



Reflections on Bilingual Education, the National English Program, and the (Re)shaping of Language Education Policy in Mexico

Peter Sayer, The Ohio State University
Language Policy in Multilingual Mexico
Host: University of Southampton – June 20-21, 2023

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Slides and reference links

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 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

PETER SAYER
Department of Teaching & Learning. Associate Professor of Language Education Studies

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5 WORKSHOPS ABOUT ME

19 June 2023

Language Policy in Multilingual Mexico

Slides and papers cited from my keynote address “Reflections on Bilingual Education, the National English Program, and the (Re)shaping of Language Education Policy in Mexico” for the Language Policy in Multilingual Mexico talk, hosted by University of Southampton.

Presentation slides

Sayer, P. (2019). The hidden curriculum of work in English language education: Neoliberalism and early English programs in public schooling. *AILA Review*, 32: 36-63.

Sayer, P., Martinez-Prieto D. & Carvajal, B. (2019). Discourses of white nationalism and xenophobia in the U.S. and their effect on TESOL professionals in Mexico. *TESOL Quarterly*, 53(3): 835-844.

Sayer P. (2018). Does English really open doors? Social class and English teaching in public primary schools in Mexico. *System*, 73(2): 58-70.

Sayer, P., Ban, R. & Lopez de Anda, M. (2017). Evaluating the educational outcomes of an early foreign language programme: The design of an impact study for the primary English programme in Mexico. In J. Enever and E. Lindgren (Eds.), *Researching the complexity of early language learning in instructed contexts*, (pp. 269-288). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Ramírez Romero, J.L. and Sayer, P. (Eds.) (2016). *Educational Policy Analysis Archives – Special Issue on English Language Teaching in Public Primary Schools in Latin America* 24(84).

Sayer, P. (2015). Expanding global language education in public primary schools: The national English program in Mexico. *Language, Culture &*

RECENT POSTS

- Language Policy in Multilingual Mexico
- Summer seminar on Generative AI & ChatGPT in Language Teaching
- HICELLS 2023 – Handout for Keynote
- Keynote address at TESOL conference in Vietnam
- Chapter on research with young language learners

RECENT COMMENTS

- maxteachenglish on [Presentations at TESOL and AAAL](#)
- almas-institut.ir on [Fall 2021 Doctoral seminar on Sociolinguistics of Language Education](#)
- Lina on [Keynote address at language education conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia](#)
- Susan Ataei on [Linguistic Landscape project funded by GSIRI](#)
- Becky on [Special Issue of SYSTEM published on Young Language Learners and Social Class by Butler, Sayer & Huang](#)

3

Locating my work



IDENTITY &
LANGUAGE
TEACHING

LANGUAGE
IDEOLOGIES

TRANSLANGUAGING

LINGUISTIC
LANDSCAPE

SOCIOLINGUISTICS
OF LANGUAGE
EDUCATION

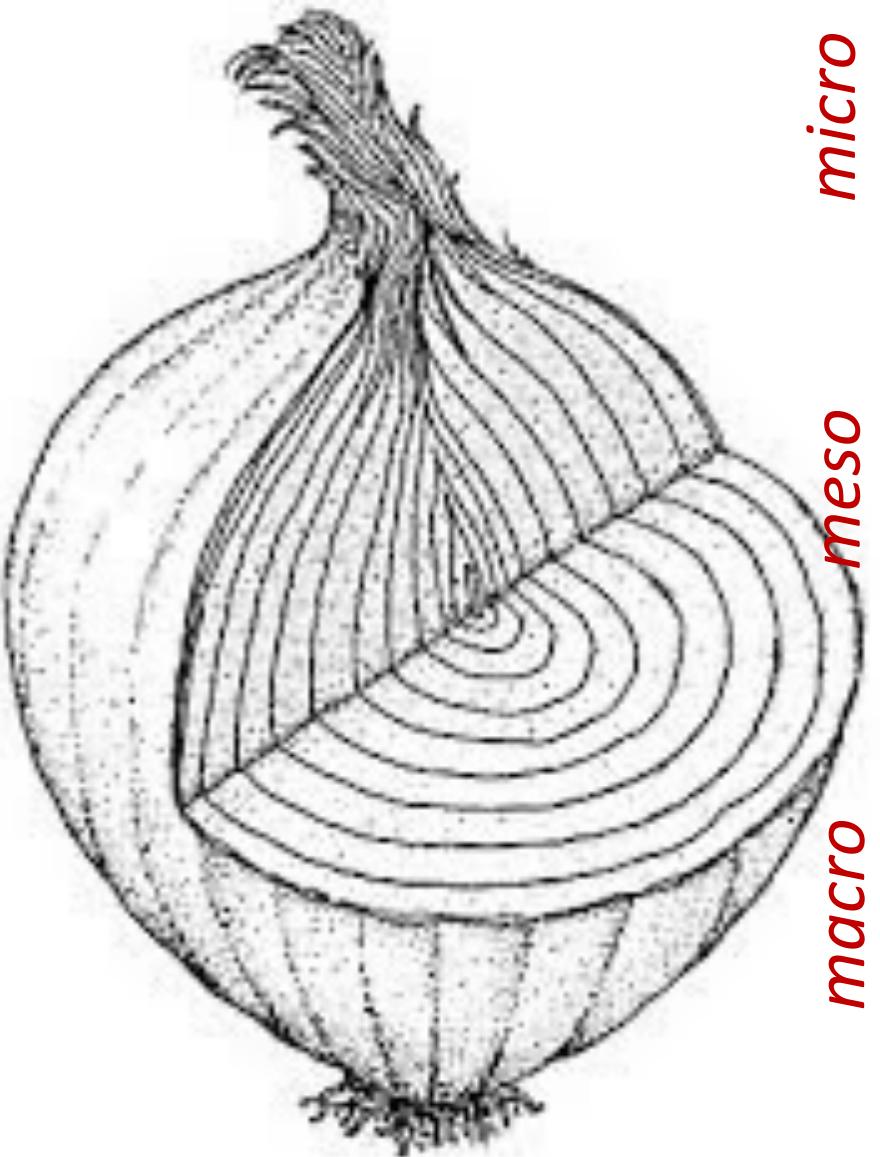
TEACHING
YOUNG
LANGUAGE
LEARNERS

IMPLEMENTATION
OF LANGUAGE
EDUCATION POLICY

- Past editor of the *TESOL Journal*
- Fulbright Scholar (2011-12)



The Language Policy Onion



macro
meso
micro



Outline of talk

- Timeline of English language education in Mexico
- Shift in goals for English language education policy: elite bilingualism to macroacquisition
- An ethnographic look at two language lessons
- Interrogating the discourse of “English Opens Doors”: Does English really change the equation?

