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## TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Teaching English in a Mexican rural and an urban primary schools: General classroom teachers as an alternative to become language access facilitators in marginal and indigenous contexts

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**Abstract:** English language teaching (ELT) as a second or foreign language is a worldwide practice for Educational Systems in elementary schools. Educational reforms in Mexico have aimed at addressing English language learning within the elementary schools' curricula, however, there have been shortcomings when implementing the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in all Mexican classrooms. This study was done to explore the possibility of general classroom teachers becoming EFL facilitators. The participants were 15 general classroom teachers with no specialization in ELT, from either a rural school in a Bilingual indigenous community or an urban school in the Mexican State of San Luis Potosí. A mixed-method research approach was employed, which included a socioeconomic questionnaire, an attitude towards English questionnaire and an ad hoc questionnaire; to explore the implementation of EFL in the participating schools. Results suggest that general classroom teachers without specialization in ELT may be a potential positive alternative to implementing ELT by becoming second language facilitators. The findings are discussed in relation to the concept of second language facilitators and recommendations for future studies to further explore this teaching role are laid out.

**Subjects:** Education; Humanities; Language & Literature

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign language teaching; language access facilitators; general classroom teachers; marginal schools

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Globalization, in particular English language as the common tongue for communication, entails that more and more countries adapt to an ever evolving technological, economic and cultural world. Latin American countries have for at least two decades implemented English language teaching into their education system curriculum. Mexico in particular is the midst of educational reforms to its public education system, English language teaching implementation is one of the issues that these changes bring about, due to a shortage of English teachers and this study attempts to offer insight as how teachers of Elementary grades in rural indigenous bilingual contexts react to English language teaching in their classrooms.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *English as a(n) second/foreign/international language?*

There is a numerous surge of nomenclatures given to the English language usage around the globe, given the fast-paced globalization process; this has also resulted in the advent of English nativized varieties. As defined by Baumgardner (1990), Kachru (1983), and Rahman (1990) the nativization of a non-native language is characterized by a process where changes in lexical, syntactic, and stylistic variations in a language take place within time, mainly due to the influence of local languages in a culture. This occurrence, in turn, has shaped the increased interest in the techniques and methodology of teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). McKay (2003) suggests that pedagogical considerations to the way second and foreign languages are taught must be approached differently from the principles and practices for teaching English as an International Language (EIL) and from English as a Second Language. From that viewpoint, there are fundamental questions of interest to professionals in the language teaching discipline, for example, on the adequate teacher modeling for speakers of English or which approaches work better than others and under what conditions? Is there a specific English variety or varieties best suited for teaching English? How are qualified English Language teachers best designated? (McKay, 2003).

The task of answering those questions are not an easy endeavor; Kachru (1985) states that the English Language Teaching (ELT) world landscape has been reshaped, from a linguistic perspective, in the sense that native English speakers (NSs) are outnumbered by non-natives speakers (NNS) on a three to one ratio. Kachru (1985) defines three concentric circles of English speakers, where the inner circle, as described by McKay (2003), is constituted by countries where English is a native language; the outer circle by countries where English has official or second language status; and the expanding circle by countries where English is a foreign language. The numbers for all the circles are estimated in millions of speakers according to Crystal (1997). This means that a given person may have a greater possibility of a communicative interaction with a multilingual speaker rather than with a monolingual speaker, which in turn removes the political, social, cultural, and economically motivated norms of English language usage imposed by the inner concentric circle (Burns, 2005). So, in that sense, having such a complex panorama, pinpointing adequate conditions for ELT seems to be decided by the context in which ELT takes place.

### 1.2. *Regional English Language Teaching implementation*

A global trend for research in regard to regional ELT practices has increasingly flourished and focused its attention to the expanding circle, as defined by Kachru (1985). Some of the reasons for the attention to ELT are the societal and economic changes, at a worldwide scale, perceived by many countries. Hence, adaptations in the educational systems globally have undertaken the incorporation of ELT in school curricula.

