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English language teaching in public primary schools in Mexico: the practices and challenges of implementing a national language education program

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Over the past 15 years, many state governments in Mexico have initiated local programs to introduce English at the primary school level. In 2009, the Mexican Ministry of Education formalized the *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica* (PNIEB) as part of the national curriculum, based on the argument that increasing the number of English speakers in Mexico is necessary for the country to be globally competitive and to follow the trend in other developing economies of augmenting English instruction in public education. This paper focuses on the implementation of PNIEB and the state programs that preceded it. The authors document the practices and challenges associated with the program based on data collected from interviews with the main stakeholders involved (students and parents, teachers, school principals, and program coordinators) and from classroom observations. The total data-set consisted of over 200 interviews and classroom observations spread over several years from 2008 to 2012. Several challenges are described, including the development of materials, the role of English in relation to other subject areas, and the training of teachers who often speak English but have uneven formal preparation. The status of the teachers, both as second-class citizens within the schools and the instability and irregularities with their contracts, was identified as the most significant challenge to the successful implementation of the programs.

Keywords: PNIEB; English as an additional language; primary schools; public schools; Mexico; multisite qualitative policy research; educational theory of change

Prologue

The teaching of English as an additional language in Mexican public primary schools is a relatively recent phenomenon. We begin by relating the story of an ordinary day for Claudia, a young teacher who has just begun teaching in a large urban school. The description of Claudia's day is based on our long-term fieldwork with English teachers in two Mexican states – Sonora and Puebla – and follows Wenger's (1998) use of narrative based on composite observations to represent a typical case. After presenting Claudia's case, we shift and present English language education in a broader context in Mexico based on two large-scale qualitative studies. We discuss the main practices and challenges of English programs and the massive expansion of English as an additional language of instruction.

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Claudia glances at her cell phone to check the time. 6:54 am. Six minutes to get to class. She waits impatiently at the copy shop across the street from her school as the old clerk makes photocopies of the activity sheet she will use with her third grade class. It is already the second month of classes, but the English textbooks haven't arrived yet, so she relies on activities she finds on-line, has collected from the few training workshops she's had, or that one of her friends who teaches English has given her.

The clerk hands her the copies, each sheet still warm and cut into four little squares to save a few pesos, and she digs into the bottom of her purse to find change. She hasn't been paid since school started, although the contract she signed was for 70 pesos (US$5.40) per class. She's been told the English teachers' salaries have been held up because of financial problems in the government accounting office. Since the English teachers don't have formalized union positions like other school staff, they don't receive regular paychecks or any benefits. To help her, the school principal has asked parents to give one peso a week per child, at least to cover her bus fare and photocopies. Many of her fellow English teachers don't even have that, and some have left the program to take jobs elsewhere. At 23 years old, Claudia still lives at home with her parents, so she can get by, but others have to work afternoon and even weekend jobs at private schools to make ends meet. However, most stay in the program because it may lead to a coveted union position, which means stability and good benefits.

Claudia enters the office and signs her time sheet and then heads to her first class, pulling her little rolling box stuffed full of materials behind her. She passes a group of her sixth grade students who greet her loudly in English "Good morning teacher!" She pauses to remember which class is first … what is today? Wednesday. On Wednesdays she starts with … the upstairs second grade group. She has eight different groups and sometimes she can't remember which group is which, let alone the names of her students since she only sees them three times a week for 50-minute lessons. She lugs her box up the stairs, and one of the fifth grade boys – she thinks it's Javier – helps her carry it.

She arrives in the class while the group's regular teacher – the maestra titular – is making announcements. Claudia flips through her notebook quickly to remind herself what lesson is for today. It's the science experiment. "I wonder how many remembered to bring their supplies," she thinks to herself. The new program didn't really say much except to do a "science experiment" and that the objective of the lesson is for the students to learn the English terms for following directions: First, next, then, finally. She hunted around on-line and found one where students make a telephone with Styrofoam cups and string that seemed right for second grade and could be adapted as an English lesson. But she isn't sure how the lesson fits with the new program with its "sociocultural approach," since she went to a brief workshop last week and the trainer just told them the lesson should relate to social practices and the kids' everyday lives. Well, she asked the kids what they knew about doing a science experiment, and they said they'd never done one before! Even in their science class! What was she supposed to do about that? And the classroom teacher was sitting there at her desk marking homework. She looked up as if to say "Who are you coming in here to make me look bad?" The program says English class is supposed to relate to the students' other subjects, but it doesn't seem to work that way. "And the classroom teacher thinks I just sing songs and play games with the kids," Claudia thought. "She doesn't get it that the new program calls for

us to have the students being more active, to try to relate the contents to students' lives." The first thing, Claudia has decided, is to get the students to enjoy the class and have a positive attitude towards learning English, and she knows she can only accomplish that if they are relaxed and comfortable.

The classroom teacher finishes the announcements and indicates to Claudia that she can begin her lesson. She begins the class in English, and injects her voice with energy: "Are you ready to sing a song?" "Yes!" the class responds, and one girl yells "Head and shoulders song!" Claudia uses her loudest voice so all 42 students can hear in the large concrete room. "First we'll sing the Good Morning Song, then Head and Shoulders, okay?" After a few months, she is learning how to control the class better. At first, the class was pretty chaotic, but now with the younger students she can get the kids to do mostly what she wants, even when she is speaking mostly in English. Juanito approaches her before the song starts, mentally formulating the sounds of the English words in his mind: "Teacher, can I go… bathroom?" Claudia smiles; it's the first time she's heard Juanito use English. "Yes," she says "but hurry" she replies in English, making a snapping motion with her fingers to help communicate her meaning. Juanito scampers off and the Good Morning Song begins.

Introduction

English has long been an important language in Mexico, due to its geographical proximity and close cultural and economic ties with the United States and Belize. However, relatively few Mexicans, perhaps less than five percent of the general population, are conversationally proficient in English (González Robles, Vivaldo Lima, & Castillo Morales, 2004). Although English has been taught as a foreign language in public secondary schools since at least 1954 (Secretaria de Educación Pública [SEP], 2010), the results have generally been regarded as poor (Aramayo, 2005; Davies, 2007; Martínez, 2009), and even after six years of English most high school graduates have minimal communicative abilities in English. Jobs that require English proficiency, like management and skilled positions with multinational corporations, are usually filled by people who have attended elite private schools or studied abroad and have been able to develop their language skills. Nevertheless, following recommendations from international organizations (such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and as national economies become further integrated and Mexico continues its push to compete in global markets, there has been a growing recognition among policy-makers that the country must transition from a model of *elite bilingualism* to one where more citizens are able to study and learn English, called *macroacquisition* (Brutt-Griffler, 2002).