[View Slides](#)

English language education in Mexico



Bilingual elementary school in Durango, Mexico, founded in 1954

Elite bilingualism

Historically, private
“bilingual”
elementary schools
for elite
socioeconomic status

2009: English made
part of national
curriculum, high school
graduate B2 level

Macroacquisition

**Google image search:
“Escuela Bilingüe México”**



Sayer, P. and López Gopar, M. (2015). Language education in Mexico: Access, equity, and ideology. In W. Wright, O. Garcia, & S. Boun (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingual and multilingual education*, (pp. 576-589). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ideologies of English in Mexico

- English indexes both:
- “English opens doors” = opportunities and socioeconomic mobility
- Ideologies of US imperialism, malinchismo, pochoism
- Social class and raciolinguistic ideologies

Zócalo in Oaxaca in 2006 during the APPO Movement



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part of national
curriculum, high school
graduate B2 level

Macroacquisition

La expansión del inglés en la primaria pública: Una tendencia global



“El inglés te abre muchas puertas”



Chile: *English Opens Doors Programme*

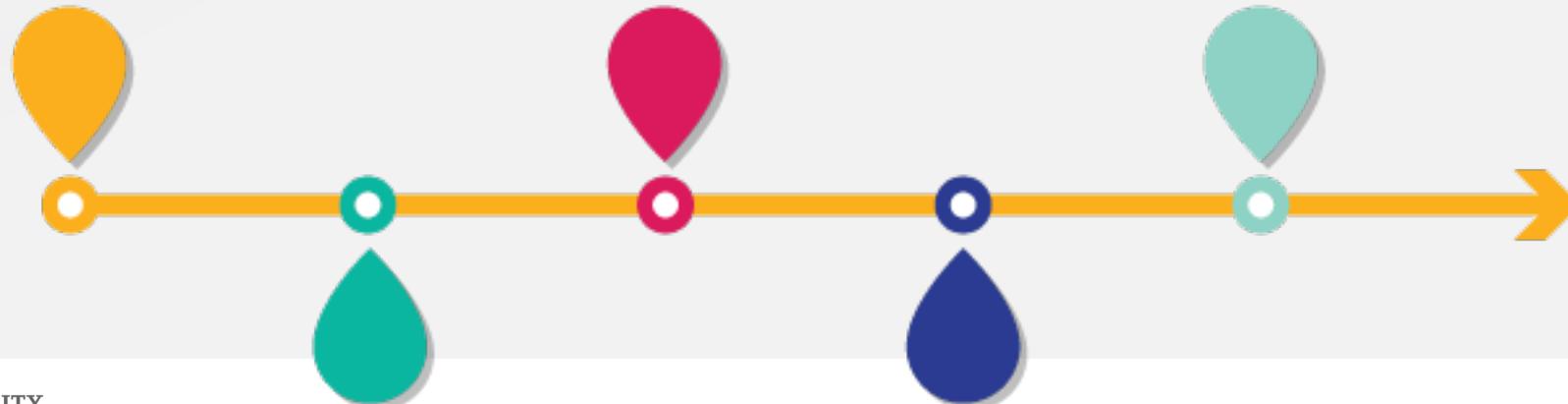
English = idioma de oportunidad y
mobilidad socioeconómica

Niño-Murcia (2003) ideología lingüística
en Perú: “English as the dollar”



Antecedentes del inglés en la educación en México

- 1955: Se incluyen tres años de inglés en la secundaria pública
- 1980s-2000s: Expansión significativa de las escuelas privadas “bilingües”
- 1990s: Varias universidades establecen licenciaturas en enseñanza del inglés
- 2000s: 21 estados inician programas de inglés en primarias
- 2009: Secretaría de Educación Pública arranca el PNIEB
- 2014: Vuelve Programa Nacional de Inglés PRONI



Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2012

- 1. La sociedad contemporánea, regida de manera preponderante por las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC), demanda ciudadanos que cuenten con las competencias necesarias para insertarse en un mundo globalizado. (Pág. 11)**
- 2. Propone [el programa de inglés] como una medida para reducir la disparidad en la calidad entre escuelas privadas y públicas. (Pág. 11)**



MAPA CURRICULAR DE LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA 2011

ESTÁNDARES CURRICULARES ¹	1 ^{er} PERÍODO ESCOLAR			2 ^º PERÍODO ESCOLAR			3 ^{er} PERÍODO ESCOLAR			4 ^º PERÍODO ESCOLAR				
	CAMPOS DE FORMACIÓN PARA LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA			Preescolar			Primaria			Secundaria				
HABILIDADES DIGITALES	1 ^º	2 ^º	3 ^º	1 ^º	2 ^º	3 ^º	4 ^º	5 ^º	6 ^º	1 ^º	2 ^º	3 ^º		
	LENGUAJE Y COMUNICACIÓN			Lenguaje y comunicación			Español			Español I, II y III				
	PENSAMIENTO MATEMÁTICO			Segunda Lengua: Inglés ²			Segundo Lengua: Inglés ²			Segunda Lengua: Inglés I, II y III ²				
	EXPLORACIÓN Y COMPRENSIÓN DEL MUNDO NATURAL Y SOCIAL			Pensamiento matemático			Matemáticas			Matemáticos I, II y III				
	DESARROLLO PERSONAL Y PARA LA CONVIVENCIA			Exploración y conocimiento del mundo			Ciencias Naturales ³			Ciencias I (énfasis en Biología)				
	Desarrollo físico y salud			Exploración de la Naturaleza y la Sociedad			Geografía ³			Ciencias II (énfasis en Física)				
Desarrollo personal y social			La Entidad donde Vivo			Historia ³			Ciencias III (énfasis en Química)			Tecnología I, II y III		
Expresión y apreciación artísticas			Formación Cívica y Ética ⁴			Geografía de México y del Mundo			Historia I y II					
			Educación Física ⁴			Asignatura Estatal			Formación Cívica y Ética I y II					
			Educación Artística ⁴						Tutoría					
						Educación Física I, II y III								
						Artes I, II y III (Música, Danza, Teatro o Artes Visuales)								

¹ Estándares Curriculares de: Español, Matemáticas, Ciencias, Segunda Lengua: Inglés, y Habilidades Digitales.