In response, Latin America has made efforts to address investing in education programs where ELT is implemented. Following that idea, the influence of commercial trading and political relationships amongst North, Centre and South America accentuates the need to establish a *lingua franca* or common tongue as a medium for international communication. Consequently, educational systems in Spanish-speaking countries have commenced, in recent decades, to adopt ELT as part of their curricula. Davies (2007, 2009) research has shown that English learning in public educational systems in Latin America has experienced mainly syllabuses changes and methodologies as seen appropriate in order to follow global tendencies and not in order to address contextual characteristics and needs. Davis recommends carrying out research into the reasons for the general, historical shortcomings in Latin-American public systems regarding ELT.

In the Mexican educational system, English teaching has been a mandatory subject since 1929 at secondary level (Mexicanos Primero, 2015); six years in primary level and three more years at secondary level, similar to an American Middle School level; however, it was until 2009 that the Ministry of Education (SEP) implemented English language in the primary level (Ramírez, Pamplon

& Cota, 2012). There are two education systems in Mexico, one administered by each state and the other by the federation, but they are both governed through the National Ministry of Public Education (SEP). The purpose for SEP to launch the National English Program in Basic Education or (PNIEB, 2009), was to link preschool, elementary and secondary levels English programs in all public schools. The PNIEB is the program under review in this study.

The program's pilot stage (PNIEB, 2009) included the Mexican states of Aguascalientes, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Tamaulipas. Since the release of the program there have been studies to document the program's progress such as the one by Ramirez, Pamplon, and Cota (2012), which included 11 states, and reported areas in which implementation of the PNIEB needed improvement, such as the curriculum, qualified teacher standardization (characteristics, current labor situation, and profile), the teaching and evaluation practices, and the resources and materials. The complexity of implementing the English program throughout the country is also discussed by the study and the lack of specialized human resources to cover all the schools in the Mexican Educational System. Other studies (Education First, 2013) agree that recruiting and training English teachers with the necessary characteristics is one of the main obstacles for implementing the English language program.

According to another study performed by British Council (2015), in Mexico, the PNIEB has not reached full public school coverage; it reaches only an 18% of schools or 6.7 million students. According to the researchers, to attain full coverage of the program, there must be 80,000 new English teachers hired. Education First, a private international education company, claims that there is a need for training 85,000 English teachers for 12 million students in primary education, while the Ministry of Public Education reports that for the PNIEB there is an estimated 99,500 teachers to satisfy all the Mexican basic education needs (Sayer, Mercáu & Blanco 2013).

Furthermore, Mexicanos Primero (2015), which is an NGO, states that there is one English teacher for every 419 students; two out of three teachers work in primary level, seven out of 10 in secondary level; and less than one out of 200 work in an indigenous school regardless of level. Only one out of seven schools, in general, have an English teacher: one out of 20 preschools, one out of 10 elementary schools and one out of 100 indigenous schools.

### **1.3. Present-day ELT in Mexico**

With the creation of the PNIEB the SEP incorporated English as a mandatory subject into the pre-school and primary education curricula, as well as adjustments to secondary school, which constitute the three levels of basic education. These changes to the curricula had the goal of enabling EFL instruction in the three levels of basic education (SEP, 2009). The purpose of the program was to develop plurilingual and pluricultural competences in Mexican students in public schools to successfully face the communicative challenges of a globalized world.

Davis (2011) recommends a phase approach design in ELT practices. The proposed phase encloses the development of a more comprehensive understanding of ELT in Mexican public education by means of research and debate, sharing of successful cases in ELT in public education; experimental approaches to ELT based on results in different contexts (urban, rural, and indigenous) and levels; and disseminating findings and experiences both positive and negative.

However, the PNIEB (2009) is structured in two stages that cover four phases (see Table 1); these phases encompass different grades in basic education where students will become exposed to English in different degrees (Initial contact or familiarization to formal ELT). The objective of the first stage focuses on Contact and Familiarization and occurs in Phase I. As described in the syllabus for the PNIEB, the aim is to sensitize students to English by promoting involvement in social practices with the target language to build a foundation for later learning. The second stage seeks to promote a constructive teaching of EFL and occurs in Phases II, III and IV. According to the syllabus, during this second stage students obtain the required competencies to use English

**Table 1. PNIEB English program structure. Adapted with information from PNIEB syllabus**

School level	Primary						Secondary			
	Preschool	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	1st	2nd	3rd
Grade	3rd									
Phase	I	I	I	II	II	III	III	III	IV	IV
Aim	Contact and familiarization with the language									
	Formal foreign language program									

effectively through participation in specific activities with the language, defined by and based on the social practices of the language in different social learning environments.

