paso, Texas, and it is a common practice for Mexican citizens to visit the USA for shopping, fun, or entertainment. It is also well known for its main economic source which comes from the manufacturing industry. Therefore, many people work in this industry and use English to communicate with international companies. Due to this usual contact that citizens have with native English speakers, students from the UACJ might encounter idioms while communicating with them.

Moreover, the Language Center consists of three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced. The duration of each level is six months, and the students can complete the courses in a year and a half. In this institution the teachers need to use the communicative approach for teaching. They are also required to follow a sequence of activities (controlled, semi-controlled, communicative) and include the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) in every class. The teachers have the freedom to include extra content if necessary. Because of this, teaching idioms depends on how teachers perceive their importance in English teaching.

Participants

Five English teachers from the UACJ's Language Center were the participants in this research. At the moment of the data collection, all the

participants were teaching young adults (18+) and their ages ranged from 23 to 30 years old. All had a BA degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) from the UACJ. They were also native Spanish speakers, yet proficient in English. According to their English certificates and based on the Common European Framework (CEFR), their competency levels were from B1 to C2. The participants' names and identities were carefully anonymized, and pseudonyms were used in this research.

Data Processing and Analysis

Regarding the information from the questionnaires, I developed a digital chart to organize the teachers' biodata information (age, gender, BA degree, English proficiency, among other aspects). This process enabled me to create a visual instrument to describe the participants' background.

For the data processing and analysis of the interviews, I followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommendations, which were to transcribe, get familiar with the data, code, and summarize it. Based on these steps I first transcribed the interview from data in a Word document. Then, I read the data several times to identify the common patterns. Finally, I implemented a meaning categorization by using the MaxQDA software. According to Berg (2009), meaning categorization facilitates the process of identifying the patterns, categories, and meanings of the qualitative data. Once I processed the information, I coded the data by implementing the following themes: 1) Definition and understanding of idioms; 2) Importance of teaching and learning idioms, 3) Teaching materials, strategies, and activities for idioms; and 4) Teachers' decision-making concerning the teaching of idioms.

Data Results

This section will present the data of the four themes which represent the teachers' beliefs on teaching idioms in an EFL classroom.

Definition and Understanding of Idioms

An idiom is an utterance with a connotation which is not possible to translate literally (Manzoor & Kiran, 2015; Vasiljevic, 2015). There are different types of idioms, but the more difficult ones to decode are those with a cultural, political, or historical background (Talib, 2015). In the interview the participants defined the concept of idioms from their perspective in the following:

An idiom [...] does not have like a literal meaning; it might have a meaning according to the different environments or the contexts in which people are. (Extract 01. Teacher 01)

It [an idiom] is like an expression that people use. The meaning is not literal; it is figurative. (Extract 02. Teacher 04)

An idiom is like a different compound of words that mean something totally different regarding the grammar that they [idioms] have [...]. They [idioms] mean something different from what is written. (Extract 03. Teacher 05)

The teachers' responses show that they are somewhat familiar with the definition of these expressions. The participants mentioned that an idiom is an expression whose meaning depends on the "different environments or the contexts" (Teacher 01), they have "figurative" connotations (Teacher 04), and the meaning is "different from what is written" (Teacher 05). Two teachers provided their definitions, but they could not give an accurate example:

For example, to offer coffee or tea, instead of just saying: "Would you want a coffee or tea?"; you can just say "Coffee or tea?". That could be an idiom that most people use [...]. Is OMG an idiom? (Extract 04. Teacher 01)

I do not know, like: “What’s up?” (Extract 05. Teacher 02)

The participants related these expressions with informal language such as “Coffee or tea?” or “OMG” (Teacher 01), and “What’s up?” (Teacher 02). Their answers suggest that the participants do not have a clear idea of what idioms are. Although they have a BA in ELT, their representations regarding idioms are vague. These results might be due to a possible lack of usage of these expressions in their teaching practice. Once the participants responded, I clarified the definition of idioms with them using some examples to continue with the interview.

When teaching a language, it is essential to teach cultural aspects such as idioms. This helps students to express complex ideas by using these expressions (Cieślicka, 2015; Liontas, 2017). For this connection, it was necessary to know the participants’ perceptions regarding the role that culture has in their language classrooms with the intention of revealing information related to idioms. Teachers 01 and 02 commented the following:

They [language and culture] are super interrelated; they go together. People communicate according to their culture and beliefs. People from a city or somewhere might speak differently than people from southern cities. So, yeah, language is totally related to culture. (Extract 06. Teacher 01)

They [language and culture] go hand in hand because you can’t just learn a language without knowing the context or the culture. Language tends to change a lot depending on where you are. (Extract 07. Teacher 02)

These teachers believe that people tend to speak differently based on the region or city they are from. Due to this, they consider that language and culture are connected and cannot be separated. In the same way, Teachers 03 and 05 expressed their ideas:

I think we cannot teach a language if you are not talking about culture because you have to teach also certain aspects like manners, what is proper, what is not proper in a certain culture. (Extract 08. Teacher 03)

I think they [language and culture] are really interrelated because [...] language is shaped by culture. That is why we have different constraints regarding either culture or language. For example, one thing in English cannot be the same in Spanish. I think that is very important that we can understand the language and some of the target culture. (Extract 09. Teacher 05)

Teacher 03 considered that students need to acknowledge what is polite and what is not. This can be achieved by including cultural aspects in the language classroom. Likewise, Teacher 05 explained that students can participate in different sociocultural contexts by being familiar with the possible language restrictions of the target community. According to the participants' responses, they considered that there is a strong link between language teaching and culture. This involves including culture in their teaching practice. Although they did not mention explicitly anything regarding idioms, they might contemplate their use in their language classrooms. Teachers need to be acquainted with the role that these expressions play within the community of the target language. This can be accomplished through training regarding the role and the benefits of teaching idioms. Raising awareness on this topic is needed because including culture in the classroom is more than explaining what is proper and what is not.

Importance of Teaching and Learning Idioms

English is an idiomatic language (Brenner, 2003), and it seems that the usage and understanding of these expressions help English learners to have a more effective interaction. Teachers 01 and 02 mentioned their

ideas regarding the importance of teaching these expressions in the following extract:

A lot of people use idioms all the time. It [An idiom] is almost like slang. If people do not understand slang, they will get lost in a conversation with friends. So, yeah, it [teaching idioms] is important. (Extract 10. Teacher 01)

They [idioms] are important because they are colloquial expressions. A lot of people use them, and sometimes if we do not know them, we do not know what people are talking about [...] It is very important to teach them. (Extract 11. Teacher 02)

Teachers 01 and 02 perceived these expressions as essential for learners to use in different conversations because speakers of the language tend to use them frequently. If students are not acquainted with idioms, they might have difficulties understanding different types of discourses. Teacher 04 commented something similar to this:

Yeah, idioms are definitely important because students probably might listen to those expressions, and they would take them literally and they [students] would say like “Wait, raining cats and dogs? That is not possible.” So, they [students] would not get the meaning or essence of the expression. (Extract 12. Teacher 04)

Teacher 04 stated that these expressions are also valuable when teaching English because students can improve their understanding of the language. He also commented that if students are not aware of idioms, they may feel confused due to the hidden meaning that these expressions have. The teachers agreed that if students are familiar with idioms, they will improve their communication skills by having the opportunity to interact in different socio-cultural contexts. Learners will “get the meaning

or essence of the expression” (Teacher 04) because idioms are frequent in any type of discourse.

Teaching Strategies, Materials, and Activities for Idioms

Teaching idioms is a difficult task due to their hidden meaning (Çakir, 2011). Students do not only need to understand the meaning, but they also should be proficient in the language to use these expressions correctly in different situations. The teachers shared their ideas regarding how they could teach idioms.

During the interview, all participants stated that the role of context when teaching idioms is crucial as explained in the below excerpts:

Context is important because it is how students are going to know where and when they can use those expressions [idioms], for example, to let them [students] know that some expressions are not correct in certain contexts. Like *piece of cake* cannot be used in a formal situation. (Extract 13. Teacher 01)

Context is fundamental because you can't use idioms in any context. You have to be careful with when, and where to use them. You need to know how to use them in the correct place. (Extract 14. Teacher 02)

These teachers pointed out that teaching these expressions is not possible in isolation. Students should know when to use idioms correctly. If students understand when and how to use these expressions depending on the context, they will improve their communication skills. Likewise, Teacher 05 stated the benefits of implementing the context when teaching idioms.

I think it is really essential to teach idioms within a context because you need to provide this to them [students] when they

can use some of the idioms. So yeah, I think a context is really important because if you do not include it, they [students] can use them in a wrong way or when it is not necessary. Also, some of them [idioms] could be informal, well not really informal, but in some situations, it is better not to use them and to use formal language. (Extract 15. Teacher 05)

This teacher considers that using contexts when teaching is a technique that can help learners to understand these expressions. In the same way, students can know how to use idioms appropriately depending on the context. The participants' arguments are connected to what Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016) stated regarding context, in that it "plays a crucial role in understanding idioms. Idioms have a relation with context, and their meanings are found to be easier to figure out when used in context" (p. 8). The teachers have a strong belief that using a context with idioms is better than teaching idioms in isolation.

Additionally, the participants demonstrated positive opinions regarding the usage of visual aids when teaching idiomatic expressions. Teacher 01 commented on didactic material in the following:

We can use visual aids like a video, maybe depending on the idiom. Let say that we are going to teach *easy peasy*. How can we teach that expression with an image? I think it depends on the idiom, also *piece of cake*. You can show them a picture, but how are you going to teach the real meaning with an image. Maybe show them situations with YouTube videos where people use them. (Extract 16. Teacher 02)

This participant considers that visual aids provide the opportunity for students to comprehend the hidden meaning of these expressions. However, including this material might be difficult for all idioms because some have a difficult representation as *easy peasy*. For this type of situations, it could be useful to use YouTube videos. In this way, students will

know the meaning and how to use idioms. Teacher 04 also agreed on the implementation of visual aids:

Yeah, they [visual aids] are important because they [students] get the meaning faster. You can show pictures like the literal so they can relate what those words mean and then give the image of the real meaning with a picture. (Extract 17. Teacher 04)

Teacher 04 considers that visual aids support students' learning because they can comprehend the hidden connotation faster. He commented that it could be a suitable strategy to show two images to students: one with the literal meaning and the other one with the figurative connotation as stated in the following:

Yes, I use them [idioms] a lot because I think they really help to get a better understanding of what we are watching [...] I think they [visual aids] do not only help you to give examples, but also to engage them [students] in the classroom because sometimes they get lost, but if they see something they really like, they are going to be interested in the class. (Extract 18. Teacher 05)

This participant considered that visual aids not only help students to understand the hidden meaning, but also engage them in the class. This type of material creates a more interactive and dynamic class. These excerpts demonstrate the positive views that the teachers have towards teaching idioms with visual aids. However, they are aware that it may not be possible to use this material with all idioms, due to their literal and figurative meanings.

Regarding activities, the teachers suggested several activities on how to include these expressions in the language classroom. Teacher 01 commented the following:

I do not know, maybe make students discuss about the possible meaning of idioms, then explain to them the literal and real meaning. (Extract 19. Teacher 01)

This participant believed that collaborative work would help students to discover the hidden connotation. This can be done by encouraging students to discuss the possible definitions with their classmates. He also considered that showing students the literal and figurative connotations aid them to avoid misunderstandings. Teacher 02 mentioned a different activity:

Maybe role-plays because people tend to practice a lot and they [people] might feel more comfortable using those expressions in real situations. (Extract 20. Teacher 02)

The teacher considered role-plays an appropriate activity so that students can practice idioms. This task will guide students on how to use these expressions correctly depending on the context. Teacher 04 commented the following:

I do not know; this one is kind of difficult [...]. Let me think [...]. Probably like a project or paste some images on the board about different meanings. [...] So, students can match the meaning with the idea, like connecting images with the definition of the idioms. (Extract 21. Teacher 04)

This participant suggested a dynamic activity where students need to match the idiom with its definition. It could be possible to modify this activity by changing the definition for images. In this way students will connect the image with the corresponding expression. Moreover, from the data, it was possible to notice that some teachers had difficulties answering this question. Some hesitated with their responses by starting their

arguments with: “I do not know; this one is kind of difficult” (Teacher 04), and “I do not know, maybe” (Teachers 01). Their answers demonstrated that they might not have a clear idea of what activities can be included to practice idioms in the classroom. This might be due to a lack of practice because they might not include them in their language classroom.

Teacher’s Decision-Making Concerning the Teaching of Idioms

The participants expressed their reasons for including or excluding idioms in their classrooms. First, I start with the teachers’ decision to teach idioms and then the teachers’ decision to not teach idioms.

Even though all the participants acknowledged the benefits of teaching these expressions, only one teacher included idioms in her teaching practice. She explained her reasons for her decision:

This semester, I think it is the second time that I teach idioms. I did it because I think the [text]books are missing a lot of content and sometimes the lessons are boring. For example, with intermediate students there are some things they already saw in basic, so I tried to teach them something new, something that maybe they did not know and that is why I included idioms [...] So, yes, I plan it [teaching idioms] because I think they need to learn [them] and the content of the [text]book is not so good, in my opinion. (Extract 22. Teacher 05)

This instructor decided to include idioms in her language classroom due to the lack of relevant content in the printed material that she had to follow. She plans and adapts several topics or material that will be useful for her students. Although the teachers from the Language Center have the freedom to include extra material, some might not do this due to different reasons. A week after the interview, Teacher 03 sent me the following message:

Thank you. I have not thought about teaching idioms as a topic. I noticed that they are very important. I am planning to teach them [idioms] next semester. (Extract 23. Teacher 03)

Her message raises the possibility that language instructors might need some training to update themselves on this topic. This training would include possible tools and activities using these expressions

Having provided data about why teachers decided to teach idioms, I now turn to the teachers' decisions to not teach idioms. The participants stated that teaching idioms is beneficial for students to improve their communication skills. Although they recognized the benefits of these expressions, the teachers expressed the following reasons as to why they do not include these expressions in their language classrooms:

Because they are not in the [text]book. The [text]book has many lessons that we need to cover, and the semester is short. So, it is hard to include extra topics. Also, there are many lessons that focus only on grammar structures, but not on expressions that people can use in different situations. (Extract 24. Teacher 01)

I do not include them [idioms] as a topic because we do not have them in the [text]book. (Extract 25. Teacher 02)

I do not plan a lesson about idioms because I do not have time to cover and create extra content. (Extract 26. Teacher 04)

These excerpts showed that the main reasons the teachers do not include idioms in their teaching practice are the lack of textbook content and time constraints. It can be implied that teachers must cover all the printed material and that the creation of extra material is perceived as time consuming. These two contextual factors are the main reasons behind teachers' decisions not to teach idioms.

During the interview, the participants stated that these expressions are difficult to understand for students due to their hidden meaning. I asked the participants to comment on the possible challenges they have faced when including idioms in their classroom. They noted the following:

I think that the difficulties [when teaching idioms] happen more often with basic students because they are just learning basic English. So, they [students] are not used to using idioms or different expressions in English. So, it is totally new to them. (Extract 27. Teacher 01)

I have faced some difficulties. The first one is related to students. When I first try to use one idiom, for example, *piece of cake*, my basic students just looked at me and were like: “But why a cake?”, “Are you bringing cake to the classroom?”. I said no, and I had to explain to them what the idiom meant. (Extract 28. Teacher 03)

These two participants commented that it is more challenging to teach idioms to beginning students because they are starting to learn the language. They do not have sufficient knowledge regarding the complexities of English. This finding relates to Cooper’s (1998) idea that some teachers prefer to avoid these expressions due to the possible difficulties that students can encounter while interpreting the connotation. Teacher 03 also commented on an experience she had while trying to use an idiom. It demonstrates that students need to be aware of the existence of these expressions even at beginning levels. Students will start to be familiar with idioms and understand that if they do not understand something, it is probably because it is a cultural expression. This may also motivate them to use idioms and improve their communication skills. Similarly, Teachers 04 and 05 stated the challenges they have encountered:

Students do not understand that some of them [idioms] have different meanings. They struggle a lot to understand that they [idioms] do not carry a literal meaning. They are like: “No, I do not understand why this means something different.” (Extract 29. Teacher 04)

Some idioms are pretty obvious because the idiom is telling you what it means, but sometimes things are not connected at all, and students get confused or have more problems trying to figure out the meaning. (Extract 30. Teacher 05)

These participants explained that transparent idioms (i.e., there is a strong connection between the literal and figurative meanings) are easier for students to comprehend than opaque idioms (i.e., the non-existence connection between the literal and figurative meanings) (Xie, 2017). Students may encounter difficulties trying to decode the hidden connotation of these expressions.

The teachers’ responses showed that the low language proficiency of students is a principal challenge when teaching idioms. They consider that beginning students might not be ready to decode these expressions. Another difficulty is that students feel confused due to the several meanings that idioms can have. This information implies the importance of raising students’ awareness and usage of these idioms. The teachers’ answers showed that for them teaching idioms is more appropriate for intermediate and advanced students due to the complexity of these expressions.

Summary of Findings

The aims of this study were to discover the perceptions of five EFL teachers regarding teaching English idioms, and the possible reasons behind their decisions to include or not to include these expressions in their

language classrooms. This section provides a summary of the findings related to each question.

RQ1: What are the EFL teachers' perceptions of teaching English idioms in a Mexican university?

For this question, the data demonstrated that two of the teachers had problems identifying the definition of idioms. They connected these expressions with acronyms and colloquial language. Once they shared their answers, I explained to them the definition of idioms to clarify what idioms are. After this, all the teachers perceived idioms as important for students to learn due to their high frequency in discourse. The participants recognized several learning benefits. First, idioms help students to improve their communication skills. If they understand and know how to use idioms, they will have the opportunity to participate in different sociocultural contexts. One teacher stated that by using these expressions, students develop their fluency because they will sound more natural. Another benefit is that if students understand and are familiar with idioms, they will express their ideas clearly and understand what is being communicated.

Moreover, the participants commented on different teaching strategies and material for idioms. First, all the teachers agreed that it is not possible to teach idioms in isolation. These expressions should be included within a context because students will understand how and where to use idioms depending on the situation, as well as the level of formality. Second, the implementation of visual aids engages students and is easier for students to identify the hidden meaning. Finally, the teachers perceived role-plays and mechanical activities of matching the meaning with the idiom as appropriate activities for teaching idioms in the classrooms.

RQ2: What are the factors that influence the EFL teachers' decisions to teach or not to teach idioms?

Regarding this question, one reason for teachers not to include idioms in their teaching is due to their lack of knowledge. The evidence suggested that three participants had a general idea of these expressions. However, two connected idioms with colloquial language such as *OMG* and *What's up*. It is necessary to mention that the five teachers have a BA in ELT from the same institute. This demonstrated that even when they received the same EFL training, the understanding of idioms differs among the in-service teachers. The erroneous idea of the teachers regarding what idioms are could influence students' learning process. This finding highlights the need to encourage teachers to include idioms in the EFL classroom and to receive training on how to incorporate the expressions into their teaching practices.

Even though all the teachers agreed on the benefits of teaching idioms, only one teacher claimed to include them in her teaching. She perceived the content of the textbook as repetitive, and she tries to incorporate extra material that is beneficial for students. Moreover, Teacher 03 stated that the interview helped her notice that teaching idioms has several benefits. She also commented that she plans to include these expressions in her classes in the future. These data demonstrate the importance of raising awareness of idioms as well as their benefits.

Another reason as to why the teachers do not include idioms is because the expressions are not in the textbook. This result demonstrates that even when instructors have the freedom to include extra material, they prefer not to do it. Some perceive this planning of new material as time-consuming, and they also commented they do not have time to cover extra content.

Finally, the teachers stated that idioms are complex expressions to teach due to their hidden connotations. Teaching these expressions to beginner students is more difficult, due to their low English proficiency. This finding showed that English teachers need to be motivated to include idioms depending on the students' proficiency level.

Based upon the above findings, the pedagogical implication is to develop a workshop to raise teachers' awareness regarding how to teach

idioms and the benefits of including them to improve students' communication skills. Some aspects that could be necessary to include are the following: 1) the definition of idioms; 2) the types of these expressions; 3) the importance; 4) the possible challenges and how to overcome them; and 5) techniques/strategies to teach them. Someone who is knowledgeable in the area can guide teachers through this workshop as to how they can incorporate idioms in their teaching. If teachers are familiar with the benefits and strategies of idioms, they might try to implement them by having all the necessary tools and knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

This investigation shed light on the perceptions of EFL Mexican teachers regarding teaching English idioms. It also demonstrated that having a BA degree does not always mean that they understand idiomatic expressions. This reveals the importance of being always updated regarding the teaching content. The findings showed the following factors why teachers did not include idiomatic expressions in their professional practice: 1) the lack of content in the textbook; 2) time constraints; 3) teachers' lack of knowledge; and 4) the difficulty of idioms because of their hidden meaning. This study also demonstrated that due to the scarce research in this area, more research is needed because even when idioms are frequent expressions in discourse, they have not received sufficient attention. This gap may be a reason to motivate teachers to include these expressions in their teaching practice and raise students' awareness regarding the existence of idioms. Finally, English teachers need to help students to develop several skills to succeed in the real world by using idiomatic expressions.

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CHAPTER 2

ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO: TEACHER TALES ABOUT IDENTITY IN AN EVOLVING PROFESSION

Amanda K. Wilson

Introduction

Now recognized as an international language, English has become an important ingredient for success in a global economy, and recognizing this, the Mexican government has promoted the study of English in public schools. Moreover, Mexican students have taken advantage of their opportunities to study English to increase their job prospects in the global economy. The forces generated by this reality have caused an evolution in English language teaching (ELT) in Mexico. ELT is used here to refer to both teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL).

This chapter explores the effect this evolution has had on teacher professional identity formation at a public university in central Mexico. Through narrative inquiry, the experiences of five English language teachers with teaching experience ranging from a beginner to twenty-three years are viewed from a sociocultural perspective. A Vygotskian view that “it is through others that we develop into ourselves” (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 161) supports the theory that teacher experiences are part of what shape their professional identity formation, as identity formation is defined by both the personal and the contextual. Within this framework, I examine theory related to identity including teacher professional identity formation, teacher socialization, and the issue of the marginalization of English language teaching and teachers.

Literature Review

In recognizing that teachers’ experiences help shape their professional identity formation, this research adopts a sociocultural perspective. Sociocultural theory places emphasis on the role our external world plays and its impact on the development of our internal self. As Daniels et al. (2007) describe, “Development takes place, both inside and outside the skin” (p. 281). Vygotsky (1994) used the Russian term *perezhivanie* to acknowledge the individuality of experience: “[T]he same environmental

situation and the same environmental events can influence various people's development in different ways" as we each "[experience] the situation in a different way" (p. 341). Both the individual and the contextual are therefore necessary to understand teacher professional identity formation. A central element of Vygotskian theory is the recognition that for the individual teacher, identity is not static but continuously evolving (Golombek & Klager, 2015). Identity changes as the internal self grows and develops, the internalization of external forces in turn triggers changes in identity, and the cycle continues to evolve. Because of the interplay of the individual and the contextual, I view this process as a fabric of interwoven threads which support teacher professional identity formation.