² Para los alumnos hablantes de Lengua Indígena, el Español y el Inglés son consideradas como segundas lenguas a la materna. Inglés está en proceso de gestión.

³ Favorecen aprendizajes de Tecnología.

⁴ Establecen vínculos formativos con Ciencias Naturales, Geografía e Historia.

CUADRO 3. ESTÁNDARES INTERNACIONALES Y NACIONALES

MARCO COMÚN
EUROPEO
DE REFERENCIA
(MCER). ESTÁNDARES
INTERNACIONALES

CERTIFICACIÓN NACIONAL
DE NIVEL DE IDIOMA (CENNI).
ESTÁNDARES NACIONALES Y NÚMERO
APROXIMADO DE HORAS
PARA ALCANZARLOS

NIVELES	-		+
C2	17	18	19
C1	14	15	16
B2	11	12	13
B1	8	9	10
A2	5	6	7
A1	2	3	4

HORAS
1251-1300
851-900
651-700
451-500
321-350
161-200

Educación
Básica

Progression defined
in terms of the
Common European
Framework of
Reference



“[El programa tiene como objetivo] lograr que, al concluir su educación secundaria, los alumnos hayan desarrollado las competencias plurilingüe y pluricultural que requieren para enfrentar con éxito los desafíos comunicativos del mundo globalizado, construir una visión amplia de la diversidad lingüística y cultural a nivel global, y respetar su propia cultura y la de los demás.” (Pág. 8-9)

*Fundamentos Curriculares, Segunda Lengua:
Inglés*
Ministry of Education, 2011

Programa Nacional de Inglés
en Educación Básica Segunda Lengua: Inglés



Fundamentos curriculares
Preescolar • Primaria • Secundaria

Fase de expansión



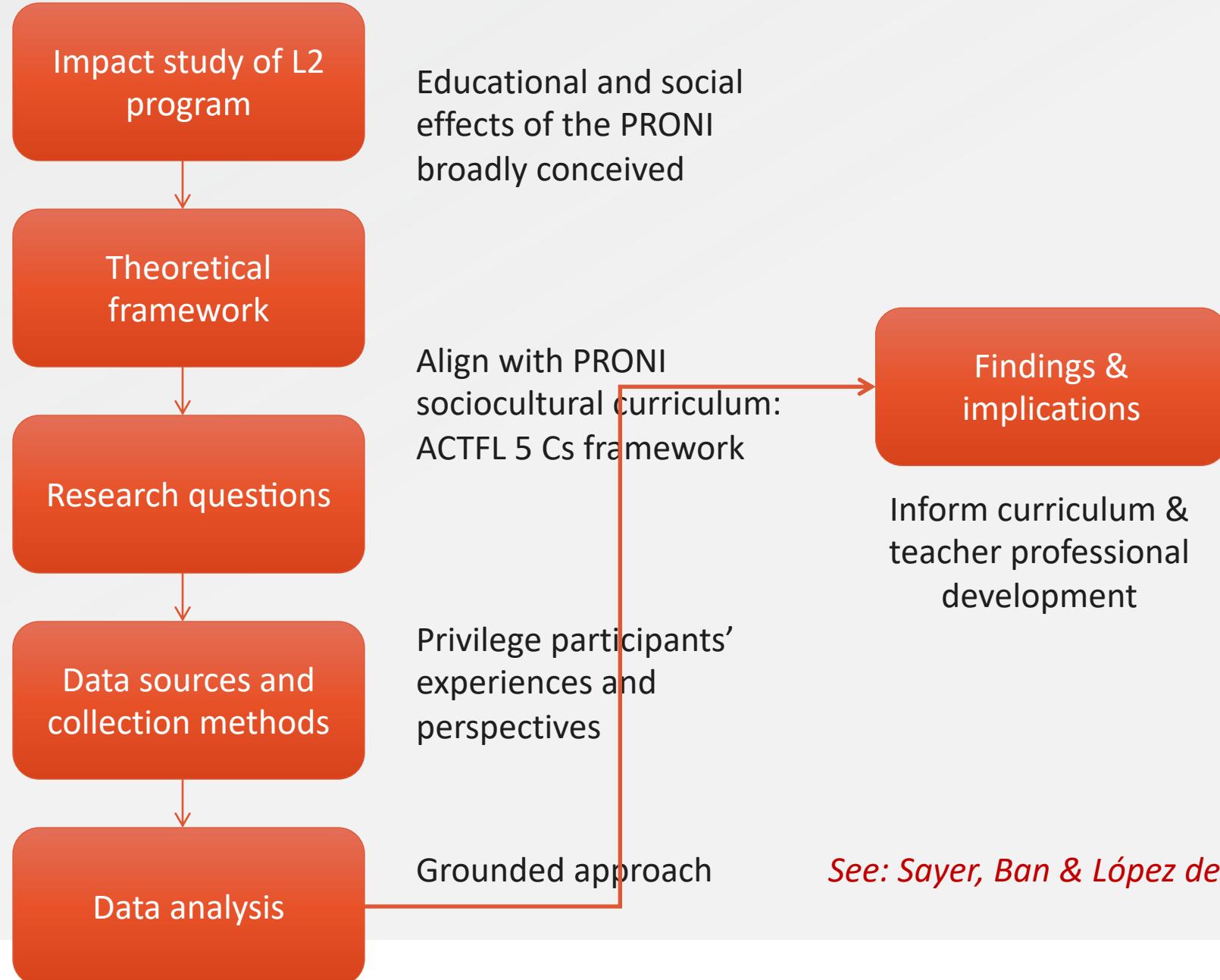
Implementación del PRONI

- 2009-2016 Expansión o generalización del programa
- 2012-15 Mayoria de los maestros sin contrato regular, cierra el programas en varios estados
- 2017 Alcanza una cobertura de ~25%
 - oferta concentrada en zonas urbanas
 - varia en cada estado del 100% al 2%
 - casi nulo en zonas indígenas