In the National English Program in Basic Education (PNIEB, 2009), the basic skill level required for a potential English teacher in the PNIEB at public schools is based on the Common European Framework. In the preschool and elementary level, the teacher must have one English competence level higher than that of the student. In other words, to teach a student in Phase I, the teacher must have achieved level A1, to teach in Phase II the teacher must have a level A2 and so forth.

## **2. Context and relevance of the study**

Bearing in mind the multiple sociocultural, sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, geographical and education policy differences among the countries in the concentric circles, it is also reasonable to look at the future concerns in ELT stated by Warschauer (2000a); first, the expansion of English and the creation of dialects practiced by non-native English speakers; second, the contextual needs for economic negotiations and globalized jobs must consider various communication methods; finally, communication technology and its constant updating lead to reconsider the manner in which literacy, research and information exchange take place amongst technology users. In other words, Warschauer proposes reflection towards the way English derived dialects are utilized, the basic notions of the language, culture/context and its relationship with ELT where English is taught as an official or foreign language. Hence, ELT practices must consider the contextual requirements for the outer and expanding English circles.

There are studies on different countries' actions to address the challenges in ELT in ESL/EFL contexts (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The increasing amount of people who have initial contact or familiarization with English permits it to act as a language for wide variety of purposes, bringing about further consolidation of English as a global *lingua franca*; defined by Kirkpatrick (2011) as a "common language between people who do not share a mother tongue". Thus, to develop an adequate English teaching curriculum on EIL, a view into how English's role as *lingua franca* has altered the nature of the language is necessary (McKay, 2003). The findings in the studies recommend the use of alternatives taking in to account the local and regional characteristics in the context and only after this consideration should planned actions be taken to implement an ELT program. As opposed to merely adopting an approach used in a different context altogether.

Regarding the inclusion of technology in ELT practices, Compton (2009) has reported the increased presence of internet and proliferation of computers in households and in educational institutions. Compton also refers to the growth of distance language courses in many countries due in part to the fast-paced developments in communication technology which aids in language learning promoting asynchronously and synchronously autonomous language learning. Ushioda (2011) recommends language teachers to exploit the broad array of digital technologies to engage motivation, interests, and identities of language learning students. Moreover, teachers in the classroom have positive and favorable attitudes regarding the use of computer technology (Chan & Son, 2009). In Mexico, there is also an increase in access to mobile devices with access to internet (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], 2016). The technology resources available at each school may serve as a bridge to close the gap to access to English language learning. Though these studies depict a favorable panorama, in a country such as Mexico with limited internet access and electronic device ownership mainly in urban areas, the technological limitations or rural ELT scenarios should be considered.

Information from the National System for School Information (Sistema Nacional de Información de Escuelas [SNIE], 2016) the Ministry for Public Education (SEP) in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí the total number of public schools in basic education is 7650; while in the private sector there are 710 schools at basic level. In the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí there is no research or official information in regard to the coverage of the English program, characteristics of the English teachers, methodology employed or educational materials employed to deliver the program. Therefore, research is needed in this area to aid in the decision making for implementing the PNIEB.

### 2.1. Hypothesis

Though teachers in marginal areas of the Mexican Public system are aware of the implementation of a national English program there are grey areas to be explored for the implementation to take place in some contexts.

### 2.2. Research questions

What differences are there in the implementation of the National English Program in Basic Education in an Indigenous and urban public elementary school in SLP?

What are the contextual characteristics and needs for ELT detected in the participating schools?

What is the attitude of the primary/secondary teachers towards the PNIEB English program implementation in these Mexican participating schools?

What are the considerations to take into account for the participating to become English as a second language facilitators?