Teacher Professional Identity Formation

Teacher identity is recognized as fundamental in studying language teaching and understanding how teachers teach (Korthagen, 2004). Varghese et al. (2005) explain that:

[I]n order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them. (p. 22)

Beijaard et al. (2004) identify 1988–2000 as the “period that teachers’ professional identity emerged as a research area” (p. 108), making this a relatively recent area of study.

Teacher professional identity formation is an ongoing and complex process, shaped by personal aspects, or our personal beliefs, values, and history, as well as contextual influences, our environment, and experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Clandinin et al., 2006; Day, 2007; Johnston, 2003; Vygotsky, 1981). Identity, or the way we see ourselves, on the surface ap-

pears to be a simple concept to define. It does not require much digging, however, to discover that this apparently simple idea of self-perception is in fact complex. That complexity stems in part from the process inherent in identity development as it is on-going throughout one's life (Beijaard et al., 2004; Johnston, 2003; Norton Peirce, 1995). The highly individual nature of identity further complicates its study. Identity is enmeshed with the personal, our beliefs, values, and history, all of which continuously change and develop. Identity is therefore unique and individual, something personal to each of us, and constantly changing and evolving.

The personal aspect is only one facet of identity formation as identity does not exist in a vacuum. Identity is also a function of environment and experience within that environment, of "landscapes past and present" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 9). In recognizing the importance of context, Norton Peirce (1995) describes identity as "conceived of as both subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community, and society" (p. 15). As identity derives from both personal and contextual influences, the personal comes into play once again as it shapes how context affects identity, as seen through the concept of *perezhivanie*. Although our context may be shared by others, our response is highly individual. Day (2007) describes this "interplay between the private and public, the personal and professional lives of teachers" (p. 603) as central to understanding identity development. How we calculate or gauge identity within a particular context is influenced by how we individually view and react to our environment.

Teacher Socialization

The contextual aspect of teacher identity formation is found in our teaching environment. A teacher's context has been found to be greatly influential, perhaps even more so than in other professions. In reporting on ESL teachers in the United States, Edstam (2001) notes that "where they work, who they work with, who they teach, and what they teach" (p. 213) affect teach-

ers' sense of identity. A teacher's context is directly linked to the community of teachers. According to Beijaard et al. (2004), teacher socialization into that community and their "developing notions of the professional community" (p. 115) greatly influence teacher identity. Teacher identity may be seen to shift from "I teach" to "I am a teacher." The shift to this broader view occurs as the teacher's focus evolves to his or her membership and role within the community of teachers. As "the self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 114), identity is therefore both relative to and related to the teaching community.

The teaching context consists not only of what happens inside the classroom and school, but outside as well. Teacher identity then is also "shaped by the traditions of the school where the teacher works and... the broader social, cultural, and historical context within which the stories are lived out" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 121). Expectations about what a teacher is, how a teacher should act, and what a teacher should know are potentially potent forces coming from outside the classroom that also influence teacher identity formation.

Marginalization of English Language Teaching and Teachers

Societal perceptions about teaching and teachers are recognized to be significant contextual factors affecting identity formation. In a study regarding the teaching profession, Cohen and Scheer (2013) describe, "Low pay and low status [are] timeless characteristics of the profession" (p. 3). Within the teaching profession, English language teaching apparently inhabits an even lower rung on the profession ladder. A teacher professional organization reports that "the ESL teacher is lower in status than the content-area teacher" (Staehr Fenner, 2013, p. 7). The prevalence of marginalization in language teaching has been similarly noted by Johnston (2003), who also found it affects "questions of identity" (p. 106). Such judgments about English language teaching and teachers are key to understanding how contextual factors affect identity.

The phenomenon of marginalization of English language teaching and teachers appears to be widespread, as described in previous studies in Australia (McKnight, 1992), Canada (Breshears, 2004), Poland (Johnston, 1999), and South Korea (Overbeek, 2014). In studies specific to Mexico, English language teaching appears to be on the very margins of teaching. Hubbard (1995) describes English language university teachers to be considered “low-level workers, who can easily be replaced and are therefore of no consequence” (p. 14). Farmer et al. (2012) also note a “low level of recognition of ELT practitioners within their universities and at [a] national level” (p. 63). Davies (2009) recognizes a general perception that English is not important for the professional success of most Mexican students. As Mora Vazquez et al. (2013) explain, this low status is especially true for English teaching, as it is both “undervalued and marginalized” (p. 1) within the general teaching community. Students see this and are aware of the problems their teachers face. They recognize that teachers are generally not well respected in their communities, and English teachers even less so. The effect on teacher identity from this low opinion of English teaching and teachers is predictable: a poor self-image and feelings of inferiority.

Compounding the effect of societal judgments about English language teaching and teachers, research has shown that low self-confidence particularly plagues teachers who “fall into the job” as they do not “[consider] themselves qualified to teach” (Lengeling, 2007, p. 95). In such circumstances, this “unfledged entry” into teaching described by Lengeling (2007) leads to feelings of incompetence, which may also affect the teacher’s developing identity unless and until something changes in either their personal or contextual self. Johnston (2003) identifies a “fundamental tension” (p. 116) between claimed identity and assigned identity. It is easy to see how this tension can lead to self-marginalization, highlighting the importance of both the teaching and societal context in teacher professional identity formation.

Research Methodology

Using a qualitative approach, this study views the narrated stories of five teachers who have been living through an evolution in English teaching in Mexico for almost a quarter of a century. Cross (2010) explains that a qualitative approach “goes beyond a focus on descriptive accounts of how things exist in the present, to, instead, attempting to understand why *that* present has come to exist in the way that it has” (p. 439, emphasis in original). The purpose of a qualitative study, therefore, is in understanding rather than quantifying.

To further this understanding, narrative inquiry was used as a means of examining teacher stories to see how life experiences affect teacher identity. Although a distinction may be made between the terms “story” and “narrative,” I use them interchangeably to mean a recounting of events in an organized manner which leads to an interpretation with some social significance (Squire et al., 2014). The “living and telling, and re-living and re-telling” (Clandinin et al., 2013, p. xv) of stories provide a view of how our life experiences shape us. Further, the process of narrating one’s own story requires people to make meaning of their own lives and experiences (Lengeling et al., 2013). Through this meaning-making process we can see “how personal lives traverse social change” (Squire et al., 2013, p. 4), such as the evolution of English teaching in Mexico. This research offers a snapshot of teachers who have lived that evolution. As our experiences are related to the world around us, this perspective may reveal how individual stories are shaped by the cultural context, what Barkhuizen calls the “bigger story” (Wilson, 2017, p. 5). This methodology is therefore coherent with the Vygotskian perspective taken here as it recognizes the relationship between the personal and the contextual.

The participants’ stories were collected using unstructured interviews which began with one question: How did you get here? To help remove researcher bias and subjectivity in the re-telling of their stories, the process of selecting and re-telling was completed by involving the partici-

pants throughout the process (Ortlipp, 2008). Participants chose their own pseudonyms to provide a sense of anonymity and encourage their openness and honesty. The participants also reviewed the narratives and provided feedback, further encouraging a sense of ownership in the re-telling of their stories. The process of member-checking increased the validity of the narrative data and ensured that their individual voices were captured.

Once the data was collected, I developed two schemes for analysis. The first step involved assigning a data code, pseudonym, and other general information such as years of teaching experience. From this, I created a timeline of major events which provided a visual perspective of the timing of events among the participants, an overall view of the breadth of their experiences, and a visual sense of the range of their teaching experience. The data were then structured into a thematic re-storying system to help identify common themes (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). This process provided consistency in analyzing the data (Dörnyei, 2011).

As the study elicited participants' personal stories, ethical considerations were important aspects of the research. Transparency was provided not only by obtaining permission from the university and the written consent of each of the participants, but by involving the participants in the re-storying of their lived experiences. Their narratives created a tapestry woven from experience, revealing a "bigger story" about teacher professional identity formation.

Data: Participants' Stories

I begin with the participants' stories: Vanessa, the atypical backpacker teacher; Lilly, the nontraditional teacher; Megan, the accidental teacher; Leonor, the proud Mexican teacher; and Yoda, the reluctant teacher. Through re-telling their stories and then viewing their individual experiences together, themes emerge to help illustrate and understand teacher identity formation.

Vanessa, the Atypical Backpacker Teacher

I first arrived here as a tourist. I came here to study Spanish 23 years ago. My plan was just to learn more Spanish and then travel all the way to the tip of Chile. The reason I got my job was the Director at that time came up to me and said, “Do you speak English?”

“Yeah.”

“Are you going to be here next semester?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you want to teach?”

“Yeah.”

I wasn’t a teacher. I never was a teacher. I had never taught. I studied business administration, so I had no teaching background at all. In those days, that was what it was like. There was no question of, “Do you have a teaching certificate?” or “Do you have a bachelor’s?” or “Do you have a master’s?” In the language school at least it was, “Can you speak English?” and “Will you be here?”

I didn’t plan to stay. I really just thought I would see if I liked it. But then I started getting connected with people that live here, and I had a boyfriend, and then I actually really started liking teaching... I had no idea. They handed me a book and said, “Just follow the teacher’s book.”

At first, I felt kind of scared. I thought, “Can I really do this?” I took it really seriously because I thought, “I can’t mess up.” It was pretty grammar oriented then, and I remember one of the coordinators yelled at me, “What are you doing teaching here? It’s not ‘less people’, it’s ‘fewer people!’”

I felt kind of intimidated at first. I’m not dumb, I picked up a grammar book, and I would read stuff and prepare myself, and then I guess I felt like a teacher. People were calling me teacher on the street anyway.

In those days, they would send us to the Best of British Council once a year, either in Mexico City or Guadalajara. They wanted everybody to improve. I don’t think anybody had a degree in teaching. No

one really knew what to do. They wanted us to become educated. I was collaborating with other teachers and going to these conferences because none of the other teachers were really that aware of what should happen in the classroom. I'd hear that so-and-so did something like this, and they had a game... and I thought, "Wow! How did they do that?"

I took all of the classes for a Master's in *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)* at the University of London as a distance program. I finished all of the papers and I got really good grades, and then at the end, I didn't like it anymore. I didn't see the connection between the theory and teaching. I'm more of a practical person. At that time, I was having problems with my boyfriend, so I thought, "I'll just do it later." The more time passed, the less I cared about it.

The people who are studying in the BA program now didn't just fall into it like I did because they're making a decision to study for a long time. You have to have standards and you have to have hiring requirements. Someone can't get hired without certain prerequisites, or background, or whatever you want to call it. If they had had that when I first came here, I wouldn't have been hired!

Lilly, the Nontraditional Teacher

When I was a student in London, I had a Mexican boyfriend. He was doing a doctorate, and when he finished, we came here. My Spanish wasn't very developed at that point. I had studied history and I really wanted to continue, but my Spanish was not good enough to do a master's or anything like that. So, I thought, "Well, I'll teach English for a while until my Spanish improves and then I'll do something in history." But, of course, the rest is history.

That was 22 years ago, and at that time, it was fairly clear that if you had any reasonable general education and you were a native speaker, you could get a job teaching English. Actually, it was hard for me in the beginning. I was kind of a shy personality, and I never had any experience

or any thought towards teaching before, so I was kind of thrown into it without any preparation. I didn't have any idea what I was doing. I think I had been teaching a week, and I thought, "I can't do this!" I remember going to the Language School Director and saying, "I'm just not made to be a teacher!" She took me out for a beer and said, "Hang on. Be patient. Give it some more time." Eventually, I started working at the *Centro de Auto Aprendizaje de Idiomas* (CAADI) as well as teaching. I felt very comfortable there right from the beginning. Some of the same issues that were a problem for me when I first started teaching, the idea of being a controller and all that, never sat very well with me. That was never very comfortable to me. I probably feel the role of teacher less than others because my personality is that way

At the beginning, of course, you depend on the book a lot more because you need some kind of structure or some kind of guide. People were always very supportive and helpful here. At the end and the beginning of the semester, we used to have internal workshops with people who were working here or with visitors. For a long time, it was like that.

There's been a general change in the university and in society, specifically with languages. Languages tended to be sort of sidetracked, but especially in the last ten years, languages have become more and more important in education. In the early years, it was considered kind of an extra. Now, languages have a fundamental role in education. Our status as teachers has changed also. In the early days, the legality of our work situation was kind of rough and ready. People just kind of worked it out any old way. When we first started, we were just thrown into it and probably we weren't great teachers at the beginning. But we worked our way through the process. These days, it's more professional, a lot more organized. I think something has been lost as well as gained. The fact that we came in with world experiences of different kinds brought a lot to our teaching.

I did a distance Master's in TESOL through Canterbury because the university was becoming much more formal. All the universities were,

not just here. Everything is becoming more academic. There are more demands on everybody for formal education and training. I finished all the classes, but I didn't write the thesis. Sad, but I was single by then and had two kids... it was kind of my mistake in a way because it was, in theory, the best time to become more professional and do the master's. But emotionally, I wasn't in a very good place for it. The program was distance and very hands-off in terms of the relationship with the tutors. I kind of hid away too much and wasn't connected enough with Canterbury. I let things go on too long without finishing them up. Even so, I think I learned a lot from it. I really did. I mean, I did all the classes, I finished all the classes, and I did learn a lot.

I never pushed the option of finishing the master's or doing a doctorate and tenure and all that. But in myself personally, I feel like I've worked well with a lot of people in a lot of different circumstances, and I feel like I can do a lot of different things. Personally, I feel like I've done some of the things I wanted to do.

Megan, the Accidental Teacher

When I was a child growing up in rural Mexico, the only option for girls was to be a teacher: The *Normal Superior* for girls, and for boys, it was either become a miner or to go to Texas to work. Because of the place where I lived, teachers had to travel to teach, and it was difficult. We had five different teachers one year, and I thought, "No, I don't want to be a teacher. I don't want to be a teacher!" All my childhood, I felt like, "Teacher? No. Teacher? No, never. Never!"

So, it was an accident that I became a teacher. I was studying business administration and a teacher asked me if I spoke English. I said, "I think so."

She said, "Wouldn't you like to be a teacher?"

I was like, "No! I can't!"

She said, “Yes, if you speak English, you can be a teacher. Go. I already arranged a meeting with the Director. He’s going to wait for you.”

They gave me an exam. But they gave me an exam with the answers, by mistake. So, I started teaching without knowing what I was doing. I started teaching, and I discovered that I liked it a lot. I taught elementary school kids and I felt like, “Well, if I’m going to do this, I need to know what I’m doing.” I found an English teaching certificate, and I took it. Then one day, my father showed me a newspaper ad for a *Diplomado en la Enseñanza del Inglés*. He said, “I think you should take it.” So, I did.

I heard they were looking for a teacher at the university. I met with the coordinators, who had been my teachers in the *Diplomado*, so they knew me, and I started teaching at the university. One of the teachers told me, “Okay, now you should take the *Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English* (COTE).” I was in a position where I thought, “Yeah, I can do it. My kids aren’t babies, and it isn’t every weekend.” It was good because I didn’t have to pay. It was part of teaching at the university. When I finished the COTE, I applied for the BA in ELT at the university. I really don’t know why I did it, and right now, I don’t know how I did it because it was every Friday and Saturday, and I was teaching from 8-12, Monday to Friday. Well, I just did it. When I finished the BA, the Director asked, “What are your plans after this?” I hadn’t been thinking about doing an MA right away, but I thought, “Yeah, let’s do it.” So, then I did the MA here at the university through the University of Auckland. All the major decisions in my life were made by others. I was just like, “Yeah, okay, I’ll do it!”

The term teacher, I have my issues with this word. I think it goes back to when I started teaching because they called me teacher, or in Spanish, *maestra*, and I thought, “No! No soy maestra! I’m not a teacher! I am a liar!” When I was teaching kids, they couldn’t say “teacher,” and so they would call me, “Peacher! Peacher!” I said, “You know what? You can call me Megan.” The word “teacher” sounds like it’s something very strong, I think. When I started teaching, well, it was a fake thing. I wasn’t a teacher. I don’t feel like a teacher. I tell my students, “Call me Megan.

Don't call me teacher." No, I don't see myself as a teacher. I see myself more as a helper, like a facilitator. When I meet people, I say, "I teach English." I never say, "I am an English teacher."

I think most of us started teaching because we knew the language, but without any formal training or anything. It was easier to get a job when I started. I was already working at the university, so I didn't have to pay anything when I started the BA or the Master's. It was easier in all aspects. Now, it has changed. You need to at least have a BA in teaching. Now, if you want to study a PhD or something, it's like, "Do you have tenure? No? Okay, so don't even think about it." Even though I'm thinking about it.

Leonor, the Proud Mexican Teacher

A friend who owned a school needed an English teacher. He asked me if I wanted to teach English, he told me the salary. I said, "Wow, of course!" I didn't think twice, I just said, "Yeah!"

It was a tragic experience because I didn't take many things into account. It was really irresponsible of me to take that position only because I was learning English. There are too many things behind being an English teacher. I basically did it because of the money and it was wrong. I actually suffered a lot because, can you imagine that? All of the sudden to be there? I didn't have any idea. I didn't have any training.

But there were publishers who gave workshops to buy the books and somehow, I went to those training sessions. In those sessions was everything I got. I learned a little bit about the profession. I decided to go observe, to see how kids would react or behave. Using those sessions, helped me to grasp ideas like: Kids learn by moving around. So, I started to build up teacher knowledge, I would say, little by little. I got support from the teachers, and I followed the teacher's book 100%. That was my planning, to follow what it said: "Teacher greets students, then teacher writes on the board..." I followed that at first.

After a year, besides enjoying the pay, I realized I had fallen in love with the job. I had developed some teaching strategies by instinct, but I thought, “Okay. Now I have to be a real teacher, a qualified teacher.” That’s why I studied the BA in ELT. In the BA, I was the best student in my class because I just knew that was what I wanted in life. I was very serious when I started to study the BA. And the next step for me? That was obvious: to study an MA was the logical step. I would like to study a PhD, but right now I have to concentrate on the present, on finishing the MA in Applied Linguistics.

When I started to teach seven years ago, I didn’t even dare say I was a teacher because that was a title I hadn’t obtained at school. I see it with my boyfriend and with some other peers. Sometimes people say, “You can teach just because you speak the language.” That makes sense because in the past, people who spoke the language were considered teachers. So now, are you an English teacher because you speak the language or are you an English teacher because you have a degree?

That is something really important to me because I realized that I was in charge of education in Mexico. I love Mexico, I love being Mexican, and I thought, “I need to be serious.” A profession needs to be respected. I fulfill the standards that I have in my head, like have a degree, be committed to the profession, be prepared in every single class, be on time, keep learning, have a degree, and contribute to education. And I try to portray that in my classroom. Sometimes I don’t do that in every single class, although I try to be prepared, to be professional. By accident or by choice, we teach. And that’s a very humanistic thing.

Yoda, the Reluctant Teacher

When I came to Mexico from Chicago seven years ago, my family here was telling me “You should be an English teacher. Just teach. Just ask somebody to let you borrow a class and show everybody that you can do it. And that’s it. You don’t even need a document that says you know how to teach.”

That wasn't my mindset at that time. I felt that if you're going to teach something, you have to be good at it, and actually have the knowledge and background that supports what you are going to do. And I felt I wasn't ready. I felt like teaching was not my thing, at the time.

I remembered my old teachers, and sometimes I said when I was younger that I never wanted to be a teacher because they are boring. They don't have a life because they're always giving us homework, and they're always wanting to grade, so they don't have a life. I felt teaching was not a well-respected career by the students because my mother is actually a teacher, and growing up, I always heard her problems at school. Her students didn't pay attention, they didn't care, and they wanted the easy way out, for the teachers to give the answers for the tests. And I said, "Why do I want to come home every day with a problem?"

But then I decided to come to this career because I felt I have English, but I need to get polished. I'm trying to be a great teacher; that's why I'm studying. I did not want to start off teaching English just for the hell of it, learning from there. I think teaching is a way of life because you take home all the problems. You take home all the mental problems you've had, all the things you saw in class that you liked or didn't like. You have to bring it home and sometimes you have to talk about it with your girlfriend or whatever person you have next to you. We take it home.

Actually, my plan was to finish my four years in the BA in ELT and then teach. But the BA pushes you to teach. When I started teaching here last semester, I was scared because I felt that I needed the other years to finish a BA in order for me to know everything there is to know about teaching. But I found that was the wrong way of thinking. You are expected to put the theories into practice and learn from the practice, the mistakes, and the adjustments you have to make as a teacher.

I know I don't want to be a teacher forever. My future is a moving future. I don't have something stable. I know I'll get married one day. I know I'll have kids. I'll stay in Mexico. That's what I'm sure about so far. But I don't know what to say regarding my future. Right now, I want to

see what I have to offer here as a teacher, and eventually check what I can do for someone else.

Discussion

The re-living, telling, and re-telling of teachers' stories provides an understanding of how changes in the profession have affected their identity formation. The participants have different backgrounds, different pre-teaching experiences and education, and different levels of teaching experience. Even with such variety in their personal circumstances, some common themes appear to have influenced their identity formation as English teachers: preconceptions about English teaching; falling into the job; and marginalization of English teaching and teachers.

Preconceptions about English Teaching

Although teachers' prior perceptions about teaching have not been the subject of much research in Mexico or elsewhere in the world (Hayes, 2008), this theme emerged as a common thread in this study. The participants' views seem to have developed from their childhood experiences.

As a schoolgirl, Megan had negative feelings about teaching. As she explained, being a teacher was the only option available to girls in the rural Mexican town where she grew up, but she rejected that path for herself: "All my childhood, I felt like, 'Teacher? No. Teacher? No, never. Never. Never!'" Yoda's impressions of teaching stemmed from growing up with a teacher-mother in the United States, as well as observations of his own teachers. He described teachers as "boring" and saw teaching as consuming teachers' lives to the point that "they don't have a life." He also observed that "teaching is not a well-respected career," explaining that he heard from his mother about her problems at school and with her students.

Factors identified by Beijaard et al. (2004), such as childhood experience with teachers and cultural archetypes, appear to have greatly influenced

their feelings about teaching. Both Megan and Yoda recognized the low pay and low status of the teaching profession described by Cohen and Scheer (2013). The contextual influences on identity coming from their communities (Clandinin et al., 2006; Norton Peirce, 1995) colored their feelings about the profession to such an extent that they initially rejected the idea of teaching for themselves. The lack of value placed on teaching appears to be an important idea contained in their narratives and explains their disinterest in entering the profession. As Ripley (2013) observed, because teaching is not valued, it is also not seen as a difficult profession to enter.

Falling into the Job

How teachers enter the profession is another common theme in the data. Historically, a common path of entry for English language teachers in Mexico has been based on ability with the language. This phenomenon of “falling into the job” has meant that “no questions arose as to credentials, teaching experience, or background. The only qualification was to speak the language” (Lengeling, 2007, p. 91). In sharing their stories, the participants in this study share their experiences of becoming English language teachers simply due to their ability to speak the language.