Picking up on this trend, state governors began to make English in public primary schools part of the centerpiece of their educational policies. From 1992 to 2009, 21 Mexican states (of 32 total) began their own programs, particularly in border and industrial states, although many state programs were small, poorly funded, and remained largely symbolic. More recently, the Mexican government has taken two major steps toward significantly increasing the amount and quality of English instruction that Mexican public school students, who represent over 90% of Mexican children, will receive. First, in 2009, the Ministry of Education (SEP) began a new program (Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica [PNIEB]) to provide

two and a half hours per week of English instruction in all years of primary schooling, from kindergarten to sixth grade.[1] The second initiative was to expand compulsory education through high school (called *preparatoria* or *bachillerato* in Mexico). The results of these two measures are that, when fully implemented, students will study English as a foreign language (EFL) during all 13 years of K-12 education.

This paper provides a descriptive account of the implementation of English language education in public primary schools. The implementation entailed the development of a new curriculum, new textbooks and materials, and the creation of the organization and infrastructure in each state to run the program, as well as the hiring and training of tens of thousands of teachers. The total data-set consisted of over 200 interviews and classroom observations spread over several years from 2008 to 2012, and including both the PNIEB and the preceding state programs. The research question that we address in this paper is:

> What have been the main practices and challenges related to the implementation of the programs for English language education in public primary schools in Mexico, according to the stakeholders involved: students, parents, teachers, school principals, and program coordinators?

The exploratory nature of this question, as well as the privileging of the stakeholders' own meanings and perspectives, made a flexible and qualitative approach ideal (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order to capture the complexity of our research question, we decided to synthesize two parallel studies, using the research question and a commonly applied linguistics orientation to frame our qualitative analysis across both data-sets (see the methodology section below for an explanation of the two data-sets).

The context of English in Mexico

The argument for expanding English language education in Mexico is predicated on the perceived need for greater numbers of Mexicans who are proficient in English. In applied linguistics, language proficiency is usually theorized as *communicative competence* (Canale, 1983; Savignon, 2001), drawing on the work of the sociolinguist Del Hymes (1972). Communicative competence is defined as the ability to use language to accomplish things in social situations. One critique of foreign language programs, and one that has been made of English teaching in Mexico (Sayer, 2012), is that "traditional" approaches to second language instruction that focus on teaching grammatical forms of the language do not help students develop communicative competence. Therefore, most high school graduates of the public education system in Mexico, despite having studied English for six years (three in *secundaria* and three in *bachillerato* or *preparatoria*), have very minimal communicative competence in English. The English as an Additional Language Curriculum for middle school (*secundaria*) was revamped by the Federal Ministry of Education (SEP) in 1994 and adopted Communicative Language Teaching (SEP, 1996), a pedagogical approach aligned with the development of students' communicative competence (Brown, 2007). However, more than 15 years after this reform, many of the classes we observed in conjunction with this research we would still not characterize as "communicative," despite the teachers' claim that they were following the communicative curriculum.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers use theory in their studies in several ways: as a broad explanation for behavior and attitudes, as theoretical lens or perspective, and as an end point, but "some qualitative studies do not include an explicit theory and present descriptive research of the central phenomenon" (p. 70). In the latter approach, "the inquirer constructs a rich, detailed description of a central phenomenon" (p. 65). Thus, our account here draws together the voices of participants with distinct roles and relationships to the English program in an attempt to show the complexities of the implementation of an educational program on this scale. We also recognize, as Creswell does, that no qualitative study starts from zero but emerges from certain ideas or concepts, which in some way serve as unfixed initial landmarks that are modified as researchers collect and analyze new data informed by their own experience and their literature review.

In our case, the teaching of English in Mexican public schools was initially conceptualized as a multi-determined process and as a set of interlocking national, state, and institutional projects, comprising multiple elements: objectives, content, educational materials, infrastructure, and so forth. At the same time, this initiative is seen as a process where various political, cultural, social, economic, and linguistic aspects converge, and where many stakeholders are involved: policy makers, administrators, principals, school administrators, faculty, parents, and students. Furthermore, the program's dimensions intersect along various dimensions, such as the institution, the curriculum, the classroom, the home, and the community.

However, as we progressed in collecting and analyzing data and tried to explain the nature of our findings, we learned about the theory of change, and found it particularly interesting to enrich our analysis. The theory of change is often connected to the ideas of Fullan (2001) whose main interests are educational systems and the process of school reform. Because the implementation of the English programs could be considered a process of school reform, we found Fullan's ideas useful to understand such implementation. Fullan describes change as non-linear and messy and believes that there is no blueprint or checklist for change. Change for him is complex and requires hard, day-to-day work of reculturing. Therefore, educational changes must be designed, implemented, and evaluated based on referential frameworks that consider multiple factors and stimulate the participation of all stakeholders affected by the proposed changes, as argued by Uys, Nleya, and Molelu (2004).

Literature on educational change or innovation has also documented several conditions that facilitate the implementation of changes and innovations, such as the active role of school principals (Fullan, 2001); the importance of school leadership (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005); human resource and behavior management (White, 2008); teachers' role and their professional development (Borg, 2006; Johnson, 2009); and the multiple roles of language program administrators (Christison & Stoller, 2012). Thus, any project that seeks change in schools, should create the conditions, the steps, and the strategies for the successful implementation and institutionalization of the change and make sure, through periodic evaluations, that things happen as planned (Fullan, 2007; Waters & Vilches, 2001; White, 2008).

The theory of change allowed us to frame the implementation process of English teaching programs within a larger context, to reorder the categories we had elaborated after the first preliminary analysis of our data-sets, and to formulate some

propositions that help us explain the nature of the implementation of English programs in Mexican public schools as well as the factors affecting the implementation of such programs.

Methodology

The first data-set (compiled by the first and third authors) represents the work of a coalition of 52 researchers[2] who conducted 54 site visits to nine different states[3] from 2008 to 2012, but in this paper we will particularly focus on the data generated in the northwest state of Sonora, which was chosen because the local government had initiated a state English program some years before the federal program was introduced, and was thus typical of many of the programs that were operating prior to the reform by the national government. The second was a data-set from a national study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education at the outset of the PNIEB which included a qualitative component and 19 site visits to 16 different states[4] over a three and a half year period from 2009 to 2012 (by the second author).