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

The initial approach was to contact the schools' authorities in order to be allowed to conduct the study. School officials informed the researchers that there was no implementation of English Program in either school. To further understand how teachers were addressing the mandatory implementation of the English Program, or what were the contextual characteristics of each institution that prevented the implementation of the English Program, permission to interview teachers of the school was asked and provided. The participants' years of teaching practice experience varied from two to 35 years of service in elementary and high school levels; the study took place with two groups of elementary teachers, without prior ELT experience. There were a total of 15 teachers in active teaching status, non-specialized in language teaching; one group with nine participants from the State capital (five females and four males); the second group had six participants (two female and four male) from an indigenous community in the Huasteca Potosina area of the state.

### 3.2. Instruments

In order to answer the research questions, the following variables were explored: the participating schools' context; the actions taken by the institutions to implement the mandatory English program or adaptations made to do so; and the participants' socioeconomical context.

The instruments used for the study were the Mexican Association of Market Intelligence and Opinion (AMAI) 8 × 7 rule questionnaire, a scale which measures Socioeconomic Level soliciting information regarding number of bedrooms, light bulbs, automobiles, bathrooms, type of house floor, stove ownership, and highest education level of the economically responsible household. The information is added and classified in the socioeconomic level per the added total score (Table 2). Also, an adapted

**Table 2. Socioeconomic categories in the AMAI scale. Elaborated using information from:**  
<http://nse.amai.org/nseamai2/>

AMAI 8X7	Score/socioeconomic level
A/B	155 to 192/high
C+	128 to 154/medium high
C	105 to 127/medium low
D+	80 to 104/Low
D	33 to 79/extreme low
E	0 to 32/very extreme low

version of Attitude towards English questionnaire (Montoya, 2013), composed of a Likert scale with 10 items that assess general and academic usefulness of English language knowledge; and an ad hoc exploration questionnaire on the English program implementation, were collected. The intention was to explore the pedagogical experiences and challenges faced with the implementation of the English program policy. The ad hoc questionnaire is made up of five dimensions based on the English program: (1) participant's general information; (2) personal perceived importance of English as a subject; (3) English program implementation in the school; (4) teaching material available; (5) perceived needs for English program implementation.

In the process of instruments available to conduct the study, it was noted that there is limited research on the level and characteristics of the English program implementation. Thus, the decision to adapt and design instruments that best served the purposes of this study was taken.

### **3.3. Data collection**

The questionnaires were applied individually to the participants in their own schools. In the urban school context, each interview session with the participants lasted for about 20 min (all three instruments were applied in a single session). In the rural school context, one of the participants was also the acting principal. The interview was conducted as a focal group at the participants' request. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and were performed with the interviewee's consent.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

For analysis of the quantitative data, measures of central tendency were used to describe them. For the qualitative analysis, Theoretical Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) guided the processing of the ad hoc questionnaire to answer inquiries in regards to teachers' challenges implementing the ELT program, comprehend and comprehension the language educational policies of the institutions and characteristics of the educational context (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following steps were followed:

- (1) Collection and verbatim transcribing of the audio recorded data.
- (2) Reading and rereading the transcribed data. Through the rereading analysis, the content relevant to the scope was selected. Focus was put on how the teachers in the two settings interpreted the ELT program implementation.
- (3) Identifying patterns in the data set that were related to the research questions and creating coding schemes for these patterns.
- (4) Organizing the codes into possible themes and sub-themes and arranging all relevant excerpts from the entire data set.
- (5) Reviewing the themes and relevant excerpts. Four themes were included: (a) Teachers' English language competence, (b) Teachers' knowledge of the ELT program, (c) institutional perceived needs, (d) perceived usefulness of English language knowledge.
- (6) Selection of informative examples.

### **3.5. Findings**

The results of this study are presented as follows: first an overview of the quantitative data, the socioeconomic indicators--gathered with AMAI questionnaire--and the data on teaching English attitudes -gathered with the questionnaire developed by Montoya (2013) second, the qualitative data will be presented as follows: Teachers' English language competence, Teachers' knowledge of the ELT program, institutional perceived needs, perceived usefulness of English language knowledge.