Vanessa’s lived experience was visiting Mexico as a tourist from the US and being invited to teach because she spoke the language. Lilly describes a similar experience when she moved to Mexico from England. For Megan and Leonor, although they are not “native speakers,” it was their ability to use the language that gave them entry into English teaching. They all “fell into the job” without any formal teacher training. Their stories reveal that because of their “unfledged entry” (Lengeling, 2007) into teaching, they suffered. Lortie (2002) identifies the anxiety new teachers face as they begin to teach as “sink or swim” (p. 60). For unfledged teachers, the experience is even more extreme. As Vanessa recounted, once she accepted an English teaching job, she said she felt scared and began wondering if she could really teach. Lilly recalled thinking,

“I can’t do this! I can’t do this!” and Megan said she felt like “a fake” and “a liar” when she started teaching. Her self-perception was that she was not really an English teacher but was just pretending. Similarly, teaching without any prior training or education was a “tragic experience” for Leonor, who described that she “suffered a lot.”

Of the teachers in this study, only Yoda entered the profession as a beginner-teacher while in the process of studying a BA in ELT. Yoda also reported, however, that his family told him that as a native speaker, “You don’t even need a document that says you know how to teach.” It was only Yoda’s personal belief that led him to seek a BA in ELT before beginning to teach English. This belief may have come from growing up with a teacher-mother although he also attributes “a bit of laziness” to his decision to delay entering the working world.

Lortie (2002) recognized that the conditions of entry into teaching are important factors in teacher identity formation. Their unfledged entry into English language teaching left these teachers not only feeling unqualified to teach but caused them to suffer personally.

Marginalization of English Teaching and Teachers

In this study, participants describe a disregard for English language teaching and teachers. Marginalization of English teachers has been identified in Mexico (Davies, 2009; Farmer et al., 2012; Hubbard, 1995; Mora Vazquez et al., 2013) as well as in other parts of the world (Beijaard et al., 2004; Breshears, 2004; Cohen & Scheer, 2013; Day, 2007; Johnston, 1997, 1999, 2003; McKnight, 1992; Overbeek, 2014). In Mexico, this marginalization may be seen as a societal reaction to how teachers have entered the profession based solely on an ability with the language.

Reaching back over 20 years, Lilly described how English teachers’ status was affected by falling into the job. This idea was echoed by Leonor’s experience with people in her social community believing “You can teach just because you speak the language.” Although Yoda heard

the same message when he moved to Mexico from the United States, he had a different preconception of teaching and teachers. Perhaps this was a factor in his decision not to start teaching just because he was a native speaker, but to seek out a BA in ELT first.

Through the years, Lilly has noted a change in the importance of English in education, and a resulting change in the status of English teachers. The societal change Lilly described appears to have motivated the university to encourage its teachers to acquire professional teaching degrees, and later, for the teachers themselves to want to pursue education specific to ELT. Vanessa, Lilly, and Megan all took advantage of educational opportunities offered by the university, while Leonor made an independent commitment to education specific to language teaching. Again, Yoda stands apart as the newest teacher at the university. By the time he began teaching, formal teacher education was recognized to be a requirement, as Vanessa, Lilly, and Megan mention. This was a marked transformation from their entry into the profession

The participants described the world they found when they entered the profession, most with no prior training or education, the evolution in English language teaching they have experienced, and the steps they have taken along their paths in response to those changes. According to Beijard et al. (2004), how teachers view themselves not only within the teaching context, but also within the broader society is integral to how their teacher identity is formed.

English Teacher Identity

From the data, the external factors discussed here appear to have impacted the participants' teacher identity formation. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) recognized, teachers' stories "have functions of self and cultural identity" (pp. 62-63) and help show how context impacts teacher identity formation. In telling their stories, these teachers shared not only what they think about teaching, but about themselves as teachers.

Both Megan and Lilly have rejected what they described as the traditional role of a teacher. As a child, Megan did not want to be a teacher, and mentioned feeling like a “fake” and a “liar” once she started teaching as her entry into the profession was based solely on her ability with the language. Megan explained she was uncomfortable with the very word “teacher” and said she does not want to be called teacher in the classroom. She portrayed herself “more as a helper” and declared, “I never say, ‘I am an English teacher.’” Lilly also recalled her uneasy entry into the teaching profession, and claimed she now rebuffs a traditional teacher role and the idea of “being a controller.” Lilly explained that she prefers to see herself as part of a team, similarly, describing her role as “helping people along.” Both Megan and Lilly fell into the job because of their ability with the language, and after they began teaching, both were encouraged by the university to pursue academic qualifications specific to ELT.

Despite their years of experience and eventual ELT education, the belief that becoming an English teacher was an accident seems to have persisted for both Megan and Lilly. They still balk at identifying as teachers. Megan does not feel part of her teaching community, even though she expressed a desire to find such a community. She failed to socialize into her teaching community and as a result, has rejected forming an identity as a teacher. Lilly similarly has rejected the identity of “teacher” in favor of something she views as less controlling and more cooperative. The teaching context at the time they both entered the profession appears to have had a significant impact on their identity development as English language teachers.

As described by the participants, the English language teaching context in Mexico began to change, and it was during this time that Leonor began teaching. She also fell into the job because of her ability with the language. As with Megan and Lilly, she similarly described her entry into the teaching profession as “tragic.” Leonor saw for herself that education specific to ELT was necessary “to be a real teacher, a qualified teacher.” Even though she then pursued both a BA and MA specific to

language education, and described herself as “committed to the profession,” Leonor continues to struggle with whether she is recognized by society as a teacher simply because she speaks the language. Like Leonor, Yoda entered the teaching profession after educational requirements for English teachers began changing in Mexico. Even though he was told his ability with the language was still all that was required, Yoda resisted starting to teach prior to entering a BA in ELT. As a beginner teacher, he is also currently a BA student, and he admitted that teaching has become “a way of life” for him. His narrative demonstrates that he is still uncertain about his future; however, Yoda has not yet formed an identity as a teacher while he keeps his options open.

These teacher stories reveal how the participants are “being simultaneously shaped by [their] background, experience, and history” (Cross, 2010, p. 440), through this interplay of the personal and the contextual. Understanding their personal histories as well as their context helps explain the complex process of teacher identity formation.

Conclusion

Grounded in sociocultural theory, this has been an exploration into the personal aspect of teacher identity formation juxtaposed with contextual influences on identity during an evolution in English language teaching at a public university in central Mexico. In this chapter, the stories of five English teachers who agreed to re-live and tell, and then re-tell their experiences provided a means of examining their lived experiences. Common threads in the teachers’ narratives reveal preconceptions about English teaching, the phenomenon of falling into the job because of an ability with the English language, societal marginalization of English language teaching and teachers, and how these common threads affected the participants’ teacher identity formation. Their stories depict the world they found when they entered the profession and the changes seen over the course of almost a quarter of a century during an evolution in English language teaching.

The study of teacher identity formation is relatively recent, and much of the prior research has focused on identity formation of student teachers. This traditional model does not address the process for those who enter the profession without any formal training or education, as seen in Mexico where teachers historically have fallen into the job based on their language ability. This study builds on prior research (Lengeling, 2007, 2010) about teacher identity formation. As with other narrative inquiries, the intent was not to provide generalizations but instead “aim for *transferability*” (Johnston, 1997, p. 688, emphasis in original). Perhaps English teachers in other locations may recognize something in what they read here and be able to add to the conversation about teaching and English language teacher identity.

This study has been impacted by two limiting factors: subjectivity in the narratives and breadth of the inquiry. While member checking provided a measure of objectivity in the data, the choice of what to include has likely been marked by my own subjectivity. The data might be made stronger through participant involvement in writing their own stories. A fair sampling of the English teachers at this university was represented, but further research might expand the focus to include teaching institutions, students, and the community. Considering the Vygotskian view of the interplay between the personal and the contextual, a broader inquiry may examine the role teacher identity has in influencing contextual changes in ELT.

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CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING PEER MENTORSHIP IN A MA PROGRAM OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN ELT

Ana María Becerra Reséndiz

Introduction

This research explores peer mentorship through students' perceptions as peer mentors and mentees in the Master of Arts (MA) Program of Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the University of Guanajuato. A peer mentorship project of mentor-mentee dyads was created and implemented to support students during their master's studies. The study focuses on examining the perceptions of the individuals involved in the peer mentoring process. Specifically, it provides insights into the impact that this practice may have on the academic and personal lives of graduate students. Thus, the questions that guided this inquiry were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions regarding peer mentorship of the student peer mentors and mentees of the MA in Applied Linguistics in ELT at the University of Guanajuato?

RQ2: How do these perceptions influence the development of peer mentorship at a graduate level?

In general, research suggests that peer mentorship is a valuable resource for students to progress personally and professionally in higher education (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). Most peer mentoring programs aim for an integral growth of students to navigate the institutional culture, accomplish academic requirements, and improve personal skills. However, further inquiry could inform us how to implement initiatives and improve mentorship according to the individuals involved in this practice. Therefore, this study intends to contribute to the limited research on peer mentoring at a graduate level by giving voice to student mentors and mentees at a master's program in ELT. Although mentorship is frequently employed as a teacher development strategy in training programs (Prudencio & Hernández, 2015), it has yet to be further explored at graduate levels of ELT programs. Since graduate students must be supported in developing personally and professionally, it is necessary to implement peer mentor-

ship due to its advantages for promoting students' academic attainment, professional skills, and personal growth. This study addresses this gap by offering peer mentoring opportunities to graduate students through a project designed and implemented in the MA program.

Literature Review

This section presents a critical review of the concepts relevant for this study. After addressing the concepts of mentorship and peer mentorship, I discuss functions of this practice in higher education. Lastly, a panorama of peer mentoring in Mexico is offered.

Origins and Definition of Mentorship

The moment when mentorship appeared in human history has been traced back to Ancient Greece circa 800 BCE in Homer's poem "The Odyssey" (Allen & Eby, 2007). The poem narrates the time when Odysseus, King of Ithaca, assigned Mentor as a teacher and adviser to look after his son, Telemachus, in his absence. Although the myth serves as an allegorical reference for a developmental and nurturing mentoring process, mentorship has incorporated learning philosophies distinct from the rhetorical understanding of the folk story (Allen & Eby, 2007). According to Garvey (2017), *The Adventures of Telemachus* written by Fénelon is the basis of modern-day mentorship. In Fénelon's narrative, the mentor acts in a generous way and draws on experience to confront issues. The mentored individual is encouraged to learn by observation and reflective discussions of previous events. This portrays contemporary principles of mentorship including fostering self-regulation, learning by experience and challenge, as well as taking on supportive functions embedded in trust and emotional help (Garvey, 2017).

A mentoring relationship typically engages a more experienced individual who is the mentor, in providing vocational guidance and person-

al support to a less experienced person, who is the mentee (Kram, 1985). Research indicates three key features of mentoring in higher education: (1) it is “focused on the growth and accomplishment of an individual, (2) it encompasses career and professional development and psychological support, and (3) it is personal and reciprocal” (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, p. 528). Roberts (2000) considers mentorship as a process which involves teaching, learning, and support, and in which reflection is essential. Thus, mentorship is “a pedagogic relationship, not a ‘managerial’ one dominated by the senior status that a mentor often carries, a distortion that may preclude the mentees’ progress” (Schofield, 2019, p. 24). To advance in the deconstruction of mentorship, Dominguez and Kochan (2020) argue that this practice must serve as a set of developmental networks with equal, and sometimes reciprocal contribution of mentors and mentees. Mentorship should then be embraced as a complex social construct, informed by multiple theories and models.

Definition of Peer Mentorship

Peer mentorship in higher education is defined according to the individuals that participate in it (undergraduate, graduate students and faculty) and their roles and functions. Terrion (2012) points out that peers may be sources of support for the transition of less experienced students into a (new) institutional environment and culture. Peer mentorship focuses on “a more experienced student helping a less experienced student improve overall academic performance, encourages mentors’ personal growth and provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee” (Colvin & Ashman, 2010, p. 122). Egege and Kutieleh (2015) propose that peer mentoring is more than a transition model, but it serves as a support system for the acculturation of incoming students. This implies that the sole purpose of assisting students to become part of the institution’s community is only one part of peer mentorship; its main goal should be fostering an overall development. This practice should promote students’ critical

thinking and self-determination to avoid them navigating higher education without acquiring essential abilities for their lives.

Although mentors are usually regarded as more experienced than mentees, peer mentoring is not a hierarchical relationship since there is not a broad difference in age or expertise among peers (Terrion, 2012). Crisp et al. (2017) argue that peer mentoring relationships are built on equal terms of power provided the mentor and the mentee(s) possess similar roles and expected behaviors within the institutional culture and context. At graduate level, this practice extends its scope of help, guidance, and modeling since students require an advanced mastery of research and professional skills (Betts, 2019). As Carter-Johnson et al. (2013) mention, “The mentor would help the mentee navigate the environment and feel more connected to the graduate program and their peers, two factors that have been identified for student success” (p. 3). Peer mentoring is a process that should challenge students to overcome difficulties while it strengthens their critical attitude towards a discipline or area of study. Thus, this practice should open dialogic spaces and guidance that encourage individuals to reflect on their knowledge and learning.

Functions of Peer Mentorship

Mentoring functions represent the specific actions that can promote an individual's integral growth. Crisp and Cruz (2009) identified four mentoring functions: (1) psychological and emotional support, (2) support for goals and career path, (3) academic subject knowledge, and (4) role modeling. Regarding mentorship at a graduate level, Yob and Crawford (2012) classified mentoring functions such as competence, availability, induction, and challenge into the academic domain. The psychosocial domain encompasses affective functions of mentorship such as personal qualities, communication, and emotional support. Drawing on the above-mentioned, mentoring functions in this study are categorized in three domains: academic support, affective domain, and professional development.

Regarding the academic support, this function builds on Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The theory's central idea is that a more experienced, knowledgeable person can enhance the cognitive development of a less experienced and knowledgeable individual through a scaffolding process. In line with this, Crisp and Cruz's (2009) academic subject knowledge function suggests that a student's learning can be reinforced by a peer. For Yob and Crawford (2012), the academic domain consists of technical and informational functions that foster the mentee's improvement of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This function entails the development of students' knowledge, which can lead to educational achievement (Holt & Lopez, 2014). Thus, peer mentorship can foster specific skills and knowledge that students may not be able to enhance otherwise (Snowden & Halsall, 2019).

The next function is the affective domain. Research shows that fulfilling affective functions may be equally as significant as accomplishing academic functions for an effective mentoring process (Egege & Kutieleh, 2015). According to Yob and Crawford (2012), the affective domain refers to the mentors and mentees' attitudes, qualities and skills in building and sustaining interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the affective domain draws on Bandura's (1982) self-efficacy theory which suggests that when students notice their peers succeed without critical consequences, this can increase (or decrease) their beliefs in achieving a similar outcome (Geesa et al., 2018). This implies that peer mentoring can reinforce students' capacity to endure and cope with emerging obstacles, especially when they experience evident academic and life challenges in graduate education (Lowery et al., 2016; Quinlan, 2019). Thus, opening spaces for dialogue through peer mentorship may help students to overcome challenges and accomplish their goals successfully (Geesa et al., 2018).

The third function is professional development. An outcome of mentorship is for the mentees to gain "career and psychosocial skills and beliefs they need to continue to learn (i.e., be self-regulated learners) outside of mentoring contexts" (Schunk & Mullen, 2013, p. 381). Lowery et

al.'s (2016) research indicates that self-reflection on professional practice may stimulate mentors and mentees' enhancement of knowledge in their field. Mentors' modeling of actions to undertake for their academic or professional development may help the mentees to reflect on their own opportunities to succeed. Moreover, the mentees' self-efficacy levels are positively influenced by a mentor with whom they identify (Lowery et al., 2016). Therefore, matching mentors and mentees with common interests and goals may enhance their motivation, engagement, and achievement in a graduate program (Geesa et al., 2018). Research also suggests that mentoring initiatives can facilitate the bonding of peers by engaging them in the matching process, by opening spaces for meaningful interactions and networking experiences (Geesa et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2016).

Peer Mentorship at Higher Education in Mexico

The efforts to adapt peer mentorship programs to the Mexican context has evidenced the multiple interpretations of this practice. Most universities in Mexico build on student support systems, such as academic tutoring to mitigate dropout rates and low scores (Romo López, 2011). For this purpose, academic tutoring is institutionally implemented across universities in Mexico according to the Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (*Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior*, ANUIES). This system requires teachers to assist undergrad students with academic and administrative requirements, but it may involve emotional support to some extent (Vallejo Carrasco & Croda Borges, 2018). This interplay between tutoring and mentoring lead support programs to be identified as both practices, even when initiatives only focus on academic activities without full awareness of students' professional and personal growth. Current trends which emphasize student-centered approaches to teaching and learning adopted in higher education align with peer mentorship's aim of promoting students' integral development (López López et al., 2019). Based on this,

student-to-student support systems have been gradually recognized as mentoring. However, peer mentorship programs at the graduate level are areas to be explored and offered more in Mexico. These programs could complement teacher tutoring and thesis supervision.

Research Methodology

This section presents an overview of the methodological approach for conducting this research. It begins with an outline of the paradigm and method that supported the inquiry process. I also provide details of the context, participants, data collection techniques, and phases of the project. Lastly, a description of the data analysis procedures and ethical considerations is offered.

Research Paradigm and Method

Qualitative research is an attempt to make sense of the world from the meaning that people confer to it (Holliday, 2007). Following a qualitative paradigm, this study aimed at providing an in-depth comprehension of the participants' perceptions regarding peer mentorship rather than measuring the data gathered. Qualitative inquiries are also characterized by its flexibility, its focus on social settings, and the recognition of multiple views of the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This paradigm allows the researcher to discover unexpected themes in the interpretations of personal views. The researcher must then understand that the participants have different realities based on their interpretations, which can be attributed to varied meanings as well. Thus, this study offered insights from a qualitative paradigm of how the student mentors and mentees constructed their understanding of peer mentorship.

Phenomenology is the study of the lived experiences of individuals, as it intends to describe how people make meaning of a concept or phenomenon, and what is shared as a common meaning (Van Manen, 2007).

Phenomenological inquiries are not only descriptions but interpretations of what and how participants have experienced an event, a phenomenon or an issue which is of interest. Thus, phenomenology as a research method facilitated the comprehension of experiences constructed within the interaction of the student mentors and mentees during this project. Nevertheless, Van Manen (2007) argues that the analysis of the participants' experiences is influenced by the researcher's cognition. This implies that the accounts of the mentors and mentees in this study may represent what and how they make meaning of the various events throughout the mentoring process. This allowed me to find common understandings of this practice at graduate level.

Context and Participants

The research was conducted in the Master's Program of Applied Linguistics in ELT at the University of Guanajuato. The program is recognized by the National Committee of Science and Technology (*Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, CONACyT) for its high-quality. Thus, the setting was selected due to its academic prestige, rigor, and the adequate population of graduate students. Moreover, the program implements teacher tutoring and thesis supervision as student support systems. This context was then suitable to plan and implement the student-to-student mentoring project. Moreover, as a member of this community, I was granted access to the setting, the students, and other stakeholders who facilitated the elaboration and completion of this project. The participating students were purposefully selected as reliable informants of peer mentorship in graduate education. They were a total of eight MA students assigned into mentor-mentee dyads. The mentors were four third-semester students, whereas the mentees were four first-semester students. Three out of four mentees were six to ten years older than the mentors and two had circa five years of teaching experience over their mentors. All participants reported they had not been previously enrolled in a formal mentorship program.

Data Collection Techniques

The data for this study were gathered through questionnaires, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews. These qualitative techniques allow for flexibility when more data are required for the analysis or if the data lead to issues that the researcher had not contemplated before (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The techniques for data collection will be outlined individually.

In qualitative research, questionnaires are a set of questions or other types of prompts that aim to collect information from a respondent (Cohen et al., 2000). This technique offers the advantage of quick and concise responses which can lead to the elaboration of additional methods of data collection. Questionnaires are appropriate when the research seeks to comprehend social phenomena in specific settings, such as communities or institutions (Cohen et al., 2000). In this study, the data obtained from questionnaires allowed me to better understand the profiles of the participants. I compared these details to identify what the students had in common to match the peers accordingly. The data obtained from questionnaires, particularly information about the students' research interests and preferred time for mentoring meetings, facilitated the process of assigning the participants into mentor-mentee dyads.

The use of journals in social science research has a long history in the development of in-depth understandings of people's behaviors, experiences, attitudes, and even routine actions (Sheble & Wildemuth, 2009). A journal is a "document created by an individual who has maintained a regular, personal and contemporaneous record" (Alaszewski, 2006, p. 1). These records can include commentaries and personal feelings. The reflective journals in this study consisted of a series of written accounts by the mentees, which also prompted their reflection towards their experience with peer mentorship during the project. Alaszewski (2006) argues that journals can broaden the understanding of how individuals interpret situations and the meaning they attribute to actions or events which may appear different to others. Thus, gathering the participants' journals

was significantly useful to attain a comprehensive interpretation of peer mentorship. As Sheble and Wildemuth (2009) suggest, the mentees were offered some guidelines for journal writing to ensure that sufficient and systematic data were obtained. Nevertheless, they were also encouraged to write anything they found worth mentioning. Eventually, follow-up questions via email and during the interviews allowed the students to elaborate on their ideas.

Interviews facilitate the gathering of data in narratives that enable the researcher to gain individuals' insights. Specifically, semi-structured interviews are described as "less formal interviews in which the interviewer is free to modify the sequence of questions, change the wording, explain them or add to them" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 268). In this study, semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather the participants' perceptions more extensively due to the flexible interaction this technique enables. Since the researcher may examine and clarify the responses from the participants, this type of interview produces quality data, but it requires a high level of preparation, analysis, and interpretation (Kvale, 2011). Piloting techniques served to rephrase questions and to enhance the interviewing skills needed to establish rapport with the interviewees. The interview guides consisted of nine open-ended questions and follow-ups that were checked by qualified professors before they were piloted with three MA students not participating in the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eight participants via Zoom and lasted from forty to sixty minutes each. They were transcribed on Otter software (<https://otter.ai/>) and revised multiple times to ensure their accuracy.

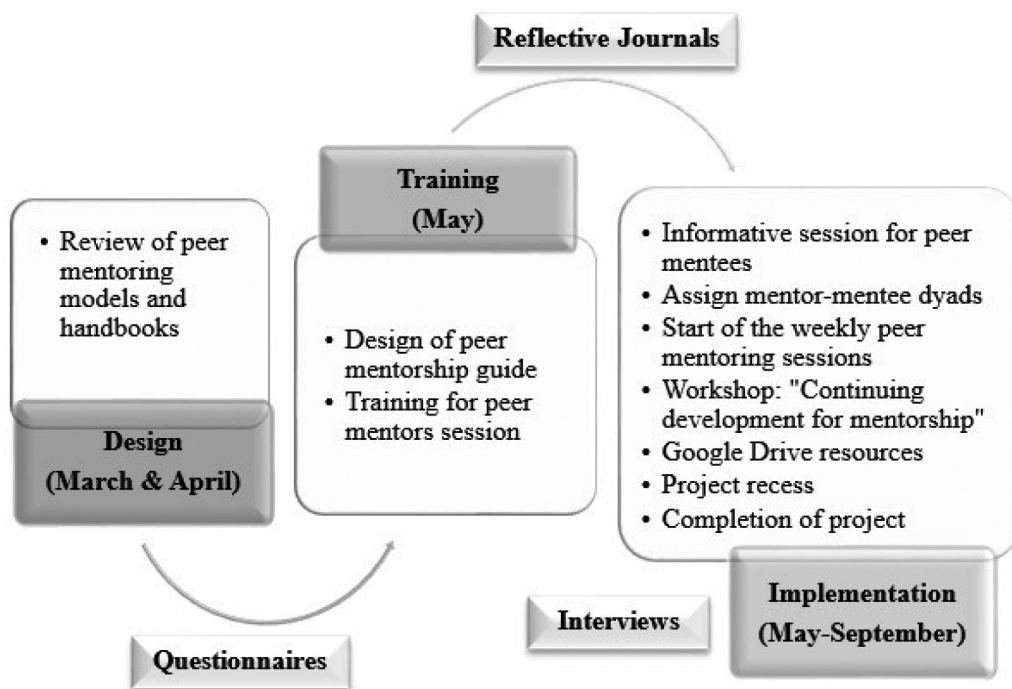
Programing of the Mentoring Project

The peer mentoring project consisted of twelve weekly mentor-mentee online sessions from May to September of 2020. As part of the research process, this project was designed and implemented in three phases (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 illustrates the interplay between the phases of the peer mentoring project and the data collection techniques of this study. First, information from the questionnaires facilitated the mentor-mentee matching process. The second phase consisted of training the mentors. In the last phase, the reflective journals were gathered from the mentees until the sessions were completed. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the final weeks of the project.