Since one of the main purposes of both studies was to document the implementation practices of a national EFL program at the local level, we used a qualitative approach, labeled by Firestone and Herriott (1994) as *multisite qualitative policy research*, or more recently by Yin (2009) as a multiple-case study, which addresses the same research question in various scenarios or sites using methods of data collection and analysis similar in each scenario. An advantage of this type of qualitative research approach is "to strengthen its ability to generalize while preserving in-depth description" (Firestone and Herriott, 1994, p. 14). Additionally, this type of design allowed us to identify and understand what emerged as the most pressing issues and concerns for the different stakeholders involved, and simultaneously to generate rich descriptions of the situation, the teaching practices, and the institutional and social contexts, as proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). This approach enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of the problems and their causes, as well as insights on the nature of the programs' implementation processes.

Data collection included extensive classroom observations and semi-structured, in-depth, and focal group interviews with students, teachers, school administrators, program coordinators, and parents. In most of the states, schools were selected to encompass the diversity of context of geographical areas (urban, suburban, and rural) and shift (morning, evening, and "full time"), as well as socioeconomic levels and, in some states, of indigenous schools. In total, the team of researchers visited more than 70 schools in 18 states (some states were visited by both teams independently) and conducted more than 200 interviews and class observations.

Key participants interviewed included principals and English teachers, as well as a sample of students and parents; in some cases, the regular classroom teachers (called the *titulares*) and supervisors were also interviewed. The interviews were guided by a tentative, open-ended, and flexible set of issues or questions to elicit the opinions, attitudes, and feelings of the respondents regarding the school English program. In general, the interviews with principals and parent representatives were conducted individually whereas those with the students were focal group interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed in Spanish by the researchers.[5]

Likewise, classroom observations were carried out in one or two English classes in each school and were complemented in some cases with photographs, videos, and

samples of students' work. In both studies, we took detailed field notes in an effort to create "thick descriptions" and, as in the study by Naraian (2011), field notes were accompanied by analytic memos recording reflections, analyses, and questions that surfaced during the course of the study.

Even though data were analyzed independently by both research teams, the analysis procedures followed in each case were quite similar. In the first team, data collected through observations and interviews were triangulated and subjected to coding and contextualizing procedures with further conceptual reflections informed by extensive iterative revisiting of the literature to facilitate and enrich the process of data interpretation (Holligan, 2011). In the second team, the data were analyzed deductively initially, using qualitative content analysis (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) from pre-established categories derived from the research questions, and then inductively to identify emergent themes and patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). Partial interpretations were, in those cases where it was deemed necessary, subsequently modified and refined based on the emergence of new evidence. Subsequently, we merged the analyses from both studies by comparing our findings and, through lengthy discussions, settling on the most salient patterns and categories. We used the categories to organize and discuss the data presented in the results section.

Researchers' positionality

In this paper, following Srivastava (2006), we will understand *positionality* as the perspective shaped by each researcher's "unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality and other identifiers" (Mullings, 1999, p. 337). We adopt Srivastava's (2006) ideas that, (1) "the multiplicity of identities (some shared, and others not) opens up a space for researchers to facilitate exchange by creating shared positionalities with participants through the use of currencies[6]" (p. 212), and (2) that most of the time researchers struggle with the notion of "lack," a term "conceptualised as the researcher's feeling of not being an insider, which is augmented as interactions with multiple and different types of participant groups increase" (p. 212).

In the case of the first research team, data were collected and analyzed mostly by researchers who lived in large cities and were female and bilingual middle-class higher education professors with little or no experience with teaching in public elementary schools. These characteristics shaped our perspectives and heightened our feeling of being outsiders and our sense of "lack" (Srivastava, 2006). This became evident each time we interacted with the different participants in the study. Some of these were parents who were poor, unemployed, rural field workers (*campesinos*) deported from the USA; others were teachers whose only credentials were that they once lived in the USA and whose English (and Spanish) were far from the standards of academic language. We also encountered students from rural and marginalized areas who were socioeconomically and/or intellectually disadvantaged. Moreover, a majority of school principals did not speak English.

To minimize this notion of lack, we tried to mediate the resulting positionalities to facilitate our exchanges with the various participants, especially through the deliberated and selective use of language, mannerisms, and outward appearance through which we tried "to achieve shared positionalities with the different participants" (Srivastava, 2006, p. 213). But, as Srivastava argues, as real-life identities were constantly defined and redefined in relation to others' identities (social positioning in time and space), so too were field identities changed, adapted, and mediated, such

that researchers had to use different currencies for different purposes "at various points in the data collection process" (p. 214). For example, our social positioning, type of language (colloquial or formal), and outward appearance with *campesino* parents were much different from those we adopted when dealing with high-ranking bilingual government officials. And the way we addressed students (e.g. using the less formal pronoun *tú)* was different from the language we used with parents, teachers, or government officials (e.g. addressed as *usted*).

However, due to the diversity of the participants, the same traits that made us feel outsiders with the previous groups were used as a currency to achieve shared positionalities with other participants (Srivastava, 2006), such as parents from large towns or cities who had stable jobs; teachers who held a degree with expertise in ESL teaching and were bilingual in both languages (English and Spanish); middle-class students who lived in the city; and high-ranking bilingual government officials. This was especially so with participants from different regions, states, and ethnicities of Mexico due to the fact that most researchers were from or lived in the same states and regions where data were collected. Therefore, the issues of local protocols, modes of speaking and mannerisms when addressing participants from different regions, social classes, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds, were more easily handled. Additionally, the fact that none of the researchers worked for the government or for the English programs under study and were teachers themselves seemed to generate rapport with the participants, especially with the teachers who on several occasions voiced their fears of being fired if they spoke freely or voiced negative comments about the program. Therefore, as in the case of Srivastava (2006), our sense of lack intersected at different points and in different ways in relation to each participant group but it was partially resolved through the use of different currencies.

The second author, a Canadian-born, US-based scholar with extensive experience living and teaching English in Mexico, faced similar issues in terms of his identity and intersubjectivity with participants. In fact, he is keenly aware that he was invited by the Mexican Ministry to lead the national study in large part because of his status as an Anglo, native English-speaking scholar from the United States, which lent credibility to the government's program. Another layering of positionality that we became aware of in the preparation of this manuscript for publication was how the collaboration became more than just how to merge our analyses and findings (which was challenging), but also how to find a shared voice as Mexican and American scholars writing for an international audience.

Findings

We identified three main areas where the stakeholders reported that the English programs face the greatest challenges: the curriculum, the textbooks, and the issues faced by the teachers. We illustrate each area by drawing from the interviews.

The curriculum[7]

The national English program (PNIEB) is based on the same pedagogical approach used throughout the general Mexican national centralized curriculum covering all the content areas. This approach was established by the *Integral Reform of Basic Education* (*Reforma Integral de Educación Básica)* (RIEB) in 2009, whereby the

Mexican primary education system adopted a "sociocultural" pedagogical approach influenced heavily by Vygotskyan learning theories. Under this approach, the teaching methodology is based on a series of "social practices of the language" that have been identified according to three learning environments in children's development: (a) family and community, (b) academic and educational, and (c) literary and ludic[8] (SEP, 2010). Within these environments, specific competencies (achievements, content, and products) have been determined for teachers to use as a basis in their lesson planning, teaching methodology, and evaluation.