### **3.6. AMAI questionnaire**

The information collected to characterize the socioeconomic level of the participants shows scores that place the subjects in a medium- low socioeconomic level. Ten participants fell into the C category of the AMAI and six, into the D category. The general description for the results is that the

participants have their quality life needs covered with a certain degree of limitations to invest on or save for the future.

### **3.7. Attitude towards English questionnaire**

The information on the participant's attitude towards English learning, according to the results obtained in Montoya's adapted questionnaire is neutral to positive. The questionnaire allows a maximum of 50 and a minimum of 10 points, where the lesser the result, the more positive attitude towards English. Participants from the rural school (6) averaged 20 points while the urban school participants (9) averaged 23 points. In other words, there is a generally positive attitude towards ELT since it is considered a tool with real-world benefits, and there is no hierarchy of language importance towards English or Spanish.

### **3.8. English program implementation questionnaire**

The questionnaire was organized in the sections: (1) General personal information; (2) Perceived importance of ELT; (3) Institutional English program characteristics; (4) Educational resources; (5) Perceived needs. The information provided by the participants was analyzed separately by school location, and the data was compared between schools and categories created. The results' samples are shown together to exemplify similitude in the responses.

The participants, selected by convenience sampling, were nine voluntary general elementary teachers in an urban school and six general elementary teachers in a rural indigenous school in the state of San Luis Potosí. The participants are not English teachers; they work within the public education school system and oversee a group in their school. Half of the teachers in the urban school had more than 15 years of experience and some of them were close to retirement from service. In contrast, only one teacher in the rural school had over 15 years of experience and intended to retire from service soon. Furthermore, none of the teachers in the urban school lived in the neighborhood surrounding the school, whereas, in the rural school, five of the teachers were members of the Teenek community, described below.

### **3.9. Rural school**

The Teenek Community is a Mayan group distributed in the state's northeast territory. The live in the area denominated Huasteca which is the coastal territory of the Gulf of Mexico and in part of the mountainous Oriental Sierra Madre. The Teenek's neighboring indigenous communities include the Nahuas and the Pames. "According to the Teenek language speakers their name means 'those who live in the field, with their language, and share the customs'; for the Nahuas and mixed communities Teenek are known as the Huastecos" (Gallardo Arias, 2004). Based on information of the National Institute for Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2016) there are 99, 464 Teenek speakers in the state of San Luis Potosí.

The rural participant school is located in a Teenek indigenous community in the area known as Central Huasteca Potosina with a total population of 1061 inhabitants (INEGI, 2016). The closest main road to access neighboring cities is 15 km away through rugged back mountainous roads, there is no public service transportation. Data from INEGI (2016) place the community in a high marginalization level and Social Backwardness indicator of medium level.

This community takes part in multidisciplinary investigations carried out by researchers from the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí (UASLP), information provided by the participants. Through observation during the study, it was noted that there were two elementary schools at the time of this investigation in the community. One of them received students during an eight to one daily schedule and the other opened its classrooms from two in the afternoon to seven in the evening. The morning school had six classrooms for students and all six general teachers (four men and two women) had a classroom assigned. The student population was composed of 121 students; there were no administrative officials nor a designated school principal. There was an additional classroom fitted as a

computer lab and there were a total of 10 computers for the school to use. Access to internet is paid for by the school teachers and some parents from the community.

According to the Public Education Ministry (SEP), the school's results in the National Assessment of Academic Achievement in Schools (ENLACE, 2013) in the evaluated years of 2011, 2012 and 2013, the school obtained a score of insufficient in subject areas of Spanish, Mathematics, Civic development, and Ethics. The afternoon school uses the same school infrastructure and equipment but only two classrooms for the two general teachers, a man and a woman, and the computer laboratory. The results in the ENLACE assessment are the same in all the subject areas as the morning school.