Figure 1

Phases of the Peer Mentorship Project



Note. Created by author.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were labeled with codes that facilitated the comparison and location of themes to their correspondent sources. These labels identified the technique, the participants' pseudonyms, and numbers for questionnaire items or journal entries. For instance, the code I-MentorAria refers to the interview with the peer mentor Aria, and JErinE1 is the first entry of Erin's journal. Regarding the processing, the data were transferred into the MAXQDA software and analyzed following the thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2012). First, patterns were identified across the dataset and then initial codes were generated and compared through the entire dataset. Once meaning patterns were categorized, themes were defined and reviewed to verify correspondence to the research questions. This iterative process of analysis aimed at ensuring that the data were systematically analyzed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are required in any study since they “advise researchers to proceed ethically without threatening the validity of the research endeavor in so far as it is possible to do so” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 49). For this purpose, a research information letter handed to the MA coordinator ensured access to the research site. Consent forms served to inform participants of the study and to ask for permission to use the information they provided. Confidentiality was assured, but complete anonymity was not possible since the students took part in the peer mentoring project (Cohen et al., 2000). The project was conducted at the MA program in which I was a member of the same community as the participants; hence, it was necessary to protect the identification of the participants. Pseudonyms were utilized to protect their identities as well as other program members which could be recognized in the data.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the discussion of the data obtained from the questionnaires, the reflective journals, and the semi-structured interviews. Two themes that emerged from the data analysis and interpretation process are presented below.

Benefits of Peer Mentorship at Graduate Level

Drawing on the mentoring functions (i.e., academic, career-related, and psychosocial), benefits perceived by the peer mentors and mentees were identified in three categories: academic support, affective domain, and professional development.

Regarding academic support, the mentors and mentees reported benefits of interacting with each other which are associated with learning, skills development, and acquisition of knowledge. Although mentors are not excluded from receiving academic support, the research data showed this function mainly favored the mentees. The following excerpts illustrate advantages regarding the MA assignments and academic writing that two mentees identified:

This was a productive session because we discussed the challenges when writing articles and the opportunities to publish them. I think writing is a complex process. Sometimes, I feel overwhelmed because it is not easy to organize my ideas. [...] We discussed the use of APA, and my mentor sent me some articles that will help me to improve. (J-MenteeMarinE3)

One of the first topics we addressed was how to write a reaction paper because I didn't understand it [...] it was helpful because I didn't know what the teachers were asking for. She gave me a lot of details. I wrote them down and I was able to write my reaction paper according to the specifications of the teachers. (I-MenteeLoren)

The above quotes indicate that the mentees characterize this academic support as a benefit of peer mentoring, even though the project was not solely focused on the MA tasks. According to the participants, this type of assistance is helpful for writing assignments, articles, and even the thesis. This implies that apart from teachers and advisors, peers can be a resource for the academic development of graduate students. Peer mentors not only share what they know about accomplishing assignments, they guide mentees on the demanding task of academic writing, as Marin states. Overall, the participants acknowledge that their academic abilities are enhanced when they work with their peers.

Additionally, all the mentees recorded in their reflective journals advantages of their peer interaction for research processes. Two mentees narrate this as follows:

I told her I have been frustrated because I do not think my topic is interesting. She said she went through the same. That I should not worry because it is normal, but that I need to focus my attention on what I really want to obtain from the thesis project. She even gave me some ideas as to change the direction of the project. [...] This second session made me consider my research and how to go about to obtain better results! (J-MenteeLorenE2)

I could consolidate the idea of my project and how I can improve the questions. Now, I know what needs to be improved and I could have a double check from a peer. (J-MenteeAliE4)

Loren and Ali's narratives reveal that mentees can take advantage of the meetings with their mentors to assess new options on how to conduct their research projects. The data corroborated that graduate mentoring focuses on the development of research knowledge and skills, ethical behaviors, and self-efficacy (Quinlan et al., 2019). These academic functions were significantly helpful for the participating mentees because they had

the opportunity to receive suggestions on the research questions and methodology at the data collection stage of their studies. In sum, the students acknowledge that peer mentorship helped them to improve their knowledge of the research process, clarify their doubts about assignments, and work on their writing skills.

Another advantage of student-to-student mentoring is concerned with the affective domain: psychological, social, and even emotional help. Regarding these functions, all the participants expressed feeling mutual and emotional support during the interactions with their peers. Two mentees refer to this other domain of mentoring:

I remember once I was, I wouldn't say depressed, but I was very sad. In that session, we talked about my situation: What I was feeling at that moment. That was special because I don't know Neri face-to-face. I had the chance to share with someone I didn't know in person, and she cared about what was happening to me. That created a link, and it was in a few sessions. (I-MenteeAli)

When you share these things that happen in your normal life, that is not academic. You know you're not by yourself. You think you are the only one who is having this trouble and no, there are more people. That is a relief. [...] she was probably facing something similar. When we shared our ideas or even how I felt, that made me feel we are okay. (I-MenteeErin)

The mentees comment that they also addressed their personal concerns during the interactions with their peers. It seems that sharing their emotions with their peers makes students feel supported, especially in deeply sensitive instances as Ali expresses. The above excerpts unveil that functions of the affective domain emerge throughout the peer mentoring process, and that they might co-occur with academic functions. For instance, Erin describes finding some comfort after acknowledging her

mentor and other peers face similar difficulties. This discloses that students in peer mentoring relationships feel accompanied in their journey. Undoubtedly, the struggles of the students' personal lives are part of their growth as graduate students (Quinlan et al., 2019). Regarding this, the literature indicates that peer mentoring is likely to afford students with some affective support which balances both their academic and professional development (Egege & Kutieleh, 2015; Holt & Lopez, 2014).

Another advantage of peer mentorship is enhancing students' sense of confidence. For Marin, a mentee, the sessions increased her self-reliance on publishing and researching:

Now I feel more confident about conducting my research and the possibility of publishing an article in the future. I feel more confident about it because previously I thought that was going to be impossible but now, I know that it is possible. I can do it. (I-MenteeMarin)

All mentees acknowledged that interacting with their mentors stimulated their self-confidence. Noticing their peers were able to overcome their doubts and insecurities prompted their feelings of confidence in their abilities. This implies that identifying the actions and behaviors their peers undertake to cope with the high demands of researching and publishing can impact the perceived self-efficacy of graduate students. In other words, by emphasizing that graduate programs demand hard work, students can be reassured that it is possible to achieve the program's objectives. Perceived self-efficacy appears to enhance graduate students' confidence in their abilities to accomplish both academic and professional goals, especially if the reinforcement comes from a peer (Geesa et al., 2018).

The participating students also perceived as beneficial that the interactions with their peers prompted their reflection on their progress throughout the MA. Loren, a mentee, narrates her insightful experience:

She asked me if I considered there are some areas of opportunity I can improve. It was nice because it got me thinking and I discovered that during this first semester, I did the best I could. However, I also realized that there are some issues I need to start working on, for example, tolerance and patience, and sometimes I get really stressed. (J-MenteeLorenE3)

Loren explains that through the interactions with her mentor, she was able to carefully assess her accomplishments and areas of improvement. The excerpt discloses that throughout recurrent meetings mentees can be encouraged to reflect on their development in a graduate program. As Schunk and Mullen (2013) point out, mentors and mentees might improve their self-regulated and self-determined skills through the mentorship process. This implies that individuals engaged in peer mentoring relationships are likely to reinforce their abilities to manage their own development and emotions as well as to make choices according to the demands of a specific task or aim.

Additionally, the interaction with their peers promoted the mentors' reflection on their actions and behaviors. Neri, a mentor, explains her self-reflection process:

For me, it was first a self-reflection activity. I needed to think about my own experience and from there take the good and bad to give Ali an overview of what I've been through. In that sense, it was an opportunity to reflect on the process I've been through in the masters. [...] When I was thinking how to help Ali, giving him resources or tips, I had to make a self-reflection of what I have learned. (I-MentorNeri)

Neri mentions that the mentoring practice engaged her in reflecting on her endeavors to expand her knowledge and skills throughout the MA. The peer mentor acknowledges that the sessions required her to think

of her actions and past experiences before she could provide any suggestions to the mentee. It can be inferred that this type of awareness leads peers to provide psychological, social, and even emotional help which are components of the affective domain. Especially, mentors could reassure their peers that despite the high demands at graduate level, it is possible to attain a graduate program's objectives as well as their own academic and professional goals.

Concerning the function of professional development, the mentors as well as the mentees expressed feeling particularly encouraged to pursue goals related to their profession if they are equivalent to those of their peers. The next excerpt shows a mentee's perspective of these aspirations:

After the MA, we plan to apply for a PhD and to work as teachers while we wait for a place in a university. We want to investigate the diverse opportunities we have to continue with our professional teacher development. [...] It is relevant to ask for advice to continue with the next steps and make the best decision for us. (J-MenteeMarinE12)

Marin comments on how peers can be valuable sources of information about potential opportunities to advance in the academic profession, either as university professors or potential doctorate students. The above indicates that functions of guidance and sponsorship within the mentoring practice motivate students to seek for options which promote their professional development (Lowery et al., 2016). Even though students may not hold the same aspirations and viewpoints, peer mentoring allows them to assess work-related options that they might not even have conceived before their peer interactions. The next quote illustrates one mentor's perception on continuous training and education:

We said that we don't want to become these researchers who only sit in their office. They don't know anything about the real world.

They only write articles and get money. We want to keep improving our skills. [...] When we finish our master's, we would like to keep on teacher training and to apply for a PhD. I think we have similar goals in that sense. (I-MentorNeri)

In the excerpt above, Neri comments on her and her mentee's plans to progress as teachers and researchers. They both envision themselves continuing their education on language teaching and studying for a PhD degree in that field. On another note, the students learned from their peers' teaching experiences while they also explored diverse areas of knowledge in applied linguistics and language teaching. The following comment from a mentor illustrates the latter:

It is good to force myself to acquire knowledge. Sometimes we tend to be stuck in a line of research and to be narrow minded like "I like this and I'm just going to focus exclusively on this area." I think there is an opportunity to grow as a person and as a professional. (I-MentorRobin)

Robin states that making the effort to know more about other areas which are not her usual interests represents an opportunity for her personal and professional development. She argues that when individuals focus on a specific area, they tend to dismiss other forms of extending their knowledge from varied areas of study and research fields. All the above indicates that graduate students are likely to acquire broader knowledge, advance in their career goals, or enter academia whilst they are engaged in mentoring interactions with their peers (Geesa et al., 2018).

Several benefits of peer mentoring were identified by the mentors and mentees in three domains: academic, affective, and professional. The graduate students were able to enhance their writing and research skills. Moreover, emotional support and self-reflection were fostered throughout the mentoring process. Students were also encouraged by their peers

to continue their education and teacher training. All the above reveals that peer mentoring helps students grow as overall human beings and not only for the academic part of education.

Challenges of Peer Mentorship at Graduate Level

Since peer mentorship may not always be a successful process, there are practical considerations that should be assessed regarding this practice at graduate level. Two main limitations of peer mentoring identified by the mentors and mentees are discussed: The insecurity to fulfill their roles as mentors and mentees, and the pressure peers face to establish rapport.

At some point of the mentoring process, the students found themselves uncertain about the adequacy of their abilities to enact their roles as mentors and mentees. The following quote exemplifies these feelings of insecurity from the mentees' side:

I think we always have an idea of what mentorship is and how it should be done. But when you are involved in the process, you realize that is quite different. There are many things to take into consideration and goals are very important. I thought I knew how this works. But then, "What am I supposed to do here? Should I tell her about myself or is she going to ask me something?" (I-MenteeAli)

Ali explains that he was not able to experience the intricacies surrounding mentorship until he was actually engaged in the project. The mentee also mentions that he felt hesitant about what he was expected to do and how he should approach his mentor during their interactions. This indicates that peers feel uneasy when they cannot make sense of their own role and their peer's role (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). A reason for this is that students may have a role that is new to them. Since they appeared to be out of their comfort zone, they are likely to feel insecure about what to do and how to behave as they interact with their peers (Geesa et al., 2018).

Even when students think they are prepared for the mentoring process, they acknowledge it is not enough to be confident in their role. A mentee comments on these self-doubt thoughts:

I was more into what kind of questions I could ask because I read. But it could have been better to know, “This is what you’re going to do” and “This is what you will be able to do”. [...] I didn’t know if I was doing it okay. I didn’t know if my classmates were doing something similar. (I-MenteeLoren)

Loren’s comment shows that even when she was prepared for exchanging ideas with her mentor, she was still insecure about her performance as a mentee. She recommends that expected tasks and objectives of peers should be specified in mentoring training. This reveals that students need to be guided in what they can accomplish during and beyond peer mentorship. According to Mullen and Klimaitis (2019), mentees are more productive and feel empowered when they notice they achieve their goals while they adjust to the institutional objectives and culture. The next quote illustrates the mentor’s perspective regarding self-assurance:

At the beginning I had this lack of confidence. I didn’t know if my experience or my knowledge was going to be sufficient to help others. But after the workshops, my confidence definitely increased. I knew how to plan my meetings with my mentee. [...] Overall, I was gaining confidence but there’s still space for improvement. (I-MentorZuri)

Zuri’s response shows that although students are self-conscious of their abilities and knowledge, they may still hesitate on their qualities and skills to mentor peers. It seems that peers’ reactions of self-doubt influence the mentorship process. As students build their confidence in their abilities, they can manage their own and their peer’s actions and behaviors within

the mentorship. As Holt and Lopez (2014) argue, how students develop their mentoring meetings varies according to their expectations not only of the mentorship outcomes, but of their own roles as well as those of their peers. The above unveils that how students interact with their peers is shaped by their expectations and their perceptions construed within their peer mentoring experiences.

Furthermore, the mentors expressed feelings of insecurity when not knowing how to respond to their peers' doubts or concerns. Neri explains her reaction to this incident:

Sometimes that unexpected information pops out and probably what you were planning, you cannot follow it because of the information you are receiving. You have to find strategies to cope with it. That was a challenge for me; there were a couple of times that I didn't know how to help him or to orient him. (I-MentorNeri)

From the above quote, it can be inferred that Neri was indecisive about how to handle scenarios that differed from those she expected at the beginning of peer mentorship. This indicates that miscommunication can occur when mentors are not able to respond to the mentees' doubts. Therefore, mentors should be reassured that it is acceptable not to be acquainted with some topics their mentees address (Egege & Kutieleh, 2015). Fostering the students' confidence in their roles as mentors and mentees implies that peers should discuss mentoring cases and identify strategies to manage tensions which can emerge within mentorship.

In the mentoring practice, both the peer mentors and mentees also encountered pressure to establish rapport with each other. Robin, a mentor, expresses her concerns about the mentor-mentee interaction:

Even though what we talk about is a mentor-mentee communication, I would feel like maybe I shouldn't or maybe I should [...] you don't want to say something that can impact or change her percep-

tion of things. There are some comments that could be taken or could be interpreted in the wrong way. It gives you anxiety to be careful of the information you're giving to your mentee. (I-MentorRobin).

Robin's feelings of distress about how her comments may hinder her mentee's progress reveal that peer interactions exert some pressure on the mentors to effectively communicate as well as build a trustworthy relationship with their peers. Vallejo Carrasco and Croda Borges (2018) emphasize that mentors' should learn how to handle the mentees' resistance to advice and the possible effect of their guidance since these challenges can affect how they interact with each other. The feeling of pressure to build an adequate mentor-mentee rapport discloses that students need continuous training that help them clarify mentoring roles and manage feelings of insecurity. Peer mentorship will then benefit from solid conceptual and theoretical foundations reinforced by the mentors and mentees' experiences with this practice (Romo López, 2011).

Discussion

The results of the study highlighted multiple benefits and challenges of peer mentorship at the graduate level. The benefits reported by the student mentors and mentees correlated with the functions of academic support, affective domain, and professional development identified in previous research (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Yob & Crawford, 2012). Based on this, the benefits were classified in this study in three main areas: academic support, affective domain, and professional development. The data indicated that the academic support function predominantly favored the mentees, which was supported by ample research on mentoring outcomes (Crisp et al., 2017). Specifically, the mentees acknowledged reinforcing their writing skills by working with the mentors on the organization, style, and format for the thesis and academic articles. This is consistent with the academic subject knowledge function which suggests

that a student's learning can also be reinforced by a peer (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Additionally, mentees benefited from discussing and receiving suggestions on how to formulate research questions and follow specific methodological procedures. All the above revealed that peer mentorship can foster the mentees' improvement of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Yob & Crawford, 2012).

Concerning the affective domain function, mentors and mentees acknowledged they provided mutual emotional support through peer mentorship. The mentees reported that the mentors helped them to increase their self-confidence by reassuring them that it is possible to develop their research abilities and writing skills for publishing articles. Consistent with Geesa et al.'s (2018) study, the findings revealed that peer mentorship can influence graduate students' perceived self-efficacy. This means that students are likely to nurture their peers' confidence in their abilities to accomplish both academic and personal goals (López López et al., 2019). Similar to Holt and Lopez's (2014) study, these findings may reflect that the emphasis on academic or affective domain functions is subject to the mentorship program structure. Therefore, these functions may vary according to the experience students have in a particular program.

Contrary to most mentoring programs that focused on academic requirements (Crisp et al., 2017), this project intended to open dialogic spaces and guidance that encourage students to reflect on their own knowledge and learning (Roberts, 2000). Therefore, both mentors and mentees recognized that their interactions prompted their attention to what and how they learn to advance in their studies. Moreover, the mentors acknowledged they needed to self-reflect on past events and actions to cope with the master's workload before they could offer any suggestions to their mentees. Findings pertaining to the professional development function highlighted that peer mentorship allowed the students to explore areas of research that differed from their usual interests. Consistent with previous studies, mentor-mentee interactions with their peers

appear to broaden students' knowledge and professional goals (Geesa et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the results unveiled that even when peers did not hold the same aspirations and viewpoints, peer mentoring allowed them to assess work-related opportunities that they might have not found otherwise.

The study disclosed some limitations of the mentoring practice at a graduate level. The results indicated that peer mentors and mentees may feel out of their comfort zone, especially if the mentoring role is new to them (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). In line with Vallejo Carrasco and Croda Borges' (2018) study, this lack of confidence prevented mentors from advising their peers on concerns that were unfamiliar to them. This research also disclosed that mentors felt indecisive that their comments could be misinterpreted by their peers, which was not evident in other studies on mentoring at graduate level. All of the above implies that different forms of assistance should be assessed to elaborate mentoring models that adapt to the mentors and mentees involved in this practice.

Regarding implications, the findings revealed that even though peer mentorship has been widely considered a resource for students' professional and personal growth, the perceptions of mentors and mentees can provide a deeper understanding of this practice and its unique features. This study contributes to the limited research on peer mentoring at the graduate level by exploring how this practice can be developed among MA students. The examination of benefits and challenges might illustrate the impact of this practice as a developmental strategy in the graduate context. For graduate levels of ELT programs, the findings revealed that peer mentoring brings other options for student support and contributes to reducing the workload of the teaching staff. The combination of students working together with teachers and peers offers benefits for their transition to other levels of education as well as promoting their overall growth. Forums or discussion panels regarding peer mentorship can help disseminate this practice as a valuable source of support for teachers, students, and study programs alike.

In general, peer mentorship may be needed in the MA program where the study was conducted. This research proposes peer mentoring as a collaborative experience that complements teacher tutoring and thesis supervision. Cooperative work between the coordination and faculty should result in organized initiatives for students to work together on their development as graduates, researchers, and academics. For this purpose, existing conceptual and theoretical models should be thoroughly examined for peer mentoring programs to be properly adapted to the Mexican education system. Peer mentors and mentees should be provided with continuous training during the mentoring process. This research suggests that coordinators, head of departments, and students can work collaboratively to provide students with peer mentoring opportunities which promotes their academic, professional, and personal growth.

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to explore the perceptions regarding peer mentorship of the mentors and mentees of the MA program in Applied Linguistics in ELT. The findings revealed that peers can be influential and, in some cases, as helpful as teachers when addressing the demands and rigors of graduate programs. Thus, the study provided a deeper understanding of peer mentorship in higher education in Mexico. Findings also unveiled that although mentors and mentees can encounter some challenges, peer mentoring offers multiple benefits as a complementary student support system.

A possible limitation of the study was the time constraints to design and implement the peer mentoring project. Additionally, the mentor-mentee sessions had to be adapted to the online modality due to the shift to remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that in-person meetings might yield different results from the findings of this research. Furthermore, gathering the mentors' descriptions and reflections as well could have supplemented the examination of the men-

torship practice. This study also lacks data from other stakeholders, such as the MA coordinator, the faculty, and the Director of the Language Department who could have offered significant information about the program's support environment, and the administrative process for designing and implementing institutional programs. Moreover, a longitudinal study could have offered a comprehensive portrayal of the mentoring process.

Furthermore, more research needs to be conducted to obtain in-depth accounts of all actors involved in the development of higher education, such as professors, administrators, and school leaders. Future studies in this area could include the perceptions of former graduates, which could contribute to the understanding of peer relations at the graduate level and the sources of support they found during their studies. The impact of this practice in graduate education may be assessed by examining the students' progress in terms of scores and completion of requirements. Ethnographic studies can additionally provide methodological models for the systematic implementation of peer mentorship at a graduate level. Therefore, finding effective ways of drawing on mentors and mentees' perceptions to improve the mentoring practice becomes paramount to offer graduate students with valuable opportunities that foster their overall development. To conclude, there is much research on the topic of peer mentorship at the graduate level which can be carried out in the future.

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CHAPTER 4

EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIS MODEL
AND EMI AT A POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY IN CENTRAL
MEXICO: EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH AND EMI FACULTY,
STUDENTS, AND COORDINATORS

Diana Leslie Castillo-Nava

Introduction

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has become a paramount type of bilingual education program enacted in jurisdictions where the first language is other than English, according to Macaro et al. (2018). The authors indicate that EMI entitles students to learn English parallel to content in the language, and therefore, many higher education institutions have sought to implement it as it has been perceived as a tool to help students and universities become more internationalized (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018).