Despite the fact that the PNIEB has developed a series of curricular documents, which include its theoretical foundations, lists of topics and contents for each grade, and leveling guidelines for mixed-level classrooms, results from our study indicate that most stakeholders have an unclear or incomplete knowledge about the program:

(1) Principal:	*Well, the truth is that I don't have information [about the PNIEB].*
(2) Teacher 2:	*I received training but I do not know the program very well …*
(3) Teacher 8:	*It [the PNIEB] is not very clear, very strange. Before [with the state program] we had more clarity about what we taught and we had books as guides to plan our classes …*

Another problem related to the curriculum is the teachers' concern that the program guidelines and textbooks are overly complex. They explained that their students do not have the language level to perform the content activities and learning tasks in some of the units:

(1) Teacher 1:	*The level is really high, I think that it's meant for students who already know English … Mine, even though they have had six years in the program, can't keep up with the level.*
(2) Teacher 2:	*… for example the sixth grade groups that I have, umm, perhaps if they had been studying English since kindergarten we could consider it, but they are giving me books that have contents that they haven't even mastered yet in Spanish.*
(3) Teacher 3:	*I feel that the English program that we're working with is very ambitious …it's the first contact that the kids have with some themes that are very advanced … For example some units include things like commercial transactions or they have to learn future [tense], when they don't even know the pronouns, or the alphabet … so I start from zero with them.*

These teachers' concerns are not unfounded. As Cameron (2003) indicates, students in primary level are still developing literacy skills in their first language and may have difficulties managing the demands of texts in the foreign language, so "careful analysis of activities by teachers is necessary to ensure that language learning opportunities are not overwhelmed by literacy demands" (p. 108). However, the idea that language and content learning ought to be sequential – as expressed by Teacher 2 above – is counter to the general goal of introducing language learning in the initial grades. We often heard teachers and parents express

concerns that four- and five-year-old children who are exposed to the English writing system would get confused, since "they haven't even learned Spanish yet." We posit that this "sequential learning" perspective expressed by many educators is the result of a second-language learning orientation grounded in foreign language teaching with older learners, rather than a simultaneous additive bilingual and biliteracy approach for younger students proposed by Cummins (2000) and Hornberger (2002).

Besides the language level, data from our observations also indicate that the activities and content in the lessons sometimes did not correspond to the children's age level or sociocultural background and experiences. An example of this was a typical activity which required fifth-grade students to write a wedding invitation. While this has the advantage that it requires the students to compose texts beyond isolated words and sentences, the sending and receiving of a formal, written wedding invitation may not represent a Mexican cultural practice that most students can relate to, or perhaps is relative only to students from a certain socioeconomic level. In most classes we observed, teachers used the content of the lesson to engage the students linguistically (e.g. as a means of practicing second language writing or grammar), but did not engage the sociocultural aspects directly (e.g. discussing students' prior experiences helping their family with a wedding).

Finally, despite the fact that the PNIEB's guidelines (achievements, content, and products) are aligned directly to the general curriculum and to the other content areas taught in Spanish, teachers rarely made explicit connections across content areas. When asked about this, some teachers mentioned that they had noticed the similarities in topics and cultural content, but that they did not seem to be aware of attempts to align the two instructional programs:

(1) Teacher 1:	*I only see what the topics are from the material the Spanish [titular] teacher has up, but I don't organize anything with her …*
(2) Teacher 2:	*I see that the students are seeing [in other subjects] what I'm teaching them, for example the United Nations … even though we're sort of out of sync with some themes.*

So, although teachers often see connections across content areas, as in the example of the science lesson from Claudia's story, these intercurricular connections are incidental and not directly coordinated between the English teacher and the regular classroom teacher. In fact, some reported that either the classroom teachers did not seem interested in collaborating or they felt threatened by the presence of the English teacher. This is unfortunate, since the sociocultural framework of the curriculum would seem to support a more holistic approach and foment the transfer of concepts and learning across subjects.

The textbooks

Before the introduction of the PNIEB, each state was in charge of selecting and, in some cases, of selling the textbooks that the students used in their classes. Most of these textbooks were not specifically designed for the characteristics of the different state programs, and their selection was not based on a specific set of criteria. Thus, in most of the state programs (before 2009), it was the publishers (mostly foreign), not the Mexican government, who dictated the school curriculum through the

content, lessons, and pace stipulated in the textbooks. In many cases, the publishers were also in charge of training teachers to use their books, with the approval and appreciation of the state coordinators:

Coordinator: *We like working with the publishers because they have helped us a lot. For example, [Publisher X] has been really good … The publishers help with materials, like posters and other things, [sending] trainers who are specialists in certain topics. That's part of the services that come with [purchasing] the textbook.*

So, despite the many criticisms of the role that publishing companies have played in education (e.g. Apple, 1986; McLaren, 2005), the state English coordinators have often relied on the publishers to set the curriculum in public schools. Likewise, some teachers were guided by the teaching methodology spelled out in the official programs (e.g. "Communicative Language Teaching"), and others based their teaching on their own ideas and experience. However, most teachers and coordinators stated that their pedagogy was derived almost exclusively from the book:

(1) Teacher 1: *Well, of course [the book is important]. I work completely with [the book …], completely from there … Never in my life do I use other materials...*

(2) Teacher 2: *We have the Teacher's Guide, we have a register of the lesson planning and from there I can list all of my activities.*

With the introduction of the PNIEB, the Ministry designed some guidelines and allowed private publishers to compete for contracts (unlike the textbooks for other subject areas, which are produced by the SEP). As of 2013, there were 12 publishers who have developed textbooks specifically for the program. However, the participants report at least two major concerns with the books. First, some textbooks did not correspond to the students' sociocultural context and English level, even though this inadequacy of textbooks in relation to cultures and local needs and student characteristics has been widely criticized by several authors. Moon and Enever (2010), for example, argue that the concepts underlying many textbooks are often inappropriate to students' reading level and the cultural context, such as the Mexican one, with overcrowded classrooms, large groups, and very limited resources.