*Clase de inglés en 4o grado en Ciudad Victoria,
Tamaulipas 2011*

Project design



See: Sayer, Ban & López de Anda (2017)

An impact study of early language education programs: Design principles

- Ethnographic perspective
- Multiple stakeholders
- Connect with social practices
- Cross-curriculum (“crosscutting concepts” Llosa)
- Multiple data sources



Interviewing an English teacher



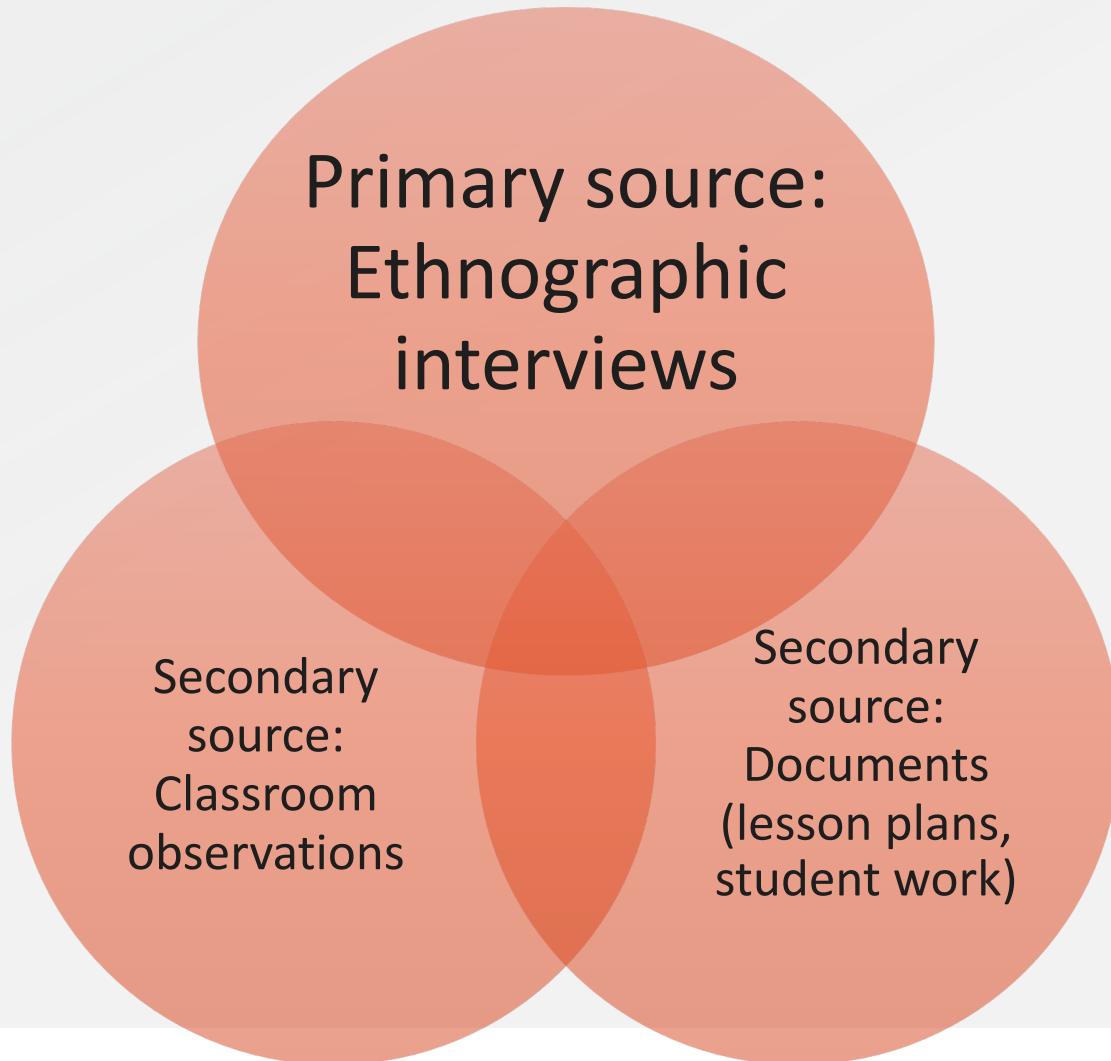
Interviewing
middle school
students
studying English
in public schools,
Aguascalientes,
March 2014

Focused questions: Early english programs in public schools



*Porque se ve que esta hablando inglés
Because it looks like she's speaking
English*

Types of data



Qualitative research:
Triangulation of data
across different sources

Lesson 1: Escuela “Las Lomas”



An adverb of frequency goes before a main verb (except with to Be)

Subject + adverb + main verb

I always remember to do my homework

He normally gets good marks in exams

An adverb of frequency goes after the verb to be

Subject + to be + adverb

they are never pleased to see me

she isn't usually bad tempered

when we use an auxiliary verb (have, will, not, might, could, would) the adverb is placed between the auxiliary and the main verb. This is also true for to be.

Subject + auxiliary + adverb + main verb

She can sometimes beat me in a race

I would ~~never~~ hardly beankind to someone

They might never see each other again

they could occasionally be heard laughing

we can also use the following adverbs at the start of a sentence

usually, normally, often, frequently, sometimes, occasionally.