### 3.10. Urban school

The urban participant school is located at the heart of downtown San Luis Potosi. The city is the capital of the state and public transportation is provided by multiple companies. Data from the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2016) place the city in a very low marginalization level and Social Backwardness. Nonetheless, the area in which the school is located is one of the city's oldest neighborhoods and is mostly composed of working class individuals. The school belongs to the State Education System which derives from the National Education Ministry. The school has a total of 12 classrooms, two per grade, a library, and a computer lab with 12 computers. There is a department for special education needs to aid the general teachers. There are a total of 12 general teachers, one for each classroom, an arts teacher, computer laboratory teacher and a physical education teacher. The teachers are eight women and seven men. In the National Assessment of Academic Achievement in Schools (ENLACE, 2013) in the evaluated years of 2011, 2012 and 2013, the school obtained a score of insufficient in subject areas of Spanish, Mathematics, Civic Development, and Ethics.

### 3.11. Teachers' English language competence

The participants reported having studied English in the Mexican public education system, generally three years in middle high school and two or three years in high school level. According to the SEP a student graduated from middle high school should have a B1 level in the Common European Framework of References for languages (CEFR, Table 3).

When asked the question "How has your own experience with the English language been?" some participants responded:

...la última vez que tomé inglés fue en COBACH (last time i took English was in COBACH [high school]).

...cuando tomé inglés la última vez estaba en prepa y secundaria (when I last took English was high school and middle school).

... el lenguaje un poco, pero solo en secundaria y en la Normal ([I studied] the language a bit, but only in middle school and during Higher Training School).

Social context according to Gholami et al. (2012) influences attitude and motivation, both aspects are necessary to learn a second language. Gholami states that the context may provide learning opportunities related to the students' academic performance. Therefore, if language and culture are connected and one encourages the other and vice versa, it is necessary to study the place where they interact, meaning the social context. The participants expressed having experience learning English, and even

**Table 3. Common European framework of reference for languages**

Basic user	A1 breakthrough	A2 waystage
Independent User	B1 Threshold	B2 Vantage
Proficient User	C1 EOP	C2 Mastery

though they may not completely dominate the subject, their pedagogical experience may act as a platform to access English language learning for their students.

### **3.12. Teachers' knowledge of the ELT program**

In regards to the English language program the participants' knowledge of structure, content objectives, in general, are limited. The participants reported informal knowledge of the program's implementation. Neither school has implemented the English language program. To the question: "What is your own knowledge of the National English Program in Basic Education?" most of the participants responded having limited knowledge:

No tengo conocimiento...la intención es que en primaria se tuviera el inglés obligatorio (I don't have much knowledge [on PNIEB] ... the intention was that primary school had the English subject as mandatory).

...otras instituciones lo tienen implementado y el inglés se suponía que estaría en todos los grados (other institutions have it implemented and English was supposed to be in all primary grades...)

No sé... en que consista el programa.... sé que es un programa obligatorio en la educación básica (I don't know...what the program consists of...I know that it is a mandatory program in basic education...)

The program seems to have limited coverage for implementation, in response to the question: "How has your experience with the implementation of the National English Program in Basic Education been?", some teachers responded:

Supé de él por los estudiantes o por la maestro de inglés en ese momento (...I learned about it [English program] through the students or through the English teacher at the time [in another institution] ...)

Aquí nosotros no enseñamos inglés (here [urban school] we do not teach English...)

Aquí nunca hemos tenido el programa implementado (Here [rural school] we have never had the program implemented).

Authors, such as Ramírez et al. (2012), report on the knowledge of the program by teachers involved in the teaching learning process, as not completely clear to them. Ramírez, citing Davis (2009), refers that the Mexican states where their research has taken place, the majority of the implementation is in urban areas near a capital city and surrounding areas. This study shows confirms those results as well in the schools observed.

### **3.13. Institutional conditions**

According to the participants, the areas needed as a first step, are to have knowledge of the English program, and understand the scope, objectives, structure, etc. Also, the participants suggested support from an English teaching specialist to integrate English to the institutional curricula. To the question "What do you consider the institutional needs to implement the English program are? Some responses were:

Primero entender el programa bien... aparece en el plan de estudios, pero no se nos dan herramientas (...first to understand the program well...it appears in the syllabus in part, but there are no tools provided...)

Un maestro para que nos capacite (...a teacher to train us...)

Capacitación e información sobre lo que es el programa (...training and guidance on what the program entails).