Secondly, all reported that the books are not being distributed equally or on time to the schools. This creates a problem for teachers because they consider the textbooks as an important methodological guide and resource:

(1) Teacher 1: *I know that [the book] shouldn't be the only resource, but the children are very visual and they need the book. Besides we can [use it] to plan the class, well some of us have experience with the [previous state program] but the new [national program] teachers are just lost.*

(2) Teacher 2: *We haven't got the textbook and it's difficult to make up the classes just from what's on the page [of the national program]. They told us to adapt the program the way we see fit for the needs of our students. But I ask myself: "What vocabulary am I supposed to be teaching?" So yeah, with the textbook it was better.*

(3) Teacher 3: *The way we were working before [with the state program] was with a program, a teaching guide with the book's contents, and so the work was easier [than the new curriculum]. It was easier to do the lesson planning, because there was something established by the textbook, and we had the Teacher's Guide.*

Hence, the textbook became something of a double-edged sword. The over-reliance on books produced by foreign publishers and not well-suited to the Mexican context tended to limit the teachers' pedagogy. However, when the books do not arrive until months after the school year starts, as has been common with the national program, novice teachers must generate their own content. While the national program provides a general list of items to cover (e.g. "sequencing words") and activities (e.g. "do a science experiment"), without the book, the teachers are left to their own devices to figure out how to plan the lesson. We should acknowledge that in some cases the most creative approaches we observed, as with Claudia's story at the beginning, were when teachers had not received the textbook, since they relied on their intuitive sense of what would fit their students' needs and interests.

The teachers

Our last category includes several inter-related issues that affect the teachers. The first issue, which overlaps with the concern noted above about the textbooks, is the teacher's methodology. Before the implementation of the PNIEB, only a few states had clear guidelines for teachers to follow in their classes; hence the reliance on the textbooks and publishers' training. The new program has a lengthy section dedicated to explaining the pedagogical approach and providing teaching guidelines to follow. Many teachers are trying to implement the official approaches using a variety of activities and resources, as Claudia's vignette demonstrates; however, others use more traditional, teacher-centered approaches.

In general, the teachers were evaluated positively by their students, although some children stated their preference for certain kinds of activities that they found more engaging, and where language could be used in more productive and challenging ways:

(1) Student 1 (5th grade): *I like it when we do presentations.*
Interviewer 1: *And those of you who don't have the book, what do you do?*
Various students: *We write down everything!*
Interviewer 1: *You do dictations and questions, what else? Games? Yes?*
Student 2: *They give us a vocabulary [list] and we translate it to Spanish.*
(2) Interviewer 2: *Anything else you'd like to tell me about English class? Yes?*
Student 1: *It should be more complicated.*
Interviewer 2: *More complicated ... what do you mean by "more complicated?"*
Student 1: *[Pause] Like we should do more advanced things.*

School principals also reported high satisfaction overall with the programs, but again, some related that they perceived limitations with some teachers' pedagogical approaches:

Principal:	*Yes I've seen that [the program] has a lot of limitations. Why? Because the question is about the materials [textbooks] … most children, haven't gotten them. So the teacher has to work with the program, [and if he] has a traditional approach it'll be like "Here is today's topic. It's about fruit and we're going to work with fruit." They write on the board the names of the fruits, draw them and the kids copy them and once in a while they do something more, some verb conjugations, but – it's my personal view – I know that … that it's not working on the level that one would hope for.*

The previous findings are supported by the researchers' observations. During the study, some of the lessons that were observed were teacher-centered and the teaching activities did not correspond to the communicative or the sociocultural approaches defined by the programs. Typical lessons that were observed featured repetitions, dictations, and copying of words and phrases from the blackboard to the notebooks.

In addition to teacher-centered pedagogy, results suggest that the way language is being taught requires greater sequencing and contextualization. As we know from sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), context is essential because children learn by making sense of the world that surrounds them. In the classroom, students also learn and create language by interacting and engaging in meaningful use of texts and not by fragmenting language into vocabulary words, grammatical items, or by repeating words or phrases without some kind of contextual support (Goodman, 2005).

Field notes from observations in schools and interviews with students show that in many cases the main content that is being taught is the alphabet, basic vocabulary (e.g. colors, numbers, animals, days of the week, and months of the year), and phrases and short sentences but they are being presented in an isolated manner and from a grammatical point of view (e.g. verb tenses and auxiliary words). The following are excerpts from an interview with three different groups (5th and 6th grade) who had been in the program for several years (both state and PNIEB). When asked what they had learned so far, they responded:

(1) Interviewer 1:	*So, let's see, since first [grade] … what have you learned [up to fifth grade]?*
Student (5th grade):	*The alphabet.*
Interviewer 1:	*The alphabet, what else?*
Student:	*The numbers, the days of the week, the months.*
(2) Interviewer 2:	*What do they teach you?*
Student (6th grade):	*The alphabet.*
Interviewer 2:	*The alphabet, what else?*
Student:	*Numbers.*
Interviewer 2:	*Numbers, what else?*
Student:	*Words.*
Interviewer 2:	*Words …*
Student:	[inaudible]
Interviewer 2:	*Oh, spelling.*
Student:	*Sentences.*
(3) Interviewer 3:	*What else have you learned?*
Student 1 (6th grade):	*Verbs, past, present, countries.*
Student 2:	*Flags, nationalities.*
Student 3:	*To ask what time it is, where things are, colors.*

Student 4: *Parts of the house, [in English] ceiling, door.*

Some of the lessons we observed included students' copying of lists of verbs, adjectives or modal auxiliaries in their notebooks and fill-in-the-blank activities on the blackboard or in their notebooks. Explicit grammar teaching is also part of many teaching activities, as shown in the following excerpts:

(1) Teacher 1: *For example, in the textbooks…we do a lot of grammar.*
(2) Teacher 2: *Yesterday, I had presented [the topic]. So today was a review because it is more grammar, so it took me longer.*

These practices do not correspond to the sociocultural perspective which considers that grammar is implicitly internalized through social interactions (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). With children, as Cameron (2003) explains, grammar emerges internally as they gain a sense of the patterns and regularities when working with discourse and vocabulary. Moreover, teaching grammar directly to young children may be irrelevant because they have not developed their ability for abstract reasoning and the terminology may be overwhelming for them (Nunan, 2010; Pinter, 2006).