* Occasionally I liked to eat this food

But we cannot use the following at the beginning of a sentence

always, seldom, rarely, hardly ever and never

we use hardly ever and never with positive NOT negative verbs

* she hardly ever comes to my parties

* they never say Thank you

We use ever in questions and negative statements

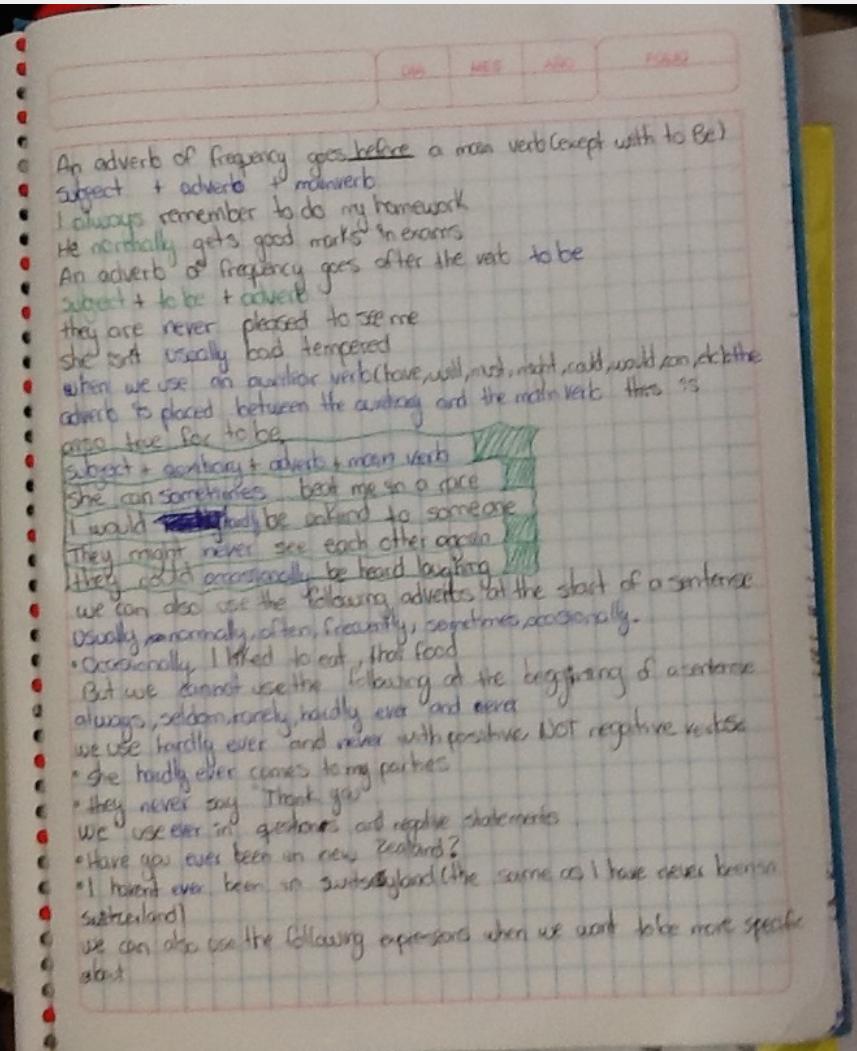
* Have you ever been in New Zealand?

* I haven't ever been in Switzerland (the same as I have never been in Switzerland)

We can also use the following expressions when we want take more specific about

**When we use an auxiliar[y] verb [...] the adverb is placed between the auxiliary and the main verb. This is also true for TO BE.
Subject + auxiliary + adverbs + main verbs**

Lesson 1: Escuela “Las Lomas”



Peter: Now that students are coming to middle school having studied six years in elementary, and they are supposed to have a higher level, how has this affected your teaching?

Teacher: Well, the problem is that even when they get here [middle school], they still lack many of the elements. Some don't remember what a verb is, what an adjective is, so I have to go step by step again...

Lesson 2: Escuela “Jardines”



Lesson 2: Escuela “Jardines”

Victor and Julian. 12 years old. 7th grade. Presentation of a memorized dialogue students have created.

Victor: *Hi. What's your name?*

Julian: *My name is Julian. What's yours?*

Victor: *My name is Victor. Do you wanna be my friend?*

Julian: *Maybe. Do you like to play soccer?*

Victor: *Yes, I like to play soccer every day.*

Julian: *Great, let's go to park Jardines to play.*

Victor: *Okay, what's your cell number?*

Julian: *It's 55-22-45-97*

Victor: *Great. I'll send you a What's Up.*

Contrasting teaching approaches

*A middle school teacher compares her pedagogy in two different schools where she teaches 7th graders from the same textbook:
(Interview March 13, 2014)*

01 Peter: So, speaking of those differences that you mention between those contexts [the two different schools where she works], so do you think you change your teaching approach when you're here in this context or in the other [school]?

02 Teacher: Yes...

03 Peter: How's that?

04 Teacher: Yes well for example, in this topic [from the class the researcher had just observed "expressing likes and dislikes"] I had explained how to express your likes, I gave them the elements, how to talk about what you don't like, and they listened to a recording of a conversation and then I told them "now create a dialogue, talking about what you like." So they chose the theme, they developed their dialogues however they wanted. And in the other school I had to just bring them the dialogue already completed [and they reproduced it].