Since 2012, EMI has been present in Mexican public polytechnic and technological universities as part of a national strategy to provide low-income students with opportunities they may not have had to learn English and position themselves in the international market (Sibaja, 2019). EMI has been developed under the sustainable international bilingual model (*modelo bilingüe internacional y sustentable*, BIS in Spanish), whose main objective is to help Mexican university students become proficient in English and their careers to use it for professional purposes (Sibaja, 2019). Nonetheless, scarce research in Mexico (Palomares-Lara et al., 2017; Sibaja, 2019), which explores the EMI field and how it is implemented, experienced, and perceived by the stakeholders, has been conducted at polytechnic and technological universities. This study explores the BIS model, which promotes the development of EMI at a large number of polytechnic and technological universities across the country and the experiences that English teachers, EMI teachers, students, and coordinators regarding this model. The research questions that guided this inquiry were the following:

RQ1: What are the experiences of English teachers, EMI teachers, students, and coordinators regarding the BIS model and EMI at a polytechnic university in central Mexico?

RQ2: How are the BIS model and EMI implemented in the classroom according to the participants?

Literature Review

To gain insights into the implementation of EMI and the BIS model, the need to understand academic fields such as English language teaching (ELT) in Mexico, bilingual education, EMI, and the BIS model are discussed below.

English Language Teaching in Mexican Public Schools: A Historical Overview

This section presents a historical overview of the evolution of ELT in public institutions in Mexico. Hence, various English programs will be addressed chronologically. This information is crucial to understand how ELT has evolved and why it has become a requirement in the Mexican curriculum.

English Language Teaching in Mexico: Different Programs

English teaching has been present in Mexican secondary and high schools since 1926 (Calderón, 2015). Since many learners had their first contact with the language when they started secondary education, the late exposure resulted in students' low performance in the subject. In 1993, therefore, the English in Primary School Project was created by the Ministry of Education to provide students with more exposure in the early stages of their education in the public sector (Petrón, 2009; Sayer, 2015). As technological, economic, and industrial advancements were often associated with the language, the Mexican government was pressured to introduce English into the basic education curriculum and several public primary schools across the country developed their own programs.

Regarding state programs, Mexican states such as Baja California, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Morelos, and Sonora were the first to adopt the English in Primary School Project (Davies, 2009; Ramírez-Romero &

Sayer, 2016). From 2000 to 2003, another 13 states followed this initiative and by 2010, 21 states enacted the English programs (SEP, 2011). Davies (2009) claims that there were divergences since each of the states perceived English learning differently. These dissimilarities, according to him, posed difficulties in assessing the results of ELT in primary schools. In 2009 the state programs were canceled due to the status that English teachers had in addition to the lack of training, an official curriculum, and English textbooks. From state programs, I will continue to discuss national English programs.

The next program, English Enciclomedia, was designed in 2001 and formally presented in 2003. The English Enciclomedia project sought to innovate the way students learned in the classroom as it first involved the digitalization of Spanish content of fifth and sixth grades. Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016) assert that “the program only included content for Spanish, mathematics, history, geography, and civic education, but in the 2005-2006 school year, *Inglés Enciclomedia* was piloted with sixth-grade students in 13 states” (p. 6). These authors also critiqued the program and highlighted that it was naïve to consider that students and teachers could learn the language at the same time without any guidance and support. Another limitation was the fact that since teachers did not know English, they could not identify students’ needs and cater to them (SEP, 2006b). In 2011, *Enciclomedia* was canceled due to a lack of organization to develop the program (Trejo, 2020).

In 2009, the *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica* (PNIEB, henceforth) was created and implemented in primary schools across the country to help students learn the language to satisfy communicative needs and, at the same time, become aware of other cultures (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). The project promoted programs to train teachers to evaluate and create materials. The PNIEB encountered challenges. For instance, students’ proficiency in English did not reach the standards that were proposed (Mendoza-Valladares & Roux, 2014), and there were clashes between the government and teachers, as well as

a lack of support the continuation of the program. The PNIEB was replaced by the *S246* program to strengthen the quality of basic education.

The *Programa S246 Fortalecimiento de la Calidad en Educación Básica* (PFCEB) was created in 2013 due to changes of political parties in the federal government (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). The authors discuss that the program attempted to improve:

[the] training of academic, technical, and management and administrative staff, as well as external consultants, and monitoring and support. In other words, the federal government would provide the framework, the books, and the teachers' salaries, while the states that "voluntarily" decide to participate, would be responsible for managing the resources and the local implementation, such as selecting the schools, hiring teachers, and so forth. (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016, p. 9)

This meant that local programs had the responsibility again for teaching English, but the federal government would provide financial support. Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016) suggest that this program did not reflect any changes in classroom practices since teachers used the same materials as for the PNIEB program thus the government created the *Programa Nacional de Inglés* (PRONI in Spanish), which will be discussed next.

The National English Program (*Programa Nacional de Inglés*) was presented in 2016 and it aimed to strengthen English teaching and learning in public primary schools (SEP, 2016a). Trejo (2020) mentions that "the SEP targeted the following aspects to improve its implementation: the materials, the professional development of the teachers, language certifications for the learners and the budget for the program" (p. 17). The PRONI was not a new program according to Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016) since it "[was] a hybrid arising from crossing two previous programs: the PNIEB and PFCEB, but without making explicit the

relationship with either of them or the reason for the creation of a new program” (p. 9).

Despite the observable changes in Mexican English programs, attempts have been made to increase the provision of English in public schools. At the tertiary level, there are no national guidelines, and each institution is responsible for designing and implementing their own strategies to provide English. The increased need to help Mexican students position themselves in the international markets has resulted in the emergence of bilingual education across the country, which will be discussed next as it is the object of study in this research.

Bilingualism and Bilingual Education Programs

This section will present the concepts of bilingualism and bilingual education, as well as a description of bilingual programs that several authors have discussed. These are relevant to address since the research focus was to explore a bilingual program and its implementation in a higher education institution.

Definition of Bilingualism

Several authors have been committed to defining bilingualism (Baker, 2011; Bloomfield, 1933; García, 2009; Macnamara, 1967) and therefore, it has become a growing phenomenon that has led to the development of research in the field. Defining bilingualism has not been an easy task. Early research on the field seems to position bilingualism in the two extremes of a spectrum. For instance, whereas Bloomfield (1933) stresses that a bilingual is a person who can control two languages at a native-like level, Macnamara (1967) proposes that anyone with minimal competence in the foreign language can be considered a bilingual.

Advances in research have criticized both arguments as they are a misconception of bilingualism and do not encompass other essential

factors such as bilinguals' age, ability, balance of two languages, development, and contexts (Grosjean, 2012; Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). Baker (2011) agrees with such criticisms and suggests that "the ownership of two languages is not so simple as having two wheels or two eyes" (p. 1). This indicates that being able to use two languages is a phenomenon that should not be simplistically viewed.

More recent literature has provided evidence that bilingualism is a multifaceted phenomenon. García (2009) proposes that "a bilingual is a person that 'languages' differently and that has diverse and unequal experiences with each of the two languages" (p. 42). This means that a bilingual will use any linguistic resources he/she possess to participate in a bilingual environment. In the present study, García's (2009) definition was adopted as the participants of this project have had distinct experiences with the two languages (English and Spanish) they use at university. Considering that bilinguals use both languages in diverse contexts, it is relevant to describe bilingual education since it is the immediate context where the interviewees use English and Spanish.

Definition of Bilingual Education

According to García (2009), it is vital to understand the differences between bilingual education and traditional foreign-language programs. She states:

Bilingual education is different from traditional language education programs that teach a second or a foreign language. For the most part, these traditional second or foreign-language programs teach the language as a subject, whereas bilingual education programs use the language as a medium of instruction; that is, bilingual education programs teach content through an additional language other than the children's home language. (p. 17)

In other words, in traditional English language classrooms, the focus is on learning and acquiring the linguistic features of, in this case, English. Conversely, in bilingual education programs, students learn diverse content subjects through the language. It is not only about educating people in two languages.

Bilingual Education Programs

Bilingual programs are “concrete categorizations” (May, 2017, p. 87) that consider the context and the structure of the program itself. The former focuses on students’ and teachers’ characteristics whereas the latter is concerned with the subjects, the language used in the classroom, and the university programs that adopt bilingual education. Baker (2011) stresses that bilingual programs can be found within weak (subtractive) and strong (additive) forms. Weak programs generally do not foster bilingualism at school, and they target learners who speak a minority language. Additionally, the author explains that these programs reflect the injustice that many minority language speakers encounter outside the classroom, leading learners to be demotivated until desertion. Conversely, the author points out that strong (additive) bilingual programs foster bilingualism since students can use their first language (L1). Furthermore, students with minority and majority languages are mixed and cultural awareness is promoted.

The university where this research was conducted has the characteristics of dynamic bilingual education which, in Garcia’s (2009) words, holds a heteroglossic language ideology and fosters bilingualism in the classroom. This type of bilingual education allows the integration of content and another language. EMI is one of the programs that supports such an integration, thus, it will be described.

English as a Medium of Instruction

According to Dearden (2014), EMI refers to “[t]he use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (p. 2). Galloway (2017) asserts that the boom of EMI was due to the mistaken idea that this type of bilingual program would provide graduate students with a double benefit in their professional lives. That is students will increase their knowledge of the subject in English and at the same time their English proficiency. Research has shown, however, that there is a modest increase in English proficiency among EMI learners (Hu et al., 2014; Rogier, 2012).

Many governments have leaned toward the implementation of EMI because this will have a positive impact on students’ attractiveness to the global market (Galloway, 2017). In Latin America, for example, research focuses on the development of EMI and its goals. To illustrate this, Martínez (2016) points out that the project *Science without Borders*, launched in 2011, aimed to send more than 100,000 Brazilian students abroad and that by 2014, more than 39,000 students of higher education had been in foreign countries. This initiative influenced the rise of English in that country. Tejada-Sánchez and Molina-Naar (2020) state that in Colombia the factor that motivated the implementation of EMI in the curriculum was the result obtained in the English Proficiency Index where Colombia was ranked 51st. Consequently, the *Colombia Bilingüe* program was created to develop human capital through the teaching and learning of English. Moreover, it served as a strategy to internationalize the country. Nielsen (2003) asserts that to comply with the belief that “the higher the proficiency level, the better chances of getting a job (or a better job)” (p. 208), Argentine institutions (i.e., British-model schools, bilingual schools, American schools, EFL courses, teacher training colleges, and graduate and post-graduate courses at university) have adopted EMI.

These examples provide evidence that EMI has been widely accepted and implemented in divergent higher education programs. It is a phenomenon that could allow for the internationalization and mobility of students. In Mexico, attempts have been made to adopt EMI at the tertiary level. Thus, I will describe the development of EMI within the country.

English as a Medium of Instruction in Mexico

Limited research that explores the integration of content and English has been conducted in Mexico (Lara-Herrera, 2015; Lara-Herrera et al., 2016; Núñez-Asomoza, 2015). However, these previous studies do not adopt the term EMI. To the best of my knowledge, two projects that adopt the term EMI in Mexico have been carried out (Palomares-Lara et al., 2017; Sibaja, 2019). On the one hand, Palomares-Lara et al. (2017) explored 125 learners' perceptions of their transition to EMI at the technological university of Guaymas, Sonora. To collect data, the researchers designed a Likert-type survey that focused on several aspects such as students' motivation to learn content through English, the university facilities, and the strategies used by teachers to foster learning, for example. The findings illustrate that the participants were satisfied with the type of program implemented by the institution. Despite this, some recommendations were given to improve the experiences at this technological university, which included the promotion of bilingualism and internationalization.

On the other hand, Sibaja (2019) examined EMI faculty development at the *Universidad Tecnológica El Retoño* (UTR) in Aguascalientes. This university was selected as it was the first technological higher education institution that implemented EMI under the BIS model. "The main aim of [the] research was to explore the implications on the CPD [continuous professional development] and training for lecturers in the current shift to EMI in BIS universities" (Sibaja, 2019, p. 21). Diverse techniques were utilized to gather data from the participants which in-

cluded online surveys, observations, and interviews. The findings indicate that EMI is seen as a positive tool for both teachers and students to improve their skills in English but also to know about their subjects in this language.

Both research projects shed light on EMI in Mexico. Even though the focus was not similar, they provide insightful information about the growth and its implementation in the country. The model that promotes instruction through English within Mexican polytechnic and technological universities will be addressed in the following section.

The Sustainable International Bilingual Model in Mexico

EMI at polytechnic and technological public universities in Mexico has been implemented by the BIS model. The need for internationalization and mobility of Mexican citizens allowed for its creation. The purpose of the model is to increase the number of Mexican university students who can speak another language, particularly English (SEP, 2016b). According to Saracho (2017, as cited in Sibaja, 2019), the aim of the BIS model is the provision of bilingual education to students who live in remote areas and whose opportunities to learn English may have been limited.

The BIS model, as explained by Sibaja (2019), was firstly implemented at the technological university of Aguascalientes in 2012. By 2016, 21 polytechnical and technological BIS universities offered bilingual education through EMI programs in 14 states in Mexico. In 2017, the SEP intended to open one BIS university in each state to comply with the demand from the industry, and 29 BIS universities were established across the country (Nuño, 2017). In BIS universities, there is an introductory term or *cuatrimestre cero* that aims to immerse students in the English language. Learners attend English lessons seven hours a day meaning that, by the end, they will have been exposed to 525 hours of English. In the first term, learners start receiving content subjects from which two of them are taught in English. In addition, they receive ten

hours of EFL lessons a week. In terms two and three, four content subjects in English and eight hours of EFL lessons a week are provided. From term four onwards, all content subjects are taught in English and the number of hours in EFL lessons decreases to six (Sibaja, 2019). BIS universities recruit two types of teachers. On the one hand, there should be proficient English teachers who are responsible for the provision of EFL lessons. On the other hand, there should be content teachers who must have theoretical background in their subject area additional to proficiency in the English to teach their subject through the language.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted to carry out this research since the aim was to explore the lived experiences of the participants regarding the BIS model and the implementation of EMI. Heigham and Croker (2009) indicate that:

As qualitative researchers believe that meaning is socially constructed, their research focus is on the participants – how participants experience and interact with a phenomenon at a given point in time and in a particular context, and the multiple meanings it has for them. They are interested in the ordinary, everyday worlds of their participants. (p. 7)

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people experience the world and how their experiences shape their views, opinions, and perspectives within a given phenomenon at a specific time and context. The method employed to conduct this research was an instrumental case study. Stake (1995) argues that as researchers in an instrumental case study:

We will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by

studying a particular case... This use of case study is to understand something else. Case study here is instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding [the particular case]. (p. 30)

In other words, researchers have a need to understand a wider phenomenon while they study a particular case. In this research, the stakeholders' experiences and the implementation of the BIS model and EMI were particular aspects that helped understand aspects that were part of the complexities of introducing EMI in BIS universities.

Even though case studies are identified due to the variety of techniques employed to gather data (Crowe et al., 2011), the COVID-19 pandemic affected several arrangements of the research and only semi-structured interviews were utilized. However, the technique was applied to four distinct groups of participants, and it was possible to gain a deep understanding of the implementation of the BIS model and EMI as the participants' experiences were relatable.

Four semi-structured interviews were designed and only the English teachers' and students' interviews were piloted due to a lack of volunteers. The piloting sessions allowed the participants to provide feedback, which was integrated into the final version of the interviews. To conduct the interviews, I had decided to meet the participants face-to-face in their hometown, but due to the social distancing strategy, it was not possible. Following Opdenakker's (2006) categorization of interviews, the participants were asked if they would participate in an online interview. Upon their agreement, they received a letter of informed consent in which they were explained the purpose of the research, their rights as participants, and how their information and identities would be protected.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, audio recorded, and transcribed onto a computer. Once the interviews were transcribed, I employed a thematic analysis and the MAXQDA software to treat the information. The thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2012) is:

A method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset. Through focusing on meaning *across* a dataset, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. (p. 2)

This framework allowed me to understand each participants' experiences individually and find patterns among them. The information was coded according to the participants' roles as follows: I for interview, ET for English teachers, CT for content teachers, S for students, and EC for English coordinators.

Now I will describe the context and the participants. The university under research is situated in the State of Mexico. It started offering EMI classes in 2017 to the Electronics and Telecommunications program as well as Robotics programs. In 2019, the Administration program became part of the EMI provision. The participants were divided into four groups. In the first group there were ten students in the three programs mentioned before, and they were in the second, fifth, and eighth semesters when the interviews were carried out. Three English teachers were in the second group. Two were in the Administration program and one was in the Engineering programs. In the third group, two EMI teachers agreed to participate, and one taught human development and ethics, and the other taught basic concepts of administration. Finally, two English coordinators were part of the fourth group. One coordinated the Administration program and the other was responsible for the Electronics and Telecommunications program and the Robotics program.

Results and Discussion

After the analysis of the data, the information was organized into four themes: 1) bilingual experiences, 2) teachers' knowledge base, 3) participants' perspectives on the implementation of the BIS model, and 3) sug-

gestions to improve the implementation of the BIS model. In this section, I present the themes followed by interview excerpts, and a discussion.

Bilingual Experiences

Being part of this university entitles the stakeholders to be in contact with English. In this theme, I will describe how they have experienced bilingual education in their context and how learners' previous knowledge of the language has influenced their views on the language as well as students' progress in English.

"I Did Not Know That the School Was Bilingual"

For some learners, the first semester surprised them since they did not know the school was bilingual. It was not until they started classes that they learned it. Paulina remembers how it occurred in the following quote:

Bueno cuando recién había entrado al salón pues te van diciendo que la escuela es bilingüe. Yo no sabía que la escuela era bilingüe entonces me voy enterando que era bilingüe... y que todas las clases eran en inglés, ¿no? Yo sí sentía... un miedo porque decía bueno yo no sé inglés. Entonces, yo decía ¿y qué voy a hacer si yo no sé nada de inglés? (I-PAULINA-S)

When this student registered to enroll in one of the programs, she was not told that the school implemented a bilingual model. Paulina learned this on the first day of school. As seen in the extract, she expressed insecurity and concern about her performance in English due to the limited knowledge she had. It is observable that she did not have information about the BIS model, which should not occur. The institution must ensure that all students know the characteristics of BIS universities so that they make informed decisions. Students also need to be responsible for

investigating the characteristics of the institution to decide if they want to register or search for other opportunities. Teachers also noticed students' negative emotions because they did not know the university was bilingual as Silvana recalls:

Yo al principio tuve hasta cierto punto, no miedo, pero como que traté de mentalizarme porque había muchos chicos que desconocían que ellos iban a tomar este modelo. No sabían a lo que se enfrentaban y estaban muy reacios. Estaban muy renuentes a entrar y decían: ¿Por qué esto? ¿Por qué lo otro? y no veían la utilidad del idioma. (I-SILVANA-ET)

Silvana learned on the first day that she had to engage her students in the bilingual model because they did not understand why English was crucial. For some teachers like Silvana, the lack of information that students have about the school might entail difficulties that go beyond teaching. Teachers must help students understand that English will be part of their lives when they enroll in this university.

It is visible that not all teachers and students have the same information about the bilingual model. It is pertinent to mention that when Paulina registered, the institution started the pilot phase and was not officially recognized as a BIS university. The authorities may have failed to inform students about the program as they were not officially BIS. However, the university should guarantee that learners, English teachers, and EMI teachers know that it is bilingual to avoid surprise, reluctance, and fear on the first day of classes. Another fact that interfered with students' perceptions of English and bilingual education was their previous knowledge of the language which is presented in the next section.

Students' Previous Knowledge of English Shaped Their Bilingual Experiences

For seven students their previous knowledge of English was an aspect that marked their experiences during the introductory term positively and negatively. Christian, for instance, described how his prior contact with the language was beneficial:

La experiencia que yo tengo hasta ahorita con el modelo que estamos llevando en la universidad ha sido bastante buena... cuando estaba en la prepa, en el último semestre yo tenía un nivel, pero no era tan bueno como hasta tal vez como cuando empecé a llevar el modelo. (I-CHRISTIAN-S)

Due to his previous knowledge of the language, Christian found that taking English at this university entitled him to improve his level. His statement denotes that English at this university has been given weight and students can witness it. Yet, not all students have been in the same situation as is Ximena's case:

Sí fue complicado tratar de acoplarse a la manera de trabajar de otros maestros y también pues el que iniciemos desde cero... pero también cuando empezamos con lo más complicado si fue muy, muy, muy difícil porque pues no sabía nada de inglés. Prácticamente no tenía conocimientos de nada y sí me sentí muy perdida. (I-XIMENA-S)

For this participant, it was challenging to adapt to her new teachers, and it is perceived that teachers follow a course that goes beyond basic structures. This led Ximena to feel lost.

Students' previous knowledge of the language may have influenced how they perceived English learning. For some students with previous

knowledge, it seems that being at this university has helped them develop their skills while those students with limited knowledge have found it difficult to adjust to the model, which can influence their learning process.

Language Progress

In this bilingual model, students are expected to improve their skills in the language. A number of learners had formative experiences while learning English. For example, Christian observed improvement in his level and his classmates' level:

Me ayudó mucho a reforzar algunas cosas en las que todavía tenía fallas... pero la verdad es que sí lo he notado... sí me he dado cuenta de que mi nivel de inglés ha ido mejorando bastante, bastante ...este punto lo voy a mencionar así aparte porque yo recuerdo cuando entré en el cuatrimestre cero, recuerdo varios de mis compañeros que la verdad no sabían nada, nada, nada, nada. No hablaban nada y ahorita los veo el día de hoy y digo ¡órale! La verdad es que sí se ve un cambio muy grande. (I-CHRISTIAN-S)

Christian acknowledged that being part of this model helped him improve his performance in English. However, this improvement was not exclusive to him. He recalled when he met his classmates and noticed that they did not know how to express themselves in the language. He seemed to be aware of the advantages of studying at this institution. In contrast, several teachers observed that not all students have had the same benefits:

He tenido alumnos que estaban muy renuentes al principio y que odiaban el idioma. Pero he visto cómo han avanzado... Sí he visto un avance, pero no en todos porque hay unos que incluso su nivel de inglés bajó totalmente, o sea, nada que ver con lo que yo con-

ocía, pero hay casos que sí funcionan. Hay otros casos que de plano pues no. Van en retroceso porque cada vez se complica más y ellos se desmotivan. (I-SILVANA-ET)

Silvana also agreed that students have improved and changed their feelings of animosity towards the language. She admitted, however, that in other cases the complexity of the language was a factor for students to feel demotivated and not progress. This shows that there may be a lack of support or time to help learners acquire the language, which should be promoted as the purpose is to achieve English proficiency at a C1 level. During the interviews, teachers' knowledge was a recurrent topic among the participants; therefore, it will be addressed.

Teachers' Knowledge Base

Not only should teachers know about their subject but also about the strategies, materials, and learners to demonstrate that they are effective. This section presents diverse opinions regarding EMI and English teachers' knowledge of the language.