By the same token, we documented a significant number of effective teaching practices, and overall teachers are committed and enthusiastic about their classes. In fact, as the above quote from the students who want to do more advanced activities suggests, successful teachers were able to challenge their students with creative and communicative lessons in English. So, despite the tendency towards grammar- and vocabulary-based instruction noted above, the most frequently used descriptor of many classes was "*dinámica*" (dynamic). This was the clearest strength of the programs, and connotes participants' perceptions of most English teachers as being energetic, engaging, and using less traditional, teacher-fronted instruction (at least compared to the regular teacher). Observations confirmed that many teachers did make considerable efforts to take the characteristics and interests of the children into consideration and integrate activities and lessons with movement, song, play, and technology. This increases students' motivation and their desire to continue learning the language. A significant number of teachers also have positive attitudes and willingness to learn and implement new methodologies. They are open to learning and finding ways to help the students learn the language:

(1) Teacher 1: *So when we present them [students] something real, well not so real, but you know like a stuffed animal, they can touch it and they make associations more quickly in their mind, so that actually saves us more time instead of just [in English] drilling, drilling […] I bring in a lot of things, I have dolls of almost all the animals so they can identify them, so that it's like an activity that's, um, fresh.*
(2) Teacher 2: *Well, it depends on the group! […] The intelligence of the children […] For example, for the ones who are a bit quieter, I have to encourage them to be active, so I include songs that I find somewhere else and go off the book and other materials, like stuffed animals and all that … I don't know if I'm missing things, but that's how I plan, depending on how the kids are doing, and I try to combine a lot of things.*

Although the teachers don't explicitly use the terminology, it is apparent from their statements that they are actively trying to incorporate ideas such as differentiated learning and multiple intelligences into their practice; pedagogical concepts that are generally not found in traditional Mexican classrooms. While some classroom *titular* teachers seemed to regard English class as just "song and dance," as in Claudia's story, we also had evidence that the more communicative and student-oriented lessons brought by many of the English teachers may have some positive effect with *titular* teachers, who often stay in the classroom to mark papers during English lessons and are thus exposed to alternate teaching models. The children and other diverse participants also acknowledged the effort that many teachers made by incorporating dynamic activities into their lessons:

(1) Student 1 (3rd grade):	*... the teacher is cool, and we play a lot of games ...!*
Student 2:	*... we learn by playing with the [in English] teacher.*
Interviewer:	*And what is it called [the game]?*
Student 3:	*The treasure chest!*
Interviewer:	*How does the treasure chest go?*
Student 1:	*It's when we do an activity and we all participate. The teacher pays us with a ticket and there's a box, and it has a treasure, and with the ticket, we can trade the ticket for something that's in the box.*
Student 2:	*It could be toys and when we get five or six together she gives us a ticket, and you can trade the ticket for a prize.*
(2) Principal:	*It's the second teacher that I've seen who really works as one should. She uses technology, brings good materials, and she has a lot of interaction between the students and herself and the regular teacher.*
(3) Parent:	*I see that the children are fascinated when they have to listen to songs, and that's how they learn them, right? Because they hear the pronunciation and listen to them too and so they're learning too, right?*

Therefore, English teachers are seen as a creative, innovative group, but some of them fall back on traditional, grammar-oriented lessons and struggle to adopt more contextualized and communicative language lessons. This inconsistency of the teachers' methodology seems to be due in part to the uneven training they have received. This was the second major issue we identified: teacher preparation. In order to fully implement the PNIEB by 2018, the SEP anticipates that it will need to hire 99,500 new English teachers. Historically, most public school teachers in Mexico are *normalistas,* coming from the normal or teacher training schools. With the advent of the state programs and subsequently of the PNIEB, there was an opportunity for non-*normalistas* to work in public schools. In the 1990s and 2000s, many universities established bachelor's programs in English language teaching (ELT), and graduates worked at private schools, at the high school level, or in language centers. Other teachers have related degrees (especially tourism and business, which require higher levels of English):

(1) Teacher 1:	*In my case I have a BA in business administration and have studied some English ... When I was a student at the university, I was also working in the United States during the weekends, I was a musician in a folk group, and that's how I learned English. Once I finished my studies, the program called SepaInglés opened here in town and I*

took it to get a certificate in English. While I was taking the certificate, I got a job as an English teacher [with the state program] and have been working here ever since.

While the Ministry has specified to the state coordinators a "minimum profile" for hiring teachers, including an intermediate level of English and some kind of teaching credentials, the pool of qualified people available is small, and the infrastructure does not yet exist to train more teachers in the near future. Certainly, the difficulties in finding and training teachers with requisite English language skills are a problem shared by other developing countries who are expanding English instruction to public schools, such as China (Li, 2007), Bangladesh (Obaidul Hamid, 2010), and Chile (Matear, 2008).

A point which relates to the lack of clarity about the program and the difficulty of implementing the new, socioculturally oriented curriculum mentioned above is associated with the training teachers have received. As related in Claudia's story, many teachers have received only a few hours' workshop on what is a complex and sophisticated pedagogical model which gives more autonomy and decision-making to the teacher. Moreover, teachers reported that workshops had focused more on the program's general characteristics and not so much on its methodological applications in the classroom:

Teacher: *We were given a talk about the program. I think this was in 2010, then they gave us the guidelines and we were told "Here they are, use your criteria to adapt them to what you consider necessary for your classes." But I don't know what vocabulary to teach. For example, they [guidelines] say "make an instrument," do I, for example, make a guitar or a piano? This requires different vocabulary, different instructions …*

Likewise, parents reported that while they were generally satisfied with the children's English teachers, some were critical of their approach:

(1) Mother 1: *The teacher's training is important for me and I think it's very important that the teacher knows how to work with a child, to treat adolescents, to control the group, activities, techniques, strategies … because I can tell you that often what they do is the same, the same, the same. If you teach the same thing every day to a child he's going to get bored … so it's important again, I'd emphasize the teacher's training.*

(2) Mother 2: *The English teachers should receive better training in group dynamics and other activities so they know how to make their classes interesting and motivate the students.*

These views point to the need to integrate ongoing teacher preparation into the implementation of the program, with a specific emphasis on helping teachers figure out how to put the vaguely defined contents of the curriculum into practice in the classroom in a way that is consistent with its sociocultural approach, especially when they cannot rely on the textbooks to arrive.