05 Peter: Mmm...

06 Teacher: Because they can't create one on their own.

07 Peter: Hmm...

08 Teacher: So yeah, it's different.

09 Peter: So you're saying that here, on his or her own the student can—

10 Teacher: —produce more—

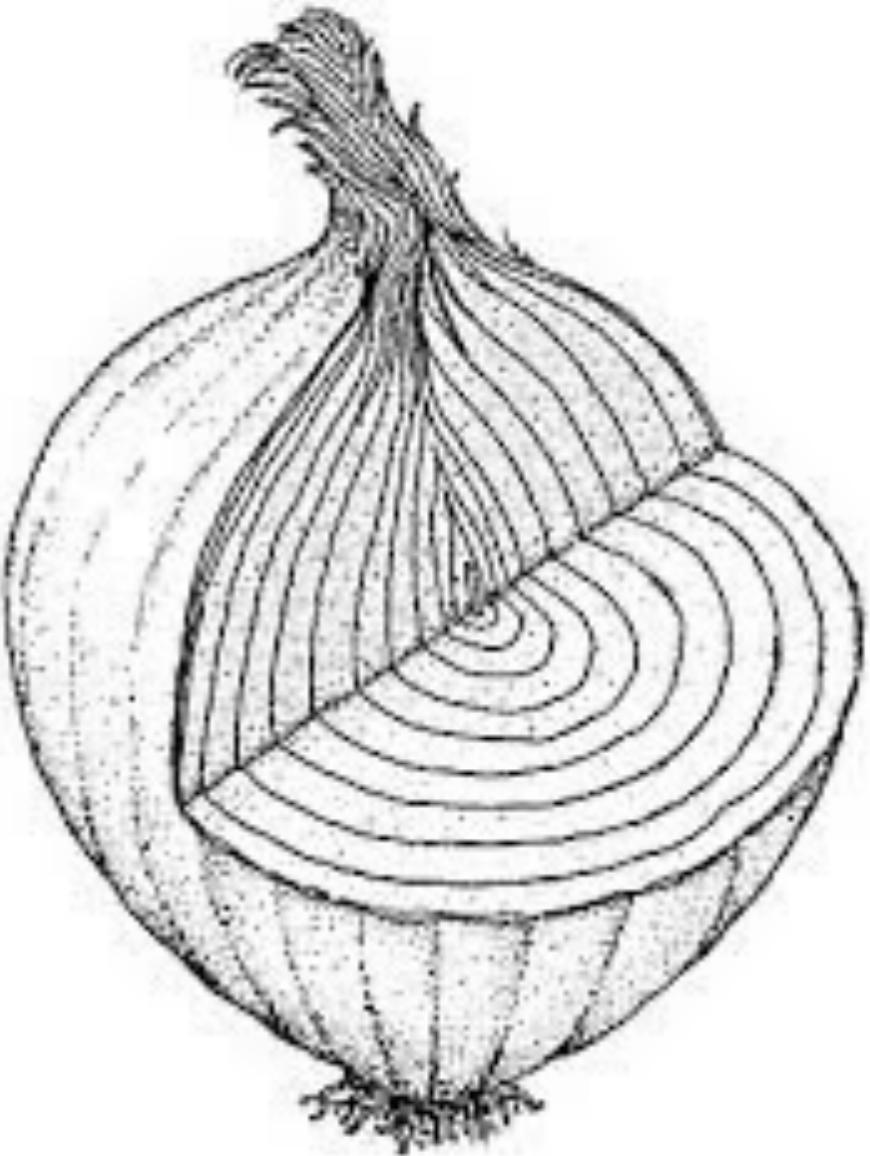
11 Peter: —express their own meanings.

12 Teacher: Exactly. Yes.

13 Peter: And in the other context, it's like you have to give it to them and do it for them.

14 Teacher: Mm-hm, yes.

The Language Policy Onion



Why does the “same” English lesson taught from the same curriculum look so different in Escuela Las Lomas and Escuela Jardines?

English in public schools: mobility or reproduction?

- Anyon (1980): “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work”
- Social stratification of math lessons
- English language education in Mexico
 - Working class public schools: Accurately reproduced scripted language and rules
 - Middle class public schools: Working within communicative guidelines to create own content
 - Upper class private schools: English as a medium of instruction using American textbooks

Social class and the hidden curriculum of work in English classes



Jean Anyon (1941-2013)
Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum

- Anaylzed how educational processes tend to reproduce socioeconomic structures



Una maquiladora en México

Language education policy

- Elite bilingualism and the model of social reproduction



Workers don't
need
linguistic skills

The manager
needs
linguistic skills
(in English)



Grupo Modelo fábrica de cerveza en Coahuila, México, casi completamente automatizada



Aprende a ser un Agente de Call Center

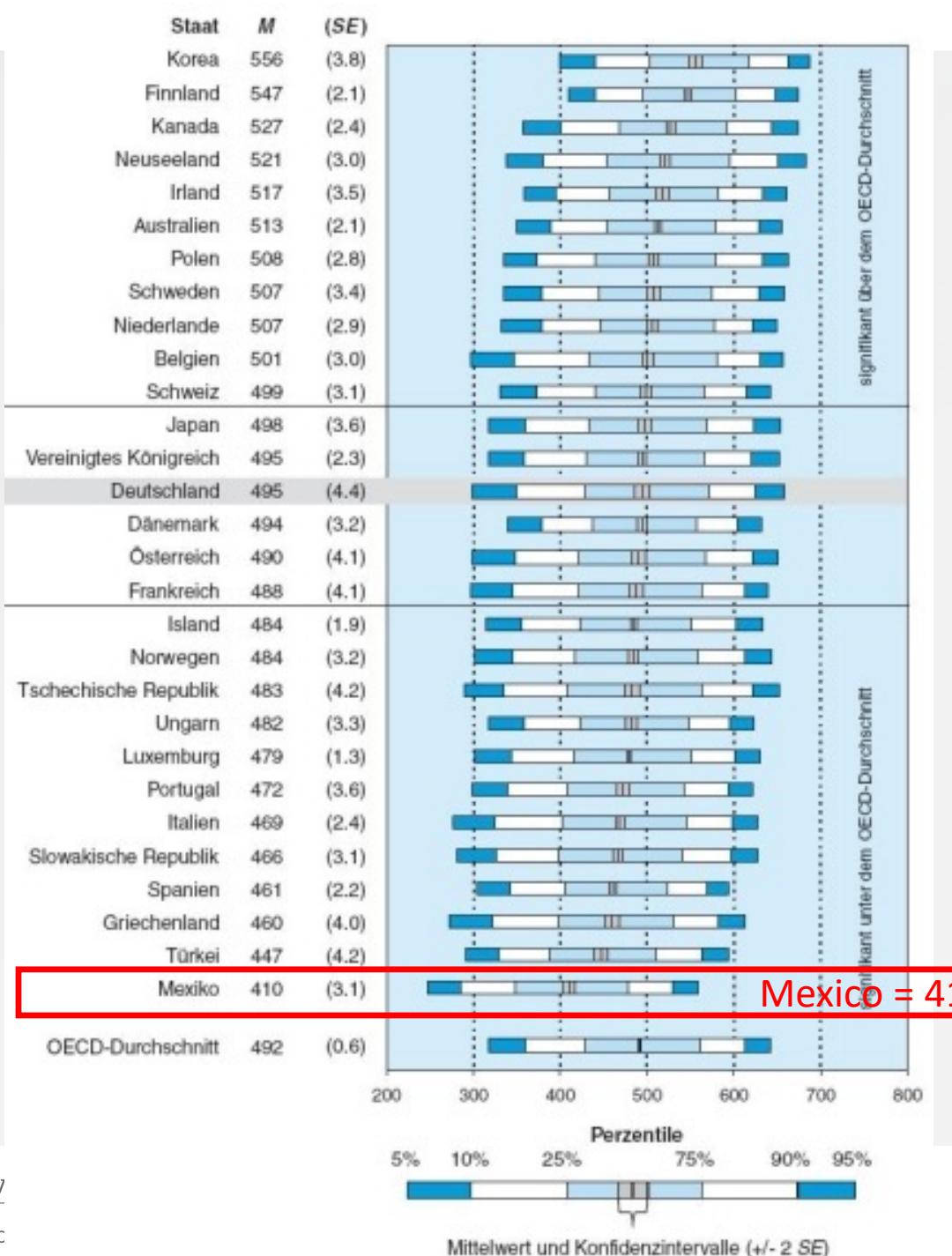
Trabajar en un call center (centro de llamadas) es un empleo considerado por muchos como una manera de ahorrar para la universidad o como un paso dado hacia otros empleos. Si lo haces apropiadamente, este empleo te podrá ofrecer varias oportunidades profesionales.