Tendría que entenderlo bien, como se desarrolla, tiempos, que materiales necesitamos (...I would have to thoroughly understand it, how it is delivered, time allocated, what kind of material is needed).

La idea es que se nos capacite para dar la materia ... necesitamos conocer la forma en que se desarrollan los contenidos (...the idea is for us to be trained to give the subject... we need to know the way to deliver the contents).

Capacitación, para entender que temas pueden ser correlacionados y establecer relaciones con otras materias que ya enseñamos (...training, so that we understand what topics can be correlated and establish relations with other subject areas we already teach...)

The context will have direct influence on the student Gholami (2012). There are two possibilities for language learning, formal and informal, and both are influenced by the social context. The participants' well-disposed attitude to be part of a training program in order to become language access facilitators, is a positive influence for the students' social context. Gholami (2012) refers that the attitude from a student towards the target language, its speakers and the learning context, play an important role in the success or failure of language learning.

### **3.14. Perceived usefulness of English language knowledge**

All participants agree that English is an important tool for future academic challenges in secondary education, where English is a compulsory subject, as well as for employment opportunities when students integrate into the workforce as adults. The participants are well aware that English language learning has more than just academic relevance, taking into consideration the socio-economic environment where their students are developing English may be an important tool for their integration into the workforce in the future. When the question "Do you consider English language to be important in basic education?" some participants responded:

...yo como doy sexto grado, como que tienen interés en que a los niños sobre todo ese grado se les enseñe para que vayan preparados a la secundaria que no vayan en ceros. Van sin conocer lo que es el idioma inglés. (I teach sixth grade, there seems to be interest to be taught [English] in this grade in order to be prepared for secondary school.... they go into secondary school in zero without knowledge of the English language).

...en secundaria los estudiantes batallan, llega a la secundaria y es una de las materias que la mayoría reprueba (...in secondary school students struggle, they arrive at secondary school and it [English] is one of the subjects most students flunk...)

...más adelante en la escuela tendrán nuevos requisitos, por ejemplo, aquí los estudiantes van a la secundaria, terminan la preparatoria y comienzan a trabajar. Lo primero que les piden es si saben inglés (...further in school there will be new requirements, for example, here [indigenous community] students go to secondary school, graduate high school and start to work. The first thing they [employers] ask is if you know English...)

Es importante dado que tenemos que tener contacto con nuestro país vecino, es importante porque la gente en esta región migra a los Estados Unidos... debido a la falta de empleos en el área. (It is important given that we must have contact with our neighboring country, it is important because people in this region migrate to the United States... due to lack of jobs in the zone).

The participants agreed the students are at a disadvantage when the English program is not implemented in their school curricula. They also consider the implementation of the English program an important matter. The attitudes and levels of acceptance documented by Ramírez et al. (2012) are similar to those found in this study. The participants expressed the need and importance of implementing ELT in their schools. There is a general acceptance for the addition of English language in the study plans.

Although Mexico is a political, economic, and academic partner with the United States and shares a geographical border, the use of English in Mexico is employed as a *lingua franca* (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Mc Kay, 2003). Firth (1996) defines a *lingua franca* as a common language between people who do not share a native tongue nor a common culture. In that sense, the participants in this study have basic knowledge of the English language and have not needed to exchange English communication with foreigners, nonetheless, from their teaching experiences they are aware that the academic requirements for their students have changed and their potential exposure to English language communication is manifest.

English language in the Mexican public schools is to be considered as part of Kachru's expanding outer concentric circle (Kachru, 1985). The participants of this study have had experience learning English in the public system and from their responses, the limited exposure to the language fits into the category of EFL teaching system. Furthermore, the adaptations to basic education English teaching curricula of the Mexican Ministry of Public Education have responded to the emerging globalization requirements authors such as Warschauer (2000b) have pointed out. Participants of this study also refer that technological, academic and future workplace challenges are elements to consider imperative to assess the importance of English language programs in basic education.