EMI Teachers' Knowledge of English

Several participants suggested that English teachers were qualified and could use the language to instruct. For instance, Laura had valuable experiences regarding her English teachers' knowledge of the language:

Entonces para mí, en mi opinión, los profesores de inglés en la universidad están súper capacitados y nos ofrecen una preparación muy buena. (I-LAURA-S)

This participant acknowledged that teachers were prepared and demonstrated knowledge of English in the classroom, and this may be due to

the requirements to be an English teacher at this institution. Nazario, an English coordinator, explains:

Pues es la licenciatura, que tenga una certificación de manejo de idioma, mínimo nivel B2, ya sea TOEFL... y que ya tengan experiencia en el campo y obviamente una clase muestra donde se pueda comprobar lo que dicen sus papeles tanto título, certificaciones, o cursos que sean evidenciables en una clase muestra. (I-NAZARIO-EC)

A number of students perceived that their English teachers were qualified, as it was in Laura's case, and this may occur due to the strict requirements to become part of the English team. However, the next subtheme indicates that EMI teachers have shown difficulties when using the language.

EMI Teachers' Knowledge of English

EMI teachers' knowledge of English was a factor that influenced the implementation of the model and EMI. Some learners, like Miguel, believed that their teachers did not seem to be qualified in the use of the language.

Siento que los profesores [de contenido] no estaban familiarizados con el idioma, con el enseñar en inglés pues se perdieron completamente y no supieron cómo desarrollar sus clases... ya lo veían más obligatorio como que enseñarnos a fuerzas... siento que sí veía a nuestros profesores muy perdidos. (I-MIGUELS)

Unfortunately, this participant witnessed EMI teachers' lack of English proficiency. This statement denotes that EMI lecturers used the language not because they were skilled or wanted to use it but because it was a requirement. Their unpreparedness has allowed students like Miguel to

think that teachers are lost. Another student also had a similar experience as she recalls:

Algunos que me daban materias de mi carrera y las querían dar en inglés, pues también eran como maestros que no tenían mucho o apenas iban aprendiendo, y así. Algunos nos decían que sí les costaba trabajo darnos las clases en inglés. Otros solamente lo intentaban una vez y después ya no lo hacían. Entonces, como que algunos profesores sí nos daban las clases, pero a la mayoría sí les costaba trabajo y algunos no nos daban las clases en inglés más que materiales en inglés. (I-PAULINA-S)

Paulina also acknowledges that EMI teachers were not proficient in the language, and therefore, it was difficult for them to teach in English. Interestingly, the materials they used in the class were in English. It is questionable how they asked students to use English materials when they themselves were not able to use the language adequately. The teachers' reasons for not using the language in the classroom may be the result of the process to become EMI lecturers. The following excerpts describe such a process:

Fue muy simple. El coordinador me dijo: "Aquí está la materia y la tienes que dar en inglés porque es para los grupos de bilingüe, punto". Eso fue todo. (I-CECILIA-CT)

Ella [mi jefa] me dijo que solamente había dos maestros que podían dar la materia y que eran varios grupos, entonces yo dije: "¡Ya estuvo que me dio esa materia!" No me explicó cómo darla o qué hacer. (I-HELENA-CT)

These excerpts show that EMI teachers are not initially hired as such, and therefore, they have difficulty using the language. It is observable

that the recruitment process is different for English and EMI teachers. If the institution promotes itself as bilingual, the administrative staff (the dean, the academic director, and human resources) need to establish strict requirements to hire English and EMI teachers or provide them with continuous professional development (CPD) to ensure the provision of EMI classes at this institution. The next theme addresses how the participants perceive the implementation of the BIS model and EMI.

Participants' Perspectives on the Implementation of the BIS Model

Regarding this theme, I will address aspects that illustrate how the BIS model is developed as perceived by the participants and how much they think it has posed challenges and benefits.

"It Is Not Like in Other Schools"

For some students, the implementation of the bilingual model is a new experience. They recognize that this university has given weight to English and that the dynamic of English classes is distinct. Laura gave an account of her perception in the next excerpt:

Yo he platicado con universitarios jóvenes que están estudiando de aquí del área. Incluso de universidades privadas y no tienen la preparación que nosotros estamos teniendo. El hecho de estar llevando el inglés a la par con tus materias... siento que es una gran ventaja. (I-LAURA-S)

Laura was a student in the second semester. For her, the scheme of the university was novel, and she believed it had advantages. Abril, an English teacher, mentioned what she observed in the introductory semester:

Aquí la dinámica no es como cualquier otra escuela. Empezamos con un cuatrimestre cero, por decirlo así... en todo momento ellos están escuchando y escribiendo en inglés. (I-ABRIL-ET)

When Abril was interviewed, she had worked at the institution for eight months. She stated that teaching English at this university was not similar to her past experiences. It is perceived that during the first semester the language was taken seriously, and its use was promoted in the classroom. However, as students advance, the provision of bilingual education was questionable. The next section supports this idea.

How Long Does the Bilingual Enchantment Last?

The participants perceived that this polytechnic university offers a distinctive program. Yet, students provided evidence that may reveal the reality of bilingual education at this institution. Julia, for example, mentioned:

Ahorita según llevo física y cálculo, pero no me dan clases en inglés. Algunas veces los ejercicios o exámenes son en inglés y nuestros reportes deben de llevar inglés, pero los maestros pues no nos hablan en inglés. (I-JULIA-S)

The requirements of the BIS model establish that a student in the fifth semester should have all content subjects in English. It is seen that even when she knows that there should be two EMI classes, teachers do not use the language in the classroom. It is noticeable again that EMI lecturers provide materials and exams in English even though English is not used while teaching. This can lead students to feel confused and may affect their performance in the content areas. Miguel, a student in semester eight, had a disappointing experience as he mentions:

Al final creo que se rindieron porque a partir del cuarto cuatrimestre nos dejaron de dar materias bilingües... a partir de ese cuatrimestre como que tiraron todos la toalla. Fueron todos a lo tradicional otra vez. A hablarnos en español y pues la materia de inglés siguió su camino o sea como que no funcionó a final de cuentas. (I-MIGUEL-S)

This excerpt shows the realities at this BIS university. At the time of the interview, Miguel should have had all the content subjects in English, but as he says, teachers could not continue with the development and implementation of EMI classes. Due to these challenges, several participants suggested changes to improve the BIS model and the provision of EMI as the following theme describes.

Suggestions to Improve the Implementation of the BIS Model

The implementation of the model has been influenced by various aspects. For that reason, some participants suggested modifications that may foster bilingual education. I explore under this theme how bilingual education at this public university can be more realistic and how teachers believe the institution could help them enhance their teaching and linguistic skills.

“Be Real”

A number of participants indicated that they should have a real sense of a bilingual environment that goes beyond the classroom, understanding that English should not be regarded only as a subject. For Carlos, an English teacher, there should be opportunities in which students practice the language in other environments:

Traer unos extranjeros aquí para que vean los alumnos cómo sería ... llevarlos al aeropuerto, a la parte de aduanas... llevarlos a un recorrido y ver cómo interactúan. Ver qué es lo que pueden hacer... que tengan esa conexión todos los actores. Esa es la única modificación. Esa es como “*Be real*”. Aterrizalo. (I-CARLOS-ET)

Carlos considers that students could improve if they were in contact with native speakers, which is questionable since students can learn from other speakers of the language. Additionally, his statement implies that even when the university presents itself as a bilingual school, the few opportunities do not promote a real bilingual environment. Students also proposed other activities in the following excerpt:

Creo que conferencias sería una experiencia muy agradable porque ahí podríamos dar a conocer lo que hemos estado aprendiendo en todos los cuatrimestres y a pesar de que obviamente no podríamos entender todo como tal por lo mismo que pues ya sería con palabras técnicas, creo que eso nos abriría más la mente para seguir estudiando el inglés y más que nada irlo enfocando a lo que es nuestra carrera. (I-SUSANA-S)

Susana realized that English can be used in a variety of ways. She considered conferences as an opportunity to apply the knowledge of English in her profession. It looks as though the only place in which she used it was the classroom, and therefore, she did not understand the real purpose of the language.

Please, Help Teachers!

One of the influential factors in the model is teachers' lack of training. The following excerpt illustrates what an English teacher, Carlos, believed regarding professional development opportunities:

Lo único que haría con el modelo bilingüe sería hablar con el director académico, con el rector y con el área administrativa y que sobre eso vayan perfilando a los profesores de inglés y a los profesores de contenido sabiendo que los profesores de inglés desconocen el contenido y los profesores de contenido desconocen el inglés. Sería algo así como que haya un acercamiento. (I-CARLOS-ET)

Carlos perceived that English and content should be intertwined. That is, English teachers should take courses to be aware of the content taught in EMI programs and EMI faculty should receive training to improve their language skills. Moreover, content teachers and English teachers should work together to devise and implement activities in which students see the relationship between their content subjects and the language. However, faculty do not work collaboratively because they probably do not know how bilingual education should be implemented. Helena also believed that professors need help to accomplish the objective:

Yo creo que, si el objetivo es que el profesor aprenda a dar clases en inglés, es importante que se le den esas estrategias porque cuando yo tomé los cursos en inglés y ese curso de herramientas fue porque nosotros lo pedimos. Así como que ¡Por favor, por favor! (I-HELENA-CT)

Helena is an EMI professor that had difficulties teaching content in English. She believed that the university should provide teachers with courses to improve their teaching skills. However, the fact that she said “*¡Por favor, por favor!*” implies that the authorities had not focused on educators’ needs until they requested it. This has led faculty and coordinators to implement the model and EMI with the resources and understanding they have of bilingual education, EMI, and the BIS model.

Conclusions

This research project sought to explore the BIS model and the implementation of EMI at a polytechnic university in central Mexico through a variety of participants' experiences: English and EMI teachers', students', and coordinators' experiences. Regarding EMI teachers, it was perceived that they have difficulty instructing in the language due to their limited proficiency in English. Additionally, it seems that there is a lack of support and training, which could help them develop the model more efficiently. Even though English teachers consider the model and requirements to become part of the English academy are strong, there is a lack of connection between English and EMI classes. This should be addressed by the dean, the academic director and the administrative staff if they want to attain the goals of the institution. Students' accounts showed the realities at this university and although the English area was described positively, and several learners have taken advantage of the EFL lessons, they have also witnessed the deficiencies in the EMI area, which has affected their perception of the university and their teachers.

At the local level, this study may be of interest to the institutional administrators as they can learn what is needed to provide effective EMI classes and improve the dynamics of the BIS model. For instance, it was seen that the lack of established requirements for EMI teachers has led to deficiencies in EMI classes. Thus, continuous professional development can help overcome some of the challenges faced by EMI faculty and students. At the global level, this study adds to the recurrent research on EMI and shows the benefits and drawbacks experienced in the Mexican context. It is recommended that further research employ more than one technique to validate the data provided by the respondents and obtain a richer understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, other stakeholders' voices such as the dean's, the academic director's, and the administrators' should be heard to understand how the language policies enacted may influence the development and implementation of the model and EMI at BIS universities.

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CHAPTER 5

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATING ARTS
IN THE EFL CLIL CLASSROOM:
AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY IN A PRIVATE LANGUAGE
CENTER IN CENTRAL MEXICO

Iliana Carolina Campoy Aguirre

Introduction

In 2009, the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP, Mexican Ministry of Education) implemented the National English Program which now includes English as a foreign language (EFL) in the curriculum at pre-school and primary levels. SEP considers English a necessity to provide its citizens with more academic and professional opportunities (Sayer & López Gopar, 2015). However, relatively few Mexicans attain sufficient linguistic skills with the National English Program (Petrón, 2009; Sayer & López Gopar, 2015). The deficiency in the public education's English instruction has led to a rise in Mexicans attending private language institutions. These private institutions sometimes offer courses where a form of content is used and taught in English. This is the case of the institution where this study was conducted, and they shifted from a traditional methodology (drills, teacher-centered education, and overuse of textbooks) to content and language integrated learning (CLIL). This change in the program stemmed from the belief that CLIL methodologies allow for partial immersion and thus, increased language exposure.

In the language center where this research takes place, CLIL is used in contexts where students study only a few hours a week and the content in their classes is science, social studies, or math at times. Given that the time of exposure is limited, the subjects are challenging for students that only experience this immersion in their classes. Few studies in other countries have delved into the idea of using less linguistically demanding content such as arts to help new learners of English (Chi, 2017). This study intends to identify the perspectives young learners have about using arts as content in the EFL CLIL classroom in a private language institute in central Mexico. In researching this, this study aims to contribute to the gap in research found in Mexico.

Literature Review

Countries worldwide have included English as a compulsory subject in preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools for years now. Amidst the changes, it is crucial to discuss key themes and issues in the teaching of English to young learners, specifically CLIL and arts integration in the EFL classroom.

Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and language integrated learning first appeared in the 1990s and it has its origins in Europe. Bentley (2010) defines it as “an approach or method which integrates the teaching of content from the curriculum with teaching of a non-native language” (p. 3). This approach is principally used within primary and secondary schools and CLIL programs are now found in countries all around the world. Ball et al. (2016) add that CLIL “is related to all forms of education in which subjects are learned through L2 or through two languages simultaneously” (p. 2) where the content and language are interwoven in the CLIL programs.

There are implications for the integration of content and language. It is essential for teachers to understand these implications if they seek to work with CLIL. In CLIL contexts it is not a question of whether to focus on meaning or form but rather it is fundamental to address both, the balance of which will be determined by different variables in specific CLIL settings. Therefore, CLIL is highly contextual, and programs will appear different from place to place. To aid the process of developing a CLIL program, there are some concepts to consider: modality, the 4 Cs framework, basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and communicative academic language proficiency (CALP). Table 1 presents a definition of each term, the most prominent authors, and how these concepts shape any given CLIL program.

Table 1*Key Concepts in CLIL*

Concept	Definition	Authors	How it shapes CLIL
Modality	There are two CLIL modes: Hard (subject-led) and soft (language-led).	Bentley, 2010; Coyle et al., 2010; Ball et al., 2016	Defining the modality will greatly impact the foundations of the curriculum. It influences the choice of materials and grading systems, to name a few.
4 Cs framework	This framework must be considered when planning lessons. The four elements to consider are: Content, communication, cognition, and culture.	Coyle, 2007; Mehisto et al., 2008; Pérez-Vidal, 2009	Planning a CLIL lesson is different from an EFL lesson; therefore, the 4Cs provide guidelines to facilitate planning. Every aspect of content and language is considered in each C.
BICS	Skills are needed for social and conversational situations.	Cummins, 1979	Looking at BICS and CALPS allows for any CLIL program to advance in terms of cognition. Both content and language benefit from this progression.
CALPS	Skills are needed for high academic performance.		

Note. Adapted from *Putting CLIL into Practice*, by P. Ball, J. Clegg, & K. Kelly, 2016, pp. 20-40.

From Table 1, we can see four concepts that will help establish clear guidelines for any CLIL program. The curriculum creators' decisions related to modality, the 4 Cs, BICS, and CALPS will greatly have an im-

pact upon the type of classes, the preparation of the teaching staff, and students' needs. Furthermore, Coyle (2007) establishes seven principles that stem from the combination and use of the concepts above presented:

- Content matter is not only about acquiring knowledge and skills; it is about the learner creating their own knowledge and understanding and developing skills (personalized learning).
- Content is related to learning and thinking (cognition). To enable the learners to create their own interpretation of content, it must be analyzed for their linguistic demands.
- Thinking processes (cognition) need to be analyzed for the student's linguistic demands.
- Language needs to be learned which is related to the learning context, learning through language, reconstruction of the content, and cognitive processes. This language needs to be transparent and accessible.
- Interaction in the learning context is fundamental for learning. This has implications when the learning context operates through the medium of a foreign language.
- The relationship between cultures and languages is complex. Intercultural awareness is fundamental to CLIL.
- CLIL is embedded in the wider educational context in which it is developed and therefore should take account of contextual variables to be effectively realized.

Thus, to create a connection between language and content, educators in each CLIL setting should identify and justify how integrating content and language learning will be achieved. Additionally, they should think about the extent to which this is possible according to individual learning contexts and expected learning outcomes. Whilst this might seem obvious, integrating content learning and language learning is complex. Although the 4 Cs framework provides specific guidelines, it still allows

teachers and curriculum designers to move freely and decide how both content and language will be integrated into a given context.

Art Integration in the EFL Classroom

Art integration is an approach of teaching in which “students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meet evolving objectives in both” (Silverstein & Layne, 2010, p. 1). Thus, integrating arts differs greatly from an art class in the sense that it is not as strict with content, but it is concerned with how the arts enhance content such as math, science, or history. Poldberg et al. (2013) contend that art integration enhances both teaching and learning, and it does not require specialization of the arts. The degree to which we integrate arts in any curriculum varies depending on the needs and requirements of the curriculum itself.

Bresler (1995) identifies three arts integration styles: subservient integration, coequal integration, and affective integration. In the subservient integration model, arts are utilized to serve the basic academic curriculum (e.g., singing a song on a theme presented in another discipline). The coequal integration model refers to programs where arts and the content have the same value when evaluated. The last model of affective integration uses arts to evoke personal expression, and social integration.

Arts, such as painting, drama, video, photography, music, and storytelling, are commonly integrated into the English as a foreign language classroom. Whether it is a CLIL classroom or a traditional EFL classroom, teachers of young learners of English incorporate some forms of arts into their practice. However, since the CLIL methodology is used, the introduction of the concept of art integration aids the content component of the method. Exploring the integration styles will support in providing the best practices to manage the course content aspect. Table 2 presents a summary of different studies worldwide that have experiment-

ed with the integration of different forms of arts in the EFL classroom, at various school levels, and the impacts of the studies.

Table 2

Research on Art Integration in the EFL Classroom

Art branch	Authors	Benefits in the classroom
Painting	Urso Spina (2006), Shmulsky (2009), Lee (2014), Lemper (2014), Mantei and Kervin (2014), Kokko et al. (2015), Chi (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases motivation and confidence in the L2. - Able to combine written and visual language to communicate. - Decreases anxiety when producing oral or written text.
Drama	Hoyt (1992), Bang (2003), Gullatt (2008), Janudom and Wasanasomsithi (2009), Rieg and Paquette (2009), Araki-Metcalf (2012), Banejee (2014), Donnery (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develops various reading skills (decoding, fluency, syntactic awareness). - Increases motivation in class. - Develops different literacies. - Builds intercultural and linguistic competence.
Video and photography	Chapple and Curtis (2000), King (2002), Gruba (2006), Suvorov (2008), Ismaili (2013), Goldstein and Driver (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases students' interest in extensive listening comprehension. - Promotes motivation and engagement. - Students report to want more video and photography.
Music	Molina Moncada (2011), Coyle and García (2014), Cunningham (2014), Mena and Chapetón (2014), Lee and Lin (2015), Lems (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decreases anxiety when used in the background during class. - Improves L2 pronunciation and facilitates vocabulary acquisition. - Develops grammar structures. - Improves extensive and intensive listening skills.

Story-telling	Fitzgibbon and Wilhelm (1998), Lordy (2007), Ahern et al. (2008), Lee (2008), Castañeda (2013), Alkaaf (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides unconscious and indirect input to the L2. - Increases students' engagement and enjoyability. - Develops speaking skills (tone, intonation, pronunciation, etc.).
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Note. Created by C. Campoy, 2022.

Table 2 presents examples of the extensive body of research related to integrating arts in the EFL classroom. By reviewing these studies, we observe that in the language classroom the predominant integration model is the subservient one. This means that the arts are a vehicle to present the language or the content. Although most of the studies show a positive impact in the classroom environment, the results have yet to prove the success in language acquisition. Additionally, most studies argue that schools or language centers would need special resources (cameras, tablets, stationary supplies, instruments, etc.). In general, selecting and applying an integration model should be carefully planned, and outlined in its context. Throughout this section I have explored the main concepts of this research project. The next section discusses the methodological framework.

Research Methodology

This research aim was to explore children's perspectives about using art activities related to video, photography drama, storytelling, music, and painting in the English classroom. To do so, a methodological framework was designed to obtain the data and it is presented to answer the research question: What are primary school children's perspectives about the integration of arts in the EFL classroom?

Qualitative Case Study

The nature of this project is qualitative, since it focused on gathering perspectives from children (Richards, 2003). To address the research question, this study adopted a case study method. Yin (1994) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 23). Because of the study’s nature, the case study method provides the grounds to conduct research from a classroom-based perspective, this being the real-life context the author refers to. Stake (1995) identifies three types of case study: a) instrumental case study, b) collective case studies, and c) intrinsic case study. Stake also defines an intrinsic case study as one where the researcher is interested in a particular case in and of itself, without the need of generalization or theory building. For this project, the type of case study used is intrinsic since it explores the perspectives of a number of children concerning art integration in the CLIL EFL classroom. Therefore, the interest in this exploration stems from the case itself and myself. Additionally, the answer to the research question solves specific issues that may or may not arise in the specific context where the case takes place.

Context

A private language center was selected in the city of Toluca in the State of Mexico in central Mexico. The school’s teaching methodology is CLIL for their young learners’ language programs. However, the content is usually related to science, social studies, maths, or ethics. The content is used for learners new to the language and more proficient learners. It has been noticed by the teaching staff (myself included) that the new students who had very low English proficiency struggled with managing the classes being completely in English and additionally digesting the content. Because of

these observations, an intervention was designed, and a new CLIL course was created using arts as content. The idea was to use a less linguistically demanding subject to help new students adapt to CLIL.

The soft CLIL course (language-led) that I created was for students with no knowledge or an A1 knowledge of the English language according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Most of the design relied on the CEFR standards and because of the students' language level, content was kept at a non-demanding level (students learned vocabulary related to art supplies, colors, shapes, etc.). The classes took place from Monday through Friday for two hours (9:00 AM to 11:00 PM). Each of the weeks revolved around arts such as painting, drama, photography/video, music, and storytelling. Each week consisted of a short project to be created and presented by Friday. The syllabus was sent to the school coordination to be shared with the parents regarding the course content.

Participants

Regarding the participants, *quota* sampling was used. Mack et al. (2005) define *quota* sampling as the process we carry out before the data collection period starts where the researcher defines the number of participants and characteristics these participants should share. The idea behind having the participants share these characteristics is the fact that the characteristics would provide more accurate insights into the topic being studied. The potential participants would: be children between 8-10 years old, have an A0-A1 level, be enrolled at the language center, and be available to come to the summer course from July 8-August 8, 2019, from 9 am to 11 am (Monday through Friday). Lastly after concluding the summer course, their parents were asked to provide their consent for their children to participate in the data collection process.

There were eight participants (two boys, and six girls). The youngest participant was seven years old, and the oldest one was eleven. It is

important to note that although the profile had a specific age range, two participants (ages seven and eleven) were allowed to take part during the course, since according to the terminology presented in the literature review, a primary language learner is any learner between the ages of seven and eleven. Thus, in terms of developmental stages, the students were within the range. Most students were also enrolled during the school year. However, there were a few students who were new to the school and the language. The English level of the participants was the following: Seven students had an A1 level, and one of them had an A2 level (Movers from Cambridge). After the CLIL course, the children were part of the data collection process to gather their perspectives on what they had experience.

Data Collection Techniques

A focus group was used to collect data from the young participants. This technique was primarily selected due to its relaxed and unstructured nature (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). Additionally, it allowed the participants to be together. Since the participants were young children, it seemed appropriate to use the focus group technique which let them share their perspectives together and where the participants felt they were having a conversation. There is a plethora of participatory techniques, and they are useful since they engage children in research. These are sometimes called “child-friendly techniques” (Coad & Lewis, 2004, p. 3). Early in the study, it was decided that the participants would take part in the focus group.