The final issue that impacted the teachers was the working conditions within the programs. Whereas the public primary schools initially offered new employment

opportunities for fluent English speakers, there were several factors that contributed to high teacher turnover rates: sporadic payments, lack of benefits, and low wages. These factors motivated many teachers to move to more lucrative and stable jobs in private institutions. The vast majority gets paid very low wages: an average of about 70 *pesos* (~US$5.40) per class session, with no time paid for planning or grading, totaling about US$6000 per year. Often paychecks are delayed several months, and teachers work on 10-month contracts. Moreover, in most of the states studied, contracts are temporary, teachers are not entitled to any benefits (even those which are supposedly mandatory by law), teachers do not receive any medical services, and they have no job stability:

(1) Teacher 1: *We do not have any benefits and are not entitled to any medical services, even though many of us have children and are single mothers [...] We are not paid during the summer. The last check we receive is on June 30 and we do not get paid again until September 30. Three months without a penny ... that's a very heavy load for us! It's very difficult to work under those conditions.*

(2) Interviewer: *How do you feel about your employment status?*

Teacher 2: *It is an uncomfortable condition and a situation that many teachers consider unfair. This is the seventh year I've been working for the program and we still are in the same situation, always hoping that next year things will change! But in spite of that, we are always willing to work. Most of us are in the program since its beginning, when it was a state program. And it really hurts a lot! It hurts because we are left without employment every year in July and August ... and it is very hard, it is a very heavy burden for us.*

The teachers expressed ambivalence about their expectations for the future. Although most hold out hope that they will eventually get a stable position, many like Teacher 2 see little change. However, the majority feels powerless to contest their conditions, since they fear they may be retaliated against or fired if they speak out:

Teacher (2): W*e are hired on a yearly basis and 99.9% of us who are teaching in the program are doing so because we need a job. Obviously it is our profession and we like it, but we need a more stable job. Unfortunately the first who dares to speak out will be fired, so we are afraid of raising our voices.*

The launch of the national program (PNIEB), rather than providing an opportunity to "normalize" their positions, instead provoked more uncertainty:

Teacher: *We had many doubts about the new program [PNIEB]. What was going to happen? What were they going to do with us? Because there were many who said that probably they would federalize the program. If so, what was going to happen with us?*

Another common theme that emerged from the teachers' interviews was the lack of solidarity that the "regular" (*titular*) school staff had with the English teachers. Because the English teachers only teach a couple of hours in each school they are

not considered real members of the school community and do not participate in committee work done by the *titulares*, which reinforces their peripheral status in the school:

(1) Teacher 1: *There is a big difference between regular teachers and English teachers … and it shouldn't be that way!*

(2) Teacher 2: *Quite often the school administrators provide writing paper to teachers, markers, erasers, etc., all that a teacher may need … but we as English teachers do not receive anything […] So … we have to buy them from our own pockets and that affects us economically … especially if they do not pay us even our salaries!*

(3) Teacher 3: *English is still seen as "ah, English … English is not important …" It's like physical education, an unimportant subject.*

(4) Teacher 4: *We have to really earn the respect as teachers without being teachers. It's double duty, because we have to earn the respect of the institution where we work. At the beginning, the other teachers [titulares] looked at us as if they were thinking: "Oh come on, you're not a real teacher! You don't have teaching techniques, you have no pedagogical knowledge, you were not trained to be a teacher." I was growing tired of that, so one day, in a meeting, I stood up and said: "That's enough! We're here because we know something you do not know, because we are professionals, right? We are not improvising!" […] And I told them we were taking a teaching course, we were trying to be better prepared.*

(5) Interviewer: *Are English teachers considered as part of the school personnel?*

Principal: *No, because they are only hired on a temporary basis.*

The relationship with parents is hardly better, because they have limited interactions with them, due to the fact that they have to teach several groups and it is impossible for them to attend the parent meetings of each group. Additionally, English teachers do not have their own classroom, and are itinerant, "teaching off the cart." Teachers also said that they are aware of the need to provide children with greater exposure and contact with the language but they have limited access to resources and pedagogical decisions in the classroom:

(1) Teacher 1: *In the classroom we can't hang up anything, not even to put anything on the walls because the [titular] teachers […] are jealous of their space and they take it down. The next day we arrive and it's gone.*

(2) Teacher 2: *[One titular] teacher this year let me decorate the wall… first I put just things in Spanish, but then I started little by little putting up English. Now it's like half and half … but in other classrooms I can't do that.*

(3) Teacher 3: *It's my dream to have my own classroom, because I know how important it is to have visuals and materials for children … Now I put up what I can, but with my own money since there aren't any resources.*

These views were supported by our classroom observations, where in most of the classes the *titular* teacher remained in the classroom while the English teacher

gave the class. This affects the teachers' sense of ownership and connection with the classroom. So, as Claudia's opening narrative suggests, English teachers face a range of institutional difficulties, since they are seen as adjunct staff and lack stability, basic benefits, and a living wage.

Discussion and conclusions

The views of the stakeholders presented here point to several significant challenges facing the implementation of English foreign language programs in Mexican primary schools. Our synthesis of these perspectives drew from the conceptualization of English teaching in Mexican public elementary schools as a multi-determined process and as a set of interlocking national, state, and institutional projects, comprising multiple elements. At the same time, we explored the implementation of these programs as a process where various political, cultural, social, economic, and linguistic aspects converge, and where many stakeholders are involved.

In light of the PNIEB as an ambitious, large-scale program that strains the resources and human capacity of the educational system, it made sense to think about our data through the lens of the theory of educational change (Fullan, 1985, 2001). According to education change theory, any project seeking to implement a change in education, such as the English programs we analyzed, should be conceptualized as a process that encompasses three phases – design, implementation, and evaluation – and must consider as many factors, elements, and stakeholders as possible (Braslavsky & Coss, 2006). It should allow sufficient time for implementation, be implemented gradually and with great flexibility, and address the complexity of the processes, factors, elements, and stakeholders involved in the implementation. It should be accompanied by specific policies and financial aid to guarantee the correct implementation of the program in terms of availability and access to the necessary resources, infrastructure, and educational materials. Additionally, it should guarantee that the teachers will be supported with appropriate labor conditions, training, and faculty and staff development, and it should give the spaces for stakeholders to voice their opinions and concerns, thereby promoting the participants' identification with and appropriation of the program. Finally, it should be accompanied by an evaluation component that monitors implementation, making it transparent, and giving feedback to stakeholders on its results.

The data presented here suggest that many of these conditions and elements have not been adequately addressed. For one, equal importance and attention has not been given to the implementation and evaluation phases. Secondly, the voices of many stakeholders have been marginalized, especially of principals and teachers "in the trenches" who are most directly responsible for figuring out how to translate policy into practice. Finally, the conditions have not been created to support the teachers, including the practical aspects of distributing textbooks as well as the definition of the teachers' role and identity as an educator within the school. These findings are consistent with other studies that have examined program implementation and change in education from the perspective of the theory of change (Braslavsky & Coss, 2006; Ouane, 2003).

Even though in this paper we have emphasized the challenges associated with ELT in public primary schools in Mexico, especially from the perspective of the main stakeholders involved, ELT in Mexican elementary schools has also experienced important improvements in several aspects. It has created a national

framework for English education throughout the country. In states like Sonora that had an existing program, the PNIEB legitimized English classes by including them in the national curriculum. In states like Oaxaca and Puebla, English is now included in the public primary schools for the first time, giving children there the same access to English classes as the students in the northern states.[9] In all states, the creation of a national program with a clearly articulated curriculum that aligned with the recent educational reform provided a common referent for teachers and administrators that has replaced the unequal patchwork of state programs that often relied on textbook publishers to provide the curriculum and teacher training.