Ten en cuenta lo que está involucrado en este empleo.



- **Information age model:
Macroacquisition**
- **Linguistic skills for service industry**
- **Outsourcing & near-shoring**

*Reclutando agentes para un call center
en la Ciudad de México*



Results of the 2006 PISA amongst 30 OECD member country

*“Only 24% of 25-34 year old Mexicans have completed a baseline qualification at the upper secondary level, by far the lowest amongst OECD countries.”
(Hopkins, et al 2007)*

PISA 2006

“The Mexican education system is highly inefficient, incentives for improvement are weak and the quantity and quality of educational provision is well below OECD standards. In general the Mexican education system needs to rapidly improve human capital development.”

(Hopkins, et al 2007: An Analysis of the Mexican School System in Light of PISA 2006)



- *PNIEB was introduced in Mexico as part of the educational reform.*
- *“Modernization” of public education is often tied to loan conditions set by the World Bank to align with broader neoliberal reforms.*

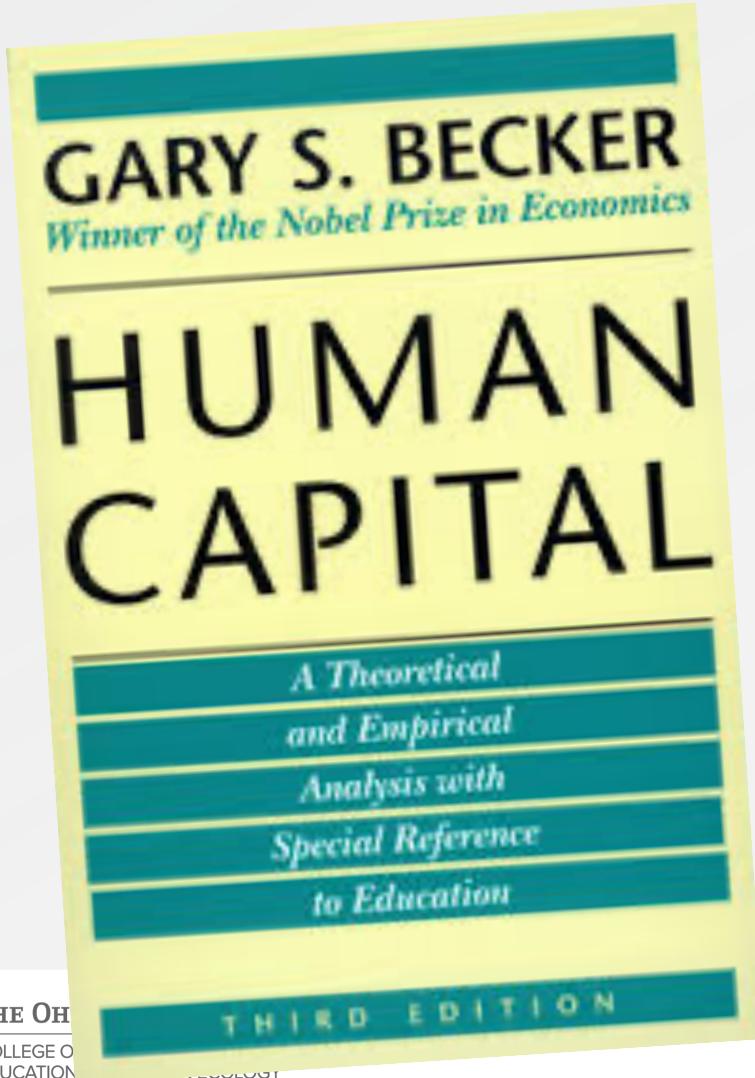
PISA 2006

“The Mexican education system is highly inefficient, incentives for improvement are weak and the quantity and quality of educational provision is well below OECD standards. In general the Mexican education system needs to rapidly improve human capital development.”