Additionally, two participatory data collection techniques of photo elicitation (Harper, 2002), and drawing and writing (Bradding & Horstman, 1999) were used to support the focus group. In the first part of the focus group, when asking the participants to remember art activities and their opinions about them, course photos were shown to them to help them remember. In the questions related to how they felt in the English class and which art branch was their favorite, they were asked to draw and write their experiences. I had two roles in this research project: the course teacher and

researcher. Due to this fact, I decided to train another teacher to moderate the focus group and collect the data in my place. The rationale behind this decision was to avoid the observer's paradox. This concept mentions that the presence of an observer may affect what happens in the observed situation (Lavob, 1972). Thus, to avoid biased student responses, a teacher from the school staff who the students were familiar with replaced me as a moderator.

Data Analysis and Coding

Once the data was transcribed, it was analyzed using a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a thematic analysis, the data is read several times to identify ideas that are repeated. The ideas are grouped and categorized into themes. Once the themes were identified, participants' names were replaced in the transcripts by a nickname provided by me to protect their identity. The code was formed by the capital letters FG (focus group) and the nickname. The nicknames were: Gre, Reny, Shuyo, Shay, Karen, Kim, Leslie, and Poly.

Results

The results are presented according to five themes identified and grouped. In general, I can establish that the data showed that participants had both negative and positive perspectives related to integrating arts.

Issues with Originality

This theme refers to the problems the participants had when they noticed that another classmate had copied some elements (decorations, design, or a type of colors, etc.) from their work. This is relevant since it presents the possible scenario where conflicts might arise if students notice similarities between their work and the others' work. Managing such conflicts prevents disruptions. In their discussions, they seemed to dislike the idea

of being copied. They valued their work being unique and different. The participants discussed the different activities they had during the weeks. During the first week, the participants worked on an activity titled “I am.” The participants designed a poster with adjectives that described them, and the moderator asks students to elaborate on the activity:

Moderador: ¿Qué es?

Gre: Eh, los carteles con los...

Shuyo: No, es un póster.

Moderador: Ah, es un póster.

Gre: Sí, y se copiaron, ellas dos [señala a Leslie y Poli] y ellas dos [señala a Karen y Shay], y los únicos originales somos nosotros dos [señala a Shuyo y a sí mismo].

(FG-Moderador, Gre & Shuyo)

In this excerpt Gre points to the posters and claims that his classmates have copied each other. Additionally, he comments that Shuyo’s and his posters are the only original ones. This was interesting, since what one might consider an inspiration among students could be negative for other participants. Gre’s opinion became a source of issue. After he claimed that his peers had no originality, the other participants started to defend their work. The students started fighting among themselves. As a teacher, observing these reactions to certain classroom activities with young learners is relevant. The relevancy stems from the need to prepare to deescalate confrontations in the classroom. Classroom management is key in successful young learner classroom.

Most participants defended their work by stating that everyone had copied. However, as the following excerpt shows, Leslie pointed out that it was not that they were not original, but they were inspiring each other:

Leslie: No es copiar. Mi maestra en la escuela de todos los días dice que es inspiración. (FG-Leslie)

However, she also points out that her primary school Spanish teacher mentions that an inspiration may come from copying parts of someone else. These exchanges between the participants show how children might have different perspectives concerning the creative process. Some children might feel it is unoriginal while others might feel the act of using the same decorations or colors is an inspiration. However, because of their young age, it is hard to interpret whether these opinions are their own or learnt. Nonetheless, this theme provides insights regarding the importance to define the difference between copying something and being inspired by something in art activities. In addition, this finding highlights the need to be prepared to face these different events to prevent a disruption in the class sequence. It is also useful to consider this situation as an opportunity to work on conflict resolution skills.

The Form of Arts We Prefer

One of the components of the focus group included providing the participants with five flashcards. Each flashcard included the name of one of the five forms of arts used during the summer course: painting, drama, music, video/photography, and storytelling.

The participants were first given some minutes to order the flashcards according to which art form they liked the most (1) to the one they liked the least (5). The following excerpt shows the beginning of the discussion they had:

Shuyo: ¿Qué les gustó más? ¿Foto y video? Alcen la mano.

Poli: Alcen la mano. [Alzan la mano seis]

Poli: Sólo a Karen no le gustó.

Shuyo: Uno, dos tres... A mí tampoco. uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis...

Poli: Entonces va en medio porque sólo a dos no les gusta.

(FG-Shuyo & Poli)

The participants reached a consensus in 15 minutes and then they were asked by the moderator to share the poll results. The following is an excerpt from the discussion:

Moderador: ¿Ya terminamos?

Leslie: Ajá.

Gre: Yes.

Moderador: ¿Sí?, a ver, ¿qué les gusta más? Primero...

Todos: Música.

(FG-Moderador & todos los participantes)

Music was voted the most liked activity among the participants. Interestingly, music was the only art discipline to receive all eight votes from the participants. Aside from the position of music, more proof to support this preference was that most participants chose to draw their concert experience, an activity during the music week. Most of these visual representations expressed the positive attitudes the participants had towards the activities and the positive feelings they experienced.

Video and photography were voted the second most liked activity by the participants. During this week participants practiced introducing themselves by creating a short identity video. First, they collected pictures related to the topics of family, likes and dislikes, food, sports, or cultural activities. Next, participants learned how to use *Animoto* (a free and user-friendly editor) to create their videos. The usage of technology for this activity perhaps explains why this was one of the most popular since out of eight votes this activity received seven.

Moderador: Después ¿cuál les gustó?

Todos: Foto y video.

Moderador: ¿Por qué?

Kim: Porque pudimos usar las tablets.

Gre: ¡Sí!

(FG-Moderador & todos los participantes)

Kim proceeds to state that the reason they enjoyed working with mixed media was because they got to use the tablets. We can also see Gre agreeing with Kim. The use of technology in the classroom is a common thread. Additionally, we could argue that these participants are “digital learners” (Bullen & Morgan, 2016, p. 60). Because of their generation, they are more exposed to technology. Although the participants had to be trained to use the software of *Animoto*, the incorporation of mixed media proved to be popular during the summer course.

Theatre was the third most liked activity with five votes. As Poli discusses below, the drama week was a challenge. One of the main challenges was creating and completing the scenography for the play.

Moderador: Después eligieron teatro.

Shuyo: Ajá. Bueno fue el tercero que más nos gustó.

Moderador: Teatro, cierto.

(FG-Moderador & Shuyo)

Poli shares that creating the scenography for the play was difficult for them. Shay reveals the same feeling and adds that it was impossible to finish. This might suggest that participants perceive the creative process as difficult or unattainable.

Poli: Ese sí que nos costó un montón.

Moderador: ¿Ah les costó mucho?

Shay: Sí, no podíamos acabar el castillo.

(FG-Poli, moderador & Shay)

Shuyo stated that the play was not his favorite one when compared to video and photography. The possible reason behind it was that *Cinderella* is often considered a play for girls. .

Shuyo: Bueno, o sea no me gustó tanto por... por ejemplo La Cenicienta es para niñas. No me gustó lo de La Cenicienta, pero el video que hicimos cada uno en la tablet sí.
(FG-Shuyo)

Overall, the participants believed that the drama week was difficult for them because of the number of tasks that they needed to participate in. This could be due to the limited amount of time of one week they had to work with the different stages of participating in a play that was not in their first language.

The fourth most popular art form was storytelling, receiving four out of eight votes. The following excerpt shows what the participants did during this week. The participants read a book titled *Worry Says What?* and learned about what the feeling of worried means and what strategies participants used to deal with the Worry Monster, the main character of the book.

Moderador: Después eligieron cuentos. ¿Qué hicieron en los cuentos?

Poli: Eso. [señala la actividad de Worry].

Las niñas: ¡Sííí! Sí hicimos cuentos.

Poli: El de Worry.

Leslie: Sí, Worry.

Gre: Hablamos de nuestras preocupaciones.

Moderador: ¡De sus preocupaciones también! ¿Sí Shay?

Shay: También sobre qué nos tranquiliza cuando estamos enojados o preocupados.

(FG-Moderador, las niñas & Gre)

The least liked art activity for the participants was painting. Only Leslie voted in favor of painting. As seen in the first theme, some participants disclosed that they did not possess or believe they possessed the ability to draw. A possible reason for Leslie's appreciation of art might be that

at her school she receives training from her art teachers. She studies at *Liceo de las Artes* where students receive art classes in Spanish, so she is familiar with art techniques and metalanguage. Another reason she liked painting was because she could use it to talk about herself and her life. Leslie explains this in the next excerpt:

Moderador: Leslie, ¿sí te gustó pintura? ¿Por qué?

Leslie: Porque contábamos así como nuestra vida, cuántos años teníamos, cuando nacimos.

(FG-Moderador & todos los participantes)

Leslie's insights are interesting since the usage of visual arts in the classroom, at least for her, are meaningful because she relates to the content. She shares her world and what she knows about it.

All Arts Means Painting and Drawing

Another theme which emerged during the focus discussion deals with how the participants viewed the arts. They seemed to think that all arts meant painting and drawing in the class and outside the class. Participants were asked to describe other art classes that they might have attended: extracurricular or at their primary school. The rationale behind this discussion was to explore other contexts where participants would have experienced other forms of arts. The following excerpt shows the moderator asking students about their previous experiences.

Moderador: Bueno, antes de que tuvieran este curso o esta clase de inglés en el curso de verano con arte, ¿habían trabajado en otras clases con arte?

Reny: Eh, no. Bueno, sí.

Shuyo: No.

Gre: Sí.

Karen: Ah, sí.

Poli: Sí

Moderador: Leslie, ¿habías trabajado con arte antes?

Leslie: Ajá.

Moderador: Shay, ¿tú has trabajado con arte?

Shay: ¡Oui, yes!

Moderador: Kim, ¿has trabajado antes con arte? ¿En otras clases?

Kim: Sí.

(FG-Moderador & todos los participantes)

All the participants, except Shuyo, state that they had contact with other art activities before this summer course. The moderator then proceeded to ask the participants what type of art-based activities they had participated in.

Moderador: ¿Sí?, ¿qué hacías cuando trabajaban con arte?

Leslie: Íbamos al parque a pintar.

Shay: Pues fue una vez, en un campamento. Pintamos y dibujamos.

(FG-Moderador, Leslie & Shay)

Both Leslie and Shay have participated in art activities in the form of painting and drawing. Leslie states that she was taken to the park to paint. Shay shares that she experienced art activities once at a camp and her experience resembled Leslie's.

Moderador: ¿Cómo? ¿Cómo usan arte en otras clases?

Kim: Pintando.

Shuyo: ¿Pintando qué?

Shay: Pues en mi escuela pintábamos las paredes o hacíamos... nos pintábamos las manos.

Reny: Sí, nosotros también.

(FG-Moderador, Kim, Shuyo, Shay & Reny)

The moderator continues to ask the rest of the participants. Kim states that she has painted in the past and Shay shares that at her school she painted her hands and the school walls. Reny comments that she also painted at her school. These students' perspectives are uniform when commenting that painting and drawing are art activities that they usually experience at school. This discussion shows that there is a gap between their voted preferences (music and video) and what they experience in the class (painting and drawing). This gap is possibly rooted in the lack of funds schools have or the availability of art infused CLIL programs at schools.

Moderador: Kim, ¿también tú hacías cosas de arte?

Kim: Más o menos.

Moderador: ¿Como qué cosas hacías?

Kim: Ya no me acuerdo.

Moderador: Gre, ¿te acuerdas si hacías arte?

Gre: Sí.

Moderador: ¿Sí?, ¿como qué cosas?

Gre: Jugamos, pintar, dibujaba.

(FG-Moderador, Kim & Gre)

In these extracts we see Kim and Gre sharing that they both have experienced drawing and painting, similar to the previous participants, regardless of attending different schools. One assumption is that art activities are not that present in the public primary school curriculum. Perhaps students are not aware that they are carrying out art activities. This might be because the teachers neglected sharing this information with them. During this part of the conversation, we can see that most participants associate arts with drawing and painting. Most have painted and drawn in their previous English classes or at their schools. At this point the participants did not discuss other forms of arts like dancing, drama, music, etc.

Moderador: Okay. Poli, ¿qué hacías en tus clases de arte?

Poli: Bueno, pues yo aquí no venía antes.

Moderador: Puede ser en otro lugar donde hayan estudiado.

Poli: Pues pintar un poco.

Moderador: ¿Nunca habías trabajado con arte? Ah, muy interesante. Y Kim, ¿habías trabajado antes con arte?

Kim: Sí, sólo pintando y dibujando.

(FG-Moderador, Poli & Kim)

Later in the transcript, Shuyo realizes he has worked with some art activities before at the language center. In the next excerpt Shuyo discussed perhaps what could be categorized as miming when learning about the animals.

Moderador: ¿Quién más quiere contarme qué hacían con arte?

Shuyo: Hacíamos sombras. Hacíamos óctopus con las manos.

Moderador: Es verdad, con las manos. ¿Qué más?, ¿qué más?

Leslie, ¿qué más recuerdas que hacías con arte?

Leslie: Pues dibujábamos.

Leslie: Bueno, y en mi otra escuela nos ensuciamos y hacemos collages. Nos enseñan, así como técnicas para el arte y así.

(FG-Moderador, Shuyo & Leslie)

At the end, participants still discuss with the moderator that they have worked with arts in the forms of drawing and painting. Leslie adds that at her school they learn techniques and briefly mentions that they work with collages. Due to the type of school that she attends, she is aware of some technical aspects. Nevertheless, the most interesting finding was brought up during the drawing and writing activity. All eight participants have a simplified perspective about the arts. For them, arts amount to drawing and writing. Interestingly, in the next fragment, all participants commented on their dislike of drawing:

Moderador: Pero están dibujando, ¿qué no les gusta dibujar?

Todos: ¡No!

Gre: A mí no me gusta dibujar, aunque soy bueno. A veces los maestros nos hacen dibujar todo el tiempo.

Kim: A mí no me gusta porque no sé.

Shuyo: Yo tampoco sé dibujar.

Ame: A veces no me dan ganas de dibujar.

(FG-Moderador & todos los participantes)

What is interesting is the contrast between drawing being what participants have experienced the most and drawing being something they do not enjoy. This is relevant because some teachers assume that children enjoy drawing and painting. Teachers might believe both are natural skills for them. However, the participants voiced that they do not like drawing and ironically, drawing is what they are asked to do in class. It is impossible to generalize this claim, but it raises a question that is worth asking our students regarding what arts they enjoy: Do our students enjoy painting and drawing as much as we might assume?

Public Schools vs. Private Schools

While discussing the contact the participants had with art-related activities, it became evident that there was a difference between participants enrolled in private schools versus those from public schools. In this context, six of the eight participants come from public primary schools while the remaining two participants are enrolled in private schools. The following excerpt presents the moderator asking the participants to elaborate on the similarities and differences between classes at their primary schools and those classes at the language center.

Moderador: Ahora, ¿qué creen que sea como parecido? ¿Qué similitudes habrá cuando tomaban esas clases de antes con la del curso de verano?

Poli: Que solamente nos enseñaban vídeos en la clase de arte. Y luego ya no fue la maestra.

Shuyo: Pues en mi escuela normal, tenía un maestro, pero nos da una vez al año su clase de arte.

Poli: Sí, algunos maestros nada más dan su clase una vez al año.

Gre: A mí sólo los miércoles.

Reny: En mi escuela a veces tenemos clase de artes.

(FG-Moderador, Poli, Shuyo, Gre & Reny)

In this excerpt the participants enrolled in public primary schools shared their experiences with art class. Poli and Shuyo state that they only saw their teacher once and then they “never” saw him again. Poli adds that in her art class they watched videos, but the class was limited to that. In Reny’s case she fails to remember the last time she had an art class and says that sometimes they have this class. In Gre’s case, and since he is in secondary school, he says that his art class is every Wednesday. From this excerpt one can infer that in public education little emphasis is given to the arts in the mainstream classroom. In contrast when Leslie and Karen, both private school students, were asked to compare the responses, they suggested the following:

Moderador: Leslie, ¿en tu otra escuela son así como en tu curso de verano?

Leslie: Maso. [más o menos]

Moderador: ¿Por qué?

Leslie: Porque en mi escuela vemos técnicas de arte y hacemos arte por más tiempo. Llevamos música, esculturas y otras cosas.

(FG-Moderador & Leslie)

Leslie states that at her primary school art is given more time. Not only arts are given more time but students at these schools receive formal art instruction rather than only receiving art-related activities. Music and

sculpture are part of the art classes Leslie has. Additionally, she shares that they learn art techniques. Karen, who also attends a private elementary school, describes that different types of activities are offered. The next fragment presents Karen elaborating on her experience with other forms of art in her private school.

Moderador: ¿Karen? En tu escuela, en la que tenías con clases de arte, ¿en qué se parecen con esta?

Karen: En nada.

Moderador: ¿Nada?, ¿por qué?

Karen: Allá había un comedor, sí, y en la salida había un comedor para que tú fueras al taller.

Moderador: ¿Al taller?

Moderador: ¿Y de qué eran los talleres?

Karen: De ballet, de gimnasia, de arte...

Leslie: Danza.

(FG-Moderador, Karen & Leslie)

The realities of art classes are different between the participants that attend public schools and those who attend private institutions: Karen and Leslie. In a public-school setting, participants rarely get to see their art teacher and they do not experience different forms of art. In contrast, at Leslie and Karen's schools they have different workshops and facilities that help them experience different forms of arts. At Leslie's school she learns through arts. At Karen's school, students are offered these extracurricular art activities and they seem to be more in contact with the fine arts.

Suggestions to Improve Art Classes

One of the last themes to emerge was the participant's perspectives concerning the recommendations they suggest improving the art activities.

The following focus group excerpt presents their suggestions for the English art class:

Moderador: ¿Qué cambiarías de la clase de inglés como para mejorarla?

Reny: Qué hubiera más juegos y una mesa más grande con más materiales para hacer arte.

Leslie: Que hubiera más espacio. Porque cuando hacíamos algunas actividades no había suficiente espacio para hacer arte.

Shay: Usar más música.

Leslie: Que la teacher haga las actividades con nosotros.

Gre: Que nos esfuercen más a aprender.

Shuyo: Nada.

Poli: Yo creo que me gustaría que hubiera disfraces para la obra.

Karen: Yo nada.

(FG-Moderador & todos los participantes)

From this excerpt it is possible to establish that the salient advice to improve the class is related to the material and facilities. Reny wishes that more materials were available as well as more games. Leslie comments on the space. She believes the space is reduced and is not enough for eight children making art. Poli perceives that there is a lack of props for the drama class. Poli states that costumes would be useful to have. Both, Shuyo and Karen do not believe there is anything to change, however, they do not provide a rationale behind their opinions. Because this is a new experience, they were satisfied with art content being used. Gre believes something to improve in the class is a teacher who pushes them to learn more.

Leslie thinks that the teacher should participate in the activities with the students. Leslie's statement is related to Maley's (2000) quote concerning how the teacher can engage his or her students:

if we want our students to sing, we must sing too. If we want them to act and mime, we must act and mime too. If we want them to write poems or stories, or to draw and paint, then we must engage in the same activities as they do. (p. 6)

It is imperative to remember that if we ask our students to lose all fear and open themselves to perform, the teacher should set the example.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore young learners' perspectives concerning art integration in the EFL CLIL classroom at a private language center in the central part of Mexico. Different perspectives regarding the integration range from positive, neutral, and negative. Positive perspectives relate to the participants reports of feeling included in the class themes, fun classes, and overall creativity. Some negative aspects students reported were those related to their opinions about being copied when asked to create different activities. The issues that copying and not knowing what to create affected mostly the flow of the classroom and CLIL teachers should be aware of this when managing the class. Finally, those perspectives that were considered neutral are related to the different reports the participants gave about experiencing arts before the CLIL course. The participants who attend public schools have limited access to art classes while those in private schools are more familiar with art classes. Schools that implement or are seeking to implement CLIL methodologies should consider exploring the students' perspectives related to the content used in their programs. The predominant adoption of content such as science or social studies might hinder the benefits that integrating content and language in the classroom might have. It has been argued throughout this study that perhaps integrating arts, a more hands-on subject that has low linguistic demands, benefits the students in terms of the perceptions they have towards the EFL classroom. Hope-

fully, this research might offer some contributions to researchers who are interested in working with CLIL methodologies. Through the exploration of the perspectives of students in a classroom with arts, the main goal of this research was to understand the opinions, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes these participants had towards this integration. These perspectives give future practitioners a broad idea of what they might encounter when using arts in the classroom and how to better prepare for it.

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CHAPTER 6

AN ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTUAL DATA ABOUT IMPLEMENTING TRANSLATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

María de Lourdes Martínez Ruiz

Introduction

One of the current dilemmas in second or foreign language education is whether or not translation should be used in language teaching. This controversy arises from the association with the grammar translation method (GTM) which has been negatively criticized. In pursuit of monolingual methods or approaches, the use of the native language and translation were banned from the foreign language classroom. Only two decades ago, the reintroduction of translation in teaching and learning processes has resulted in a thorough theoretical and new empirical inquiry (Pintado-Gutiérrez, 2018). Despite the increasing number of studies concerning pedagogical translation (PT) in Mexico (Contreras López & Zimányi, 2018; D'Amore, 2015; Gasca Jiménez, 2017; Zimányi, 2017), more research is needed about the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the use of PT in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms in the country. Therefore, this research is concerned with the perceptions of an EFL teacher and her students concerning the implementation of translation-related activities in EFL classrooms at the Department of Languages of the University of Guanajuato.

Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to review the literature related to the study of pedagogical translation in language education. The main concepts are translation, translation as a natural cognitive process, pedagogical translation, and communicative language teaching (CLT).

Translation

The origins of translation as a recognized practice can be traced back to the year 106 BCE where Cicero reflected on the difference between translating word-for-word versus sense-for-sense (Soler Pardo, 2013), a debate that still prevails nowadays. For Nida and Taber

(1982), translation “consists in [sic] reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (p. 12). It should be noted that the authors distinguish between an old and a new focus of viewing translation since it “has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor” (Nida & Taber, 1982, p.1). They argue that the translator’s main aim is to deliver a message that avoids misunderstandings among the target audience rather than focusing on stylistic features of a text in the target language. In a similar vein, Toury (1995) refers to translation as “facts of target cultures” (p. 23) as he establishes the importance of an adequate contextualization of the translator to facilitate the understanding between the translators and the target audience. Also, Assis-Rosa (2010) acknowledges the significance of culture in translating and remarks that the textual outcome needs to convey characteristics and conditions of the target context. House (2018) provides an easily digestible definition and affirms that translation is often perceived as “a procedure where original text, often called ‘the source text’ (ST), is replaced by another text in a different language, often called the ‘the target text’ (TT)” (p. 9). The author also explains that translation is a process that consists of two stages: first, the translator “understands and interprets” (House, 2018, p. 10) the original text, and second, the interpretation is transmitted into the target language.

Translation as a Means of Communication

The notion of translation as a means of communication has often been overlooked in language education, mainly due to a long-held belief that it is a static activity where the translator does not engage in any type of interaction. In this study, however, translating is understood as an inherently human communicative activity as well as “a natural communication and learning strategy” (González-Davies, 2018, p. 2). This is supported by researchers such as Gutt (2005) and Lörscher (1992), who have studied

the cognitive aspects of translation, while other scholars, including Hatim (1996), Holmes (1988), House (2016), and Pym (2010), conceive the translator as a mediator of languages and cultures.