Perhaps the most striking finding, and one that we hope was not subsumed by the difficulties we have reported, was the positive experiences of students and parents. Most teachers are seen as being innovative and engaging, and students report positive views toward English and foreign language learning. Teachers have largely replaced their foreign language teaching methods based on drilling and dictations with those that emphasize building communicative skills, such as doing presentations and studying various topics through English. Furthermore, there are potential connections between English and subject areas that can be exploited but have not yet been.

It is worth noting that the PNIEB in Mexico is best understood as part of a shift happening in response to the rise of global English. Other countries, particularly in developing economies in Asia and Latin America, are similarly expanding English language education at the public primary level. In Chile, for example, Matear (2008) explains how the rationale for the new "English Opens Doors Programme" starting English instruction in fifth grade was clearly framed as means to address educational and socioeconomic inequality, and was supported by the United Nations. Obaidul Hamid (2010) likewise describes a similar situation in Bangladesh, and argues that early start English language programs in these countries are based on a "more and earlier" approach: although there is little research in the field of second language acquisition that documents the benefits of early foreign language learning with minimal exposure (in Mexico only 2½ hours per week), there is the common belief that children are "language sponges" and therefore giving them more and earlier instruction will necessarily produce better results. Results of these studies (Li, 2007; Matear, 2008; Obaidul Hamid, 2010) have also corroborated the findings here in terms of the difficulties other countries have encountered in implementing a national English program in terms of finding enough qualified teachers with English proficiency, problems associated with infrastructure, and resources for training and materials development.

As the PNIEB transitions from a pilot program to a permanent part of the national curriculum in Mexican primary schools, we would argue that the findings here suggest that greater attention should be paid to the needs and voices of students, parents, teachers, and principals. In particular, in order to be successful the program needs sufficient resources, infrastructure, and educational materials. Teachers should be supported with stable labor conditions, benefits, and possibilities for advancement, training, and development. Key stakeholders – especially parents and principals – ought to be better informed about the program and have more opportunities to provide input. Current experiences from the pilot phase should inform modifications to the curriculum to adjust the activities, textbooks, and contents of the lessons to the children's age level and sociocultural background and experiences. English language textbooks should arrive on time and be distributed like all the

other books. The contents of English and regular classrooms should be aligned more closely, and more collaboration should be promoted among English and *titular* teachers. Finally, master English teachers should be identified who can model best practices for less experienced or trained teachers.

Clearly, teaching English in Mexican primary public schools, especially at the national level, is an ambitious and complex undertaking. As with any new large-scale educational program, the implementation of the PNIEB brings together diverse elements and interests and crosses many levels. Its success in the long term is also fraught with political and financial pitfalls. More specifically, the PNIEB is a historic opportunity to give millions of Mexican children in public primary schools access to linguistic and cultural capital that was previously available only to those few with the resources to attend private institutions. However, we recognize that simply including English in the curriculum does not guarantee results; indeed, English has been taught as part of the *secundaria* curriculum for over 50 years with minimal results. In order to create a quality program that will generate positive results in terms of English language acquisition, as well as learning and benefits across the curriculum, there will have to be buy-in from all the stakeholders involved. This paper has synthesized the early research on the perspectives of the stakeholders, and provided a descriptive account from a theory of change lens of the problems faced by the English programs in general and the PNIEB in particular in its pilot stages. It is our hope that a critical reading and discussion of this review may prompt a rethinking of the national program's implementation, and in so doing contribute to improvement of the education of Mexican public school students.

Notes

1. The PNIEB is organized as an "additional language" program, where English is taught as a (foreign language) subject. This is distinguished from bilingual (e.g. many private schools in Mexico) or immersion approaches (e.g. in Puerto Rico or India), where English is used as the medium of instruction to teach other subjects.
2. Jorge Aguilar, Margarita Camacho Soto, Roxana Cano Vara, Ismael Ignacio Chuc Piña, Sofia Cota, Lewis Crawford Troy, Rosalina Domínguez Ángel, Katherine Durán, Marisela Dzul, Rosa Maria Funderbunk, Mizael Garduño Buenfil, José Manuel González, Saúl González Medina, Verónica González Quintos, Dení Granados Méndez, Patricia María Guillén Cuamatzi, Maria Magdalena Hernandez Alarcón, Hilda Hidalgo Avilés, Elizabeth Juarez, Martina Elizabeth Leal Apáez, Martha Lengeling, Carmen Marquez, Erika Martínez Lugo, Cecilia Araceli Medrano, Nadia Mejía, Irasema Mora, Luz Maria Muñoz de Cote, Nora Pamplón, Bertha Paredes, Yenny Peralta Robles, Bárbara Ramos, Iraís Ramírez Balderas, José Luis Ramírez, Edgar Ramírez, Areli Reyes Durán, Raúl Samaniego, David Guadalupe Toledo, Laura Vallejo Hernández, Liliana Villalobos, Cecilia Villarreal, Claudia Wall Medrano, Luis Ángel Carro Pérez, María Natividad Fernández Morfín, Elizabeth Flores, Teresa Gutiérrez Zarate, María de los Ángeles Juárez Acosta, Andrea Martín, Juvenal Martínez Mendoza, Jaime Torres, Susana Vanegas, Nancy Violeta Yllescas Bastida.
3. Baja California, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Quintana Roo, Sonora, Tlaxcala.
4. Aguascalientes, Chiapas, Coahuila, DF, EdoMex, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, and Tlaxcala.
5. For the sake of space only the English translations are included here. The data collection and analysis were completed in Spanish, and the excerpts were translated into English and then double checked by the co-authors (who are all bilingual, and native Spanish and English speakers, respectively).

6. *Currencies* are conceptualized by Srivastava (2006) as "a way to mediate researcher positionality and achieve temporary shared positionalities with research participants" (p. 210).
7. In this section we will focus exclusively on the PNIEB, because most state programs that existed before the national program did not have a formal curriculum. Commercial textbooks were used to guide teaching.
8. These *ámbitos* or environments are defined for all content areas. "Ludic" refers to play, which for English includes the use of songs, rhymes, tongue twisters, and the like.
9. It is worth noting that in southern states such as Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chiapas, and the Yucatan peninsula, a high percentage of students in public schools are indigenous and many are speakers of one or more of Mexico's 62 indigenous languages. Historically, the educational infrastructure in these areas has been neglected, and they have been subject to a policy of "castellinazation": the eradication of indigenous languages and the imposition of Spanish. Hence, the PNIEB's inclusion of English in the national curriculum is also an important step in terms of educational equity in indigenous areas.

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