Despite the nations' education policy transition towards an English language education in Mexico, there are latent gaps in quality, conditions, resources. There is no official educational approach for ELT implementation, which in turn has prompted studies (Ramírez et al, 2012) to provide recommendations considering the context of each state's sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, sociocultural characteristics before implementing an English language program into an educational system. In other words, it is recommended to provide a contextual approach to English teaching, that is, taking acculturation and assimilation decisions from a micro level (classroom-teacher-students) to macro level (institutional-administrative-regional). The participants of this study acknowledged informal information regarding the program. Even though the English program has been implemented since 2009, the institutions explored do not have the subject in their institutional study plan.

Such limited coverage is later reflected, as Davies (2011) reported, in that most students enter higher school education with restricted functional English, given that the majority of university students start at a beginning level in Higher education English programs. This is particularly relevant since English language skills for students in the participating institutions who enter secondary schools, according to the participants, experience an increased challenge adapting to English as a compulsory subject in school curricula.

Another issue is the scarcity of English language teachers (Education First, 2013; Mexicanos Primero, 2015). Among the proposed solutions from Davies (2011) are experimental piloting for current ELT in public education. The participants of the study may fulfill the basic English Teacher profile established by the Ministry of Public Education, based on their pedagogical training and the participant's reported positive attitude, there may be a possibility of implementation of the English language subject by the participants.

#### 4. Discussion

This study was conducted to explore the current situation of the English Program in two schools in the state of San Luis Potosí. The most recent Educational reform took place in 2009, since then the English program has been decreed as mandatory for all schools in the Mexican basic level (Third year of preschool, elementary and secondary school). The literature shows research conducted in other Mexican states, where some form of implementation of the English program has taken place (Ramírez et al., 2012), but it is also reported that the program is not fully implemented as mandated.

The literature revised shows that at the early stages of the English program implementation, schools were chosen as pilot schools, while others adopted the program and had parents pay for the program, and other schools chose not to implement it (Davies, 2011; Mexicanos Primero, 2015;

Ramirez et al., 2012). The participant schools in this study have not implemented the English program through the state pilot school program nor the parents paying for the program.

There has been research in regards to an approximate number of teachers available to implement the program (Mexicanos Primero, 2015), the number of teachers for the entire basic level in the Mexican school system is limited. The participating teachers seem to understand the importance of implementing the program into their schools, and declare that they are willing participants in training programs with that purpose. In the English program guidelines, the proposal for teachers to teach English is that they must master at least one level from the Common European Framework of Reference above their students. The participants in this study state that they have basic competence in the target language. Provided that a training program that contemplates using the teachers' pedagogical background, it could be an approach to addressing the teacher shortage.

## 5. Conclusion

In response to the first research question of this study, Ramirez et al (2012) documents that there is no homogeneity in regards to English program implementation in other Mexican states, and this coincides with the findings in these two school in the state of San Luis Potosi. This study only had two participating schools due to budget limitations. In the Mexican educational system, there is scarcity of human resources for ELT (Ramírez et al., 2012). Nevertheless, there is an unexplored option of training regular group teachers as English access facilitators. Away to approach this proposed by Davies (2011), is to provide teachers that fit the basic profile (PNIEB, 2009) training for them to teach at lower grades using a catalogue of open access resources, providing assistance from a specialized English teacher to create adequate lesson plans in accordance to the institutional needs, and allowing in-practice training to facilitate students' access to English language learning. The participants of these schools have manifested their willingness to contribute in the implementation of an English program in their schools. The concerns from the participants include the realistic future advantage for their students when migrating to bigger cities where employment requires functional use of the English language.

### 5.1. Recommendations

The findings propose considerations for the implementation of CALL in the classroom for EFL practices considering the findings of Atkins and Vasu (2000). It is recommended that adequate computer access, and administrative and technical support be offered to teachers in order to inspire the use of CALL in their classrooms. Also recommended is the provision of computer skills training for teachers to acquire computer literacy and integration skills, aimed at building support and collaboration with their peers at school addressed by Lam (2000). Teachers' positive attitude towards social and technological changes is needed to take advantage of CALL; hence, it is of great importance that teachers become involved in setting learning goals, creation of authentic material ad hoc to their students and their context before integrating them into the classroom.

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