This social-communicative function of translation has been addressed by House and Loenhoff (2016) who reflect on the benefits of a collaborative contribution between TS and communication studies. They remark that both disciplines are concerned with using the language in a specific context and how “the production of sense and the co-construction of meaning” (House & Loenhoff, 2016, p. 97) impact the participants. They also contend that one of the primary issues that both disciplines face is related to “problems of comprehension and cultural understanding” (House & Loenhoff, 2016, p. 98). In this respect, translation and communication studies are concerned with interactions that enable people to communicate in different settings. Hence it can be deduced that translation can foster understanding among speakers of different languages.

Translation as a Natural Cognitive Process

With advances in cognitive neuroscience studies, Thierry and Wu (2007) became interested in conducting research to explore the effects of using two languages and involuntary word processing in bilingual participants. They intended to demonstrate that bilingual learners access the linguistic background of their first language (L1) when they read words in their second language (L2). The authors examined the reaction of fifteen Chinese–English bilinguals who acquired English after the age of twelve, from whom they obtained behavioral and electrophysiological information. Through a nonverbal judgment task on shapes, the participants were given a sequence of squares and circles and they had to differentiate them by pressing buttons. At the same time, they had to ignore words in English which included circle and square when translated into Chinese. The authors concluded that there is a spontaneous activation of the L1, which means that it is used as a reference to process information in the L2. Therefore, as

D'Amore (2015) suggests, it appears that translation has been part of EFL/ESL classrooms as it has influenced language learning even in classrooms where a communicative language syllabus is being implemented.

Pedagogical Translation

Despite efforts to avoid translation, it has undoubtedly been part of the EFL classroom where its manifestation varies according to the individual who uses it, that is to say the teacher or the students. In the case of students, translation may happen internally when performing reading comprehension exercises. This type of translation is known as “internalized translation” (Martínez Ruiz & Zimányi, 2020, p. 5). Teachers are not the exception: purposefully or not, teachers tend to resort to the students’ L1 depending on the learning environment and students’ characteristics. Such performance is known as “classroom discourse translation” (Martínez Ruiz & Zimányi, 2020, p. 12). An example of this is when teachers translate instructions from English into Spanish so students can understand or clarify any possible doubts. These two examples reveal a reality that needs to be evident especially for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and scholars.

One of the most prominent authors that acknowledged the value of translation in language education was Duff (1989), who believed that translation could be used to develop accuracy, clarity, and flexibility in the production of the L2. This first attempt to redefine translation as a pedagogic resource led the path to a more focused conceptualization of PT. For Vermes (2010), it is “an instrumental kind of translation, in which the translated text serves as a tool of improving the language learner’s foreign language proficiency. It is a means of consciousness raising, practicing, or testing language knowledge” (p. 83). The author differentiates PT from general translation by identifying the function, means, and purpose about the role that each of them have. Klein-Braley (1996) was visionary enough to consider translation as a necessary competence to face

the everyday linguistic encounters either professionally or in informal settings. A line of thought similar to Klein-Braley's (1996) is recovered by David et al. (2019) who define PT as an "emergent social practice" (p. 252) since translation has become part of the everyday life in bilinguals or multilinguals.

The recognition of translation as part of the learners' lives has resulted in further reflections about what this entails. That is the case of Carreres et al. (2017), who contrary to Vermes (2010), believe that the purpose of PT is beyond instrumental and state that it should be an objective. According to them, translation is part of the mediation ability. The concept of mediation is well defined by Liddicoat (2016), who considers that the one who translates brings together linguistic and cultural meanings and communicates new information that can be understood across languages. After a close review of empirical and theoretical research, one of the most outstanding findings by Carreres et al. (2017) is that PT is the fifth skill along with reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In addition, these authors highlight its value as an individual or collaborative activity. Keeping these arguments in mind, it is possible to reflect on the considerations that need to be considered to incorporate translation didactically in language education.

Communicative Language Teaching

With the creation of the direct method, the emergence of CLT attracted scholars' attention and it came to influence foreign language instruction from the 1980s onwards. It continues to be an approach that guides EFL education in many countries, despite the numerous controversies surrounding it. In order to define CLT, Howatt (1984) analyzes it from two perspectives: the weak version and the strong version, as follows.

The 'weak' version, which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners

with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching [...] The ‘strong’ version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. (p. 279)

The objective of the weak version of CLT refers to learning through the English language. In this case, the teacher focuses on the structural organization of English and aims to develop fluency and accuracy; thus, teaching becomes explicit and intentional following a syllabus based on competencies and functions. Regarding the strong version of CLT, it proposes that students learn the language entirely through using it. There is no focus on linguistic points since the teaching process is implicit and opportunities for incidental learning are provided. Perhaps the distinction between these two versions may provide teachers with options to implement CLT considering their students’ context and fostering motivation. Regarding the benefits that learners can obtain from either version, they both attempt to offer contextualized learning environments where the integration of the four skills is pursued. Ideally, learner-centeredness is considered one of the most critical aspects. Concerning the use of L1 and translation in CLT, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) state that “Judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible. Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it” (p. 91). The use of the mother tongue is still a subject of debate among CLT advocates. However, a key feature of teachers who implement this approach in the classroom is that they are viewed as ‘counselors’ which means that they should be a “skillful ‘understander’ of the struggle students face as they attempt to internalize another language” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 118). These authors further note that students’ confidence increases when their

native language is used and the creative and purposeful use of the L1 might help the teacher to overcome students' negative feelings or attitudes about learning English. Furthermore, if we consider that translation is by nature a communicative activity, it is difficult to see how it could be excluded from an approach that considers communication its main pillar. Having discussed the literature, the research methodology is addressed in the next section.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study describes and analyzes a teacher's and two groups of students' perceptions that emerged from the implementation of translation-related activities in an EFL classroom at the University of Guanajuato. This objective was expected to be accomplished by answering the following research question:

What are the teacher's and students' perceptions in upper-intermediate EFL classes at the University of Guanajuato regarding the implementation of translation-related activities?

The research question and objective were approached through a qualitative paradigm. For Dörnyei (2007) qualitative inquiry:

describes the social phenomenon as it naturally occurs, it employs a subjective interpretative analysis, its explicit goal is to explore the participants' view of the situation being studied, it comprises a small sample size, it is concerned with subjective opinions and has an emergent research design. (pp. 37-38)

This definition is pertinent because the research was conducted in a natural setting where a small number of participants were asked about their perceptions of PT. My role as a researcher then was to interpret "the

meanings that people bring to them” (Pope & Mays, 2006, p. 4), referring to making sense of these perceptions. This explanation is particularly useful since the goal was to collect perceptual information from the teacher and her students.

It is well established that one prominent method in qualitative research is case studies. McDonough and McDonough (1997) state that the purpose of a case study is to “[understand] people’s own meanings and perspectives” (p. 205). A descriptive case study was considered for this research study to gain an in-depth and contextual understanding of the participants’ perceptions. According to Yin (2003), a descriptive case study aims to “describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred” (p. 15). In this regard, the intervention consisted of incorporating translation-related activities in two EFL classrooms. The outcomes of this intervention resulted in a description of events under which the teaching and the learning process occurred and how the participants’ experiences influenced this process.

Data Collection Techniques

For this chapter, the data were gathered through two data collection techniques: focus group interviews, and a prompted teacher diary. The first technique was a focus group interview. Krueguer and Casey (2015) state that conducting a focus group interview provides a clear reaction or response about an issue or idea within a group. The participants’ opinions were elicited using a series of questions to guide the focus group interview. I carried out two focus group interviews (one with each group) after the five translation-related activities had been implemented. The participants were given the option to answer in either English or Spanish, however, all of them answered in English.

The second technique was a prompted teacher diary. Heigham and Corker (2009) define a teacher diary as an introspective technique “that provides information about L2 learners and teachers and their perspec-

tives on the affective and instructional factors that affect L2 learning and teaching” (p. 230). In this regard, twelve prompts were designed by dividing them into three sections where the teacher addressed an evaluation about the strengths and weaknesses of the activities and materials, a description of the students’ learning during and after conducting the activity, and suggestions on how the activities can be improved. Overall, five entries were obtained, and they were delivered in a Word document. Having discussed the techniques, I now turn to the translation-related activities used in the classrooms.

The translation-related activities consisted of five activities adapted from internet resources and books following the purpose of this study and their codes: 1) Chinese whispers (CW); 2) False friends (FF); 3) Lost in translation (LT); 4) Mad libs® (ML); and 5) At the restaurant (ATR). The purpose of these activities was to elicit perceptual information from the participants regarding the use of pedagogical translation. The EFL teacher implemented the five activities with her students in two groups of the same proficiency level over five weeks. Before the implementation of the activities, the teacher received a brief training that consisted of four hours over two days at the Department of Languages in Guanajuato. There was limited interaction between the researcher and the participants before and after implementing the activities to preserve her positionality. Having described the activities that were part of the methodology, I will now explain the research site and the participants.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at Department of Languages at the University of Guanajuato, which is in Guanajuato city. This school offers a variety of language courses that are open to both university students and the general public. In this study, the students were young adults between 17 and 20 years old who attended general English language classes at the 800 hundred level (highest level of eight levels), equivalent to a B2

level in the Common European Framework (CEFR). According to the teacher, the syllabus followed by the language instructors is guided by the CLT approach.

This study included one EFL teacher who taught two groups at the same 800 English level, and 36 Mexican students who belonged to these two groups. The first group had 20 students from which 55% of them were women and 45% were men. The second group consisted of 16 students, where 69% were women, and 31% were men. The purpose of including participants from more than one classroom was to have a greater participant pool and increase validity.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical criteria for this research were to obtain the full consent of all the individuals involved in this process. Regarding permission, it was fundamental to obtain the approval of the person in charge of the English language courses. The next step was to present the research topic and objectives to the EFL teacher to clarify any possible doubts and make changes to the data collection techniques, if necessary. Then, a consent form was designed and given to the teacher and her students to give them a general description of the study and then inform them of their role and rights as participants. Underage participants were given a consent form directed to their parents. It was also essential to establish a respectful relationship with the participants by telling them that their anonymity would be protected by assigning them codes, and information would be treated confidentially. The consent forms were delivered face-to-face, where doubts and comments were addressed during the interaction.

Data Analysis

To conduct the analysis and interpretation of the data, a thematic analysis framework by Vaismoradi et al. (2016) was followed. To do so, the

authors suggest that the researcher first needs to read the data and highlight the units of meaning that allow for the emergence of themes from the data sources. The next step is to label, classify, compare, define, and describe the data themes. The information obtained from the techniques was also analyzed through a triangulation approach which made it possible to elucidate the participants' perceptions after they had gained experience with pedagogical translation. Finally, the analysis of the perceptual data was based on the development of three themes.

To protect the participants' identity, the labeling process was carried out. For example, the code of FGI-GRI-ST1 refers to the focus group interview (FGI), group 1 or 2 (GRI or GR2), and the student number (S1) while the code of TD-GRI/GR2-ATR refers to teacher's diary, group 1 and 2, and the activity of "At the restaurant".

Data Results

From the collected data, three themes were identified: 1) Perceptions about translation-related activities; 2) Perceptions about translation as an activity, and 3) Perceptions about translation in the language classroom and its pedagogical use.

Perceptions about Translation-related Activities

The teacher's diary allowed me to analyze her stance towards the implementation of PT through five translation-related activities in both of her groups. From this information it could be seen that, after implementing the activities, she showed herself optimistic about using PT as a resource for further lessons and experimenting with it at other proficiency levels.

Both groups seemed to enjoy the activity. Therefore, I would use it again just like this time. I would divide the group into smaller groups so that I can see if there is a different outcome. (TD-GR1/GR2-LT)

Some of my students that took 700 level [These students were at 800 level] with me last semester, told me that these types of activities would have been nice if I had implemented last semester. And I must say that after seeing them, I agree. (TD-GR2-CW)

This data showed that contrary to some beliefs, translation is not a boring activity when carried out in a creative way. Such as any other activity, the use of translation also needs to be adapted depending on the classroom setting and students' needs. The second excerpt reveals that the teacher and her students consider that PT is also useful in lower language proficiency levels. This sheds light on the fact that students were able to reflect about their learning process.

The teacher provides her perceptions on the various activities that were implemented. Some activities were more successful than others depending on the students' needs, interests, and the level of complexity that each of them had. In this regard, the teacher shared the following:

They enjoy reading their dialogue to the rest of the group and we all laughed with their answers. (TD-GR1/GR2-ML)

Some students expressed that it was not a hard activity, but it was a challenging one. Specially [sic] because they had to focus on the spelling and the meaning of unknown words. (TD-GR1/GR2-FF)

The first excerpt shows that one activity promoted oral communication within the students and was an aid to create a positive environment for the students to present their dialogue in front of the class. This finding is relevant because it tackles the questionable belief that translation does not foster the development of oral interaction and that its use can prevent learners' communication in the L2. Regarding the second quote, data shows that using PT does not imply spoon-feeding language learners. Again, when used correctly, translation can bring new opportunities to expand students' knowledge in each language area.

Another finding was that some students had already performed a translation activity outside the classroom like the activity implemented by the teacher. This shows that PT is a great opportunity to make authentic use of the L2. After the implementation, the teacher reported that some students from the two groups had experienced a similar situation in which they had to translate for other people outside the language classroom.

I asked them if they have ever done something like this and, in both groups, I had a couple of students that answered yes to that question. (TD-GR1/GR2-ATR)

This seems to suggest that PT can prepare students to satisfy communicative needs, help them become mediators of languages and cultures, and increase their confidence while interacting with speakers of a different language. Moreover, this finding also demonstrates that the use of translation is an everyday activity which is not limited to professional translators. In this regard, a student asserted the following:

I think the activity [“At the restaurant”] was useful. I work at a hotel, so I talk to foreign people almost every day and it helps me because they ask us to translate for them and it is pretty hard if you don’t do it often. (FGI-GR1-S2)

Therefore, it cannot be considered that translation is wasteful, especially when CLT tries to recreate real situations inside the language classroom. Because CLT is often thought of as student-centered, more attention is needed to collect information about the students’ different reasons and needs for learning a foreign language and how the teacher can foster meaningful and relevant language learning.

Perceptions about Translation as an Activity

An interesting discussion about the meaning of translation emerged during the focus group interviews. The data showed that students conceptualized translation as an everyday activity performed inside and outside the language classroom, a resource only used when necessary, and an extra skill to the four skills (Carreres et al., 2017). It is relevant to consider that the student participants based their answers on their experiences with translation. In the extract below, one participant interpreted translation as an every-day activity:

We all do translation every day: in our class, in our lives because we watch series, movies. We read some texts in our schools. Also, for my area where I live because we have to deal with foreign people. (FGI-GR2-S1)

Here the student considers that translation is a process where he decodes L2 input in various contexts. He mentions that he uses translation to engage in everyday actions such as hobbies or classroom tasks. It also appears that the participant uses translation to communicate with foreign people in his own context. In this regard, one main concern of language education refers to the use of EFL for real purposes. In this case, the above student has shed light on the relevance of translation as an essential component in activity design to recreate situations with real communicative interactions. Finally, according to this participant, translation and interpretation are part of his routine because he uses translation to communicate with others, thus complying with one of the CLT's principles of a communicative purpose in language learning.

Another student stated the following:

I consider translation as a skill. It is equally important to reading or writing. (FGI-GR2-S7)

This participant acknowledges the significance of translation in foreign language education and its applicability in everyday circumstances. The fact that she considers translation as a skill means that translation is inherent to language learning. Translation then is an activity that should be developed more. The fact that she perceives translation as an additional skill to reading, writing, listening, and speaking may uncover its importance to successful language learning. This new focus of pedagogical translation may contribute to certain reconsiderations in terms of successful second language education.

Within this theme, information regarding generated emotions in the translation-related activities emerged. From the teacher's diary, it was possible to note that some activities fostered nervousness or fun. For example, she pointed out that she observed the students' nervousness during an activity:

I noticed that as they were waiting for their turn to hear the sentence; they all got nervous. The first group told me that it was because now they were not going to be able to analyze what they were going to tell their classmate like they did with "Lost in translation". I was only going to do one or two [phrases] but my students asked me to do more. I was able to use the three phrases that I was given plus another one that I found on the internet. (TD-GR1-CW)

Unsurprisingly, oral translation made students feel uneasy since they had little time to prepare their answers. Despite the learners' nervousness, the teacher indicates that they were interested in continuing with the activity. According to the teacher, the students were able to overcome their nervousness and that showed a desire to continue.

Also, during the focus group interviews, some students also commented on how they felt about these activities. One participant recalled:

I think the activities are motivating because these kinds of activities challenge our thoughts and minds, and it is not the same being challenged by these activities than just reading or listening. (FGI-GR1-S1)

It is essential to notice that for some students, demanding activities engage them with the practice of the L2. Thus, it can be said that PT can motivate EFL learners, and it seems to push them on with their learning by promoting a more critical way of thinking.

Perceptions about Translation in the Language Classroom and Its Pedagogical Use

In this section, participants' perceptions about the role of pedagogical translation as a learning resource and its impact on their foreign language learning will be analyzed. Contemplating the purpose of these activities, a student reflected on the usefulness of translation as an aid in a foreign country:

It will be helpful if we are in another country as well if we want to travel. I mean, we do translation every time we are speaking English, every time that we are listening to English because we have to process what people are saying. Maybe not exactly the same but we tend to look for the most important things. I think that the purposes of these activities are to increase our ability to translate. (FGI-GR2-S1)

In this excerpt, the student participant sees translation as a surviving skill in a context where English is spoken but he also considers that translation can be a tool to understand others. He seems to be aware of the importance of understanding meaning over isolated words. This finding is contrary to the notion that translation can mislead learners

to believe that translation needs to be performed word by word. Finally, by asserting that translation is performed every time he speaks English, the participant also realizes that translation is a cognitive process that occurs naturally, as proposed by Duff (1989), Thierry and Wu (2007), and D'Amore (2015).

Similar to the excerpt above, the next participant also reflected on the instrumental use of translation. He highlighted the benefits of it in higher education:

I think that translating is very important for our university degree because there are some words that are important for my studies to do essays. You need to be capable of translating for our university degree but also when you are watching a TV series. (FGI-GR2-S4)

For this participant, translation is essential to complete tasks at the university. The student expanded on the uses of translation by asserting that not only is it instrumental to access knowledge for his studies such as articles, but it is also helpful for his leisure activities such as watching TV program.

The next excerpts relate to the usefulness of pedagogical translation in developing vocabulary and metalinguistic awareness. For example, a participant asserted that translation is a resource to review knowledge acquired in previous lessons:

You have to scratch in your mind and look for words and vocabulary and try to be as close as the original meaning of the words. It helps you to look for synonyms. (FGI-GR1-S2)

In this excerpt, the student mentions that translation-related activities encouraged him to reflect on vocabulary he had already learned in the target language and to look for different words to express a similar con-

cept. This suggests that he understands that sometimes it is not possible to find the exact words, so translation is an aid to find a suitable equivalent. Another participant, this time from Group 2, similarly reported that through the activities, he could learn new words and recall those that he had previously acquired:

I consider them very useful because you can learn more words and it reminds you of more words that maybe you could have learned but maybe you have forgotten. I think too that translating is important for our university degrees to write academic papers in English because we tend to use the same words in English and Spanish and sometimes, they don't mean the same. (FGI-GR2-S2)

This result coincides with the findings by Carreres (2006) who observed that, according to students, one of the main benefits of performing translation-related activities was to learn new vocabulary in the L2. This participant also sees the usefulness of PT in academic writing, although he acknowledges that false cognates may hinder this process.

Translation was also perceived to promote cultural awareness. The next excerpts provide another point of view to understand how it can be regarded as a useful resource. For instance, in this case translation was seen as an opportunity to analyze meaning from the perspective of users of different languages:

When you translate you can appreciate other points of view. When you try to explain the things in another language, you can feel like you are watching the same thing but with a different gaze or with different eyes. (FGI-GR1-S8)

While this participant observed that perhaps using another language to communicate apart from the L1 can foster other ways of seeing something, another participant viewed translation as a bridge to understand

one language through another, possibly by contrasting the similarities and differences between them:

I think translation is also important in the classroom to make the students conscious not only about the language they are studying but also their own language. (FGI-GR2-S3)

In this excerpt, the student states the importance of interacting with the mother tongue and the target language at the same time. This interaction is regarded as an aid to understand features of the two languages suggesting that PT might encourage students to carry out contrastive analysis between English and Spanish.

In the next passage, the teacher provides her opinion by focusing on the usefulness of translation in EFL education.

These activities are very helpful for my students and for me as a teacher in the sense that they are helping my students realize that translating is not wrong when there is a purpose and that they shouldn't do it all the time. Also, it has shown them that sometimes they are translating without them knowing. (TD-GR1/GR2)

The teacher considers that pedagogical translation is beneficial for her students only if it meets a purpose, but she warns that translation should be used with caution as students may fall into the trap of overusing this resource. Additionally, she reports that the students realized that they use translation unconsciously which is consistent to Duff's (1989) assertion that translation is a natural activity performed by language learners. The teacher's acknowledgement of the role that translation plays in the students' learning process represents an advantage to her teaching practice since she can benefit from its application as a common strategy.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the teacher's and her students' perceptions that emerged from the implementation of translation-related activities in an EFL classroom at the University of Guanajuato. The results revealed that the teacher showed a positive attitude towards using pedagogical translation as a resource for further lessons and about experimenting with them in lower language levels. In relation to the students, their perceptions were varied, and changed according to the activity they performed. Some activities were more successful than others depending on the students' needs and interests, and the level of complexity that each had. The data disclosed that students conceptualized translation as: 1) an everyday activity performed inside and outside the language classroom; 2) a resource that is only used when necessary; 3) recognized as a process that requires cognitive effort; and 4) an additional skill to the four skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In regards of the benefits of implementing PT, the student participants consider that it helps to: 1) activate schemata, 2) evaluate the students' performance and progress through the acknowledgment of their strengths and weaknesses in the L1 and L2, and 3) increase metalinguistic awareness by comparing grammatical features between two languages. The results also show that PT can be considered a communicative activity which is part of bilingual competence. Regarding the CLT approach, it should be acknowledged that translation does not intend students and teachers to use the L1 indiscriminately but rather give the use of L1, in this case Spanish, a purpose to be used. Moreover, the rejection that the L1 has faced in ELT leads us to reflect about the influence of negative opinions about using the mother tongue and their impact on EFL education.

This study aims to encourage teachers to take advantage of translation and justify its usage to coordinators and other teachers when necessary. Both coordinators and teachers need to be receptive enough to integrate alternative forms of approaching students to foreign language

learning. This could be accomplished by designing workshops or seminars which explain how pedagogical translation can be implemented within the syllabus not only in language schools but also in public and private schools at any educational level.

Lastly, considering that translation in language education has gained interest among the teaching community, and that it has slowly positioned itself as a renewed pedagogical practice, a reconceptualization of translation needs to be carried out from two research areas: pedagogy and applied linguistics. Providing a proper definition of translation and highlighting its pedagogical use can help to promote an unbiased understanding of what it involves and the benefits of its application in the language classroom. Therefore, a collaboration between pedagogy and applied linguistics should be reinforced to encourage a new analysis about the impact of translation on language education in countries where English is rarely the students' second language.

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