(Hopkins, et al 2007: *An Analysis of the Mexican School System in Light of PISA 2006*)

Education = “human capital development”

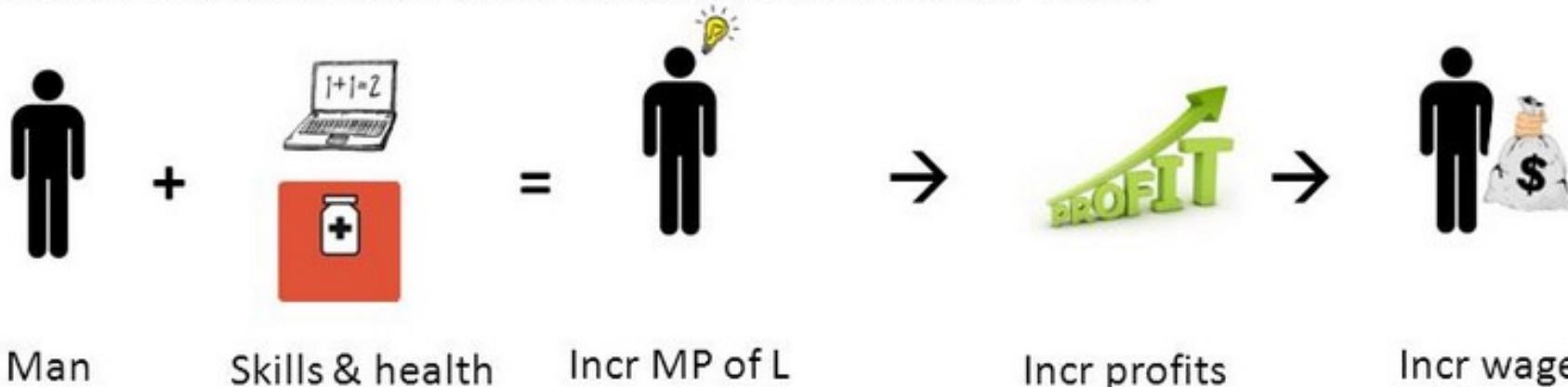
Human Capital Theory



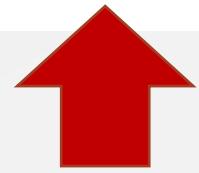
- Education = human capital development
- “Economists view education as an individual investment decision designed to achieve monetary return in the labor market.”
(Becker, 1964)
- knowledge and skills acquired through educational investments increase human productivity enough to justify the costs incurred in acquiring them.

Human Capital Theory

Education increases peoples ability to add value (productivity) → HCM



*English = Language skill with
value in the global market
(linguistic capital)*



Commodification of language (Heller, 2010)
Languages “transformed into symbolic capital as a key resource for economic exploitation” (Del Percio, Flubacher & Duchene, 2013)

Where is the implementation of English education now?



1. Politicization and inconsistency of the implementation from state to state and across *sexenios*.

2. Plagued by administrative issues and the lack of *basificación de los teachers*.

3:23 Luis Ángel's post

TEACHERS PRONI HACIENDO CAMINO Luis Ángel Robles · May 30

30 DE MAYO 2023.
MAESTROS DEL PROGRAMA NACIONAL DE INGLÉS PRONI DE DIFERENTES ESTADOS EN ESPERA DE PAGOS DE MESES PASADOS.

Like Comment Share

78 2 Shares

Top comments

George Secada Jalisco va bañaron marzo v abril

Comment as Pet... GIF 😊

Home Friends Watch Marketplace Notifications Menu

3:23 Luis Ángel's post

Poncho Guzmán Veracruz al corriente ✨ con todos los pagos PRONI.

1w Like Reply 2 🤗

Edgar Adrian Tapiz Ort Baja California aún no nos pagan. Y ya casi terminamos contrato. Vamos para dos meses sin sueldo

1w Like Reply 3 😢

Lili Esquivel S Sinaloa al corriente en los pagos. Ya casi se acaba el contrato.

1w Like Reply 1 😢

Vick Ángeles Crx Trabajen a cómo les paguen, lento, muy lento y sin chiste

1w Like Reply 9 🤗

Lupita Ayala Ponce Vick Ángeles Crx si el sueldo

Rules

Comment as Pet... GIF 😊

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Common challenges in implementation early English education policies

- Lack of educational infrastructure
- Shortage of qualified teachers who speak English
- Policies driven “top-down” from national ministry, no voices of local stakeholders
- Few resources committed to development of curricula, materials, teacher training
- Unequal access to quality L2 English instruction exacerbates social stratification?
- Argentina (Zappa-Hollman, 2007)
- Bangladesh (Hamid, 2010)
- Chile (Matear, 2008)
- China (Butler, 2013; Li, 2007)
- Colombia (de Mejia, 2004; Herazo & Jerez, 2012)
- Malaysia (Ali, Hamid & Moni, 2011)
- Mexico (Lopez, 2014; Ramirez & Sayer, 2014; Sayer, 2015)
- Vietnam (Hoa & Tuan, 2007; Nguyen, 2011)



A 4th grade class in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas 2011



2nd graders doing a science experiment in Puebla, Puebla. 2012



A kindergarten lesson in Aguascalientes, Ags. 2015

Making puppets to do a
puppet-show in English.
Kindergarten in Pachuca,
Hidalgo 2011



*English teacher Ignacio Villalobos
and his students in the Sierra
mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico*

Sayer, P. (2012). *Tensions and ambiguities in English language teaching: Portraits of EFL teachers as legitimate speakers*. London & New York: Routledge



Conclusions: Is the PRONI good language education policy?

Early English language programs in public schools are important...

- ...for developing countries like Mexico in order for more citizens to have communicative competence in English to become more economically competitive in global marketplace.
- ...because they support greater economic mobility and social egalitarianism.
- ...because it is politically popular to support the discourse of “English=opportunities”

But...

- Students reported “non-academic” engagements with English
 - Music
 - Video games (including multiplayer on-line chats with “native” English speakers)
 - Facebook, What’s App, Snapchat with transnational family members in the U.S.
 - = So... students from a range of SES backgrounds do fairly comparable things with English in their everyday lives
- It’s unclear whether the English program in public primaries in Mexico opens any new doors for students.
- The pedagogical practices of ESOL lessons tend to reproduce social class differences.
- The differences seemed to be aligned with broader tendencies of aligning educational policies and pedagogies with the neoliberal goal of schooling as inculcating labor skills for human capital development.



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