English Language Ideologies in ELT: Presence and Practices in Oaxaca, Mexico

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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to Violeta and Marco, for their unconditional love and endless support.

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Introduction

The use of English as a language of communication is growing around the world and its global influence has spread to different areas. The British Council remarks that English as a global language has removed some barriers for communication in different fields, such as science, diplomacy, business, and trade (British Council, 2013). However, there are some other perspectives regarding the use of English as a global language, and some scholars perceive the English expansion in the world as a form of 'linguistic imperialism'. Philipson (1992) says, "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p.47). The expansion of the English language worldwide can be seen from different angles; some people perceive English as a global language but others as an instrument to accelerate the process of globalization and neoliberal policies (Kubota, 2011, Nino-Murcia, 2003; Sayer & Lopez-Gopar, 2015). Philipson (2010) adds, "globalization policies serve to ensure that the role of English is maintained and perpetuated" (p.41).

One effect of the spread of English internationally is the increasing number of English speakers worldwide, and according to Rao (2019), "around 375 million people speak [English] as a first language and more than 750 million people speak English as a second language" (p. 68). English is used worldwide by speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, some of those speakers use it as a second language, others as lingua franca. The British Council (n.d.) reports that 1.5 billion people speak

English globally. Therefore, English learners around the world are culturally and linguistically diverse, and with different learning needs and uses for the English language that vary depending on the context.

In some places, English is taught as an additional language, and sometimes in those contexts, the term 'English as a foreign language' is used. However, some scholars perceive the term "foreign language' as a form of exclusion because the expression 'foreign language' remarks a difference between the 'English language owners' and the others. For DeGraff (2019), the term "foreign language education has its roots in colonialism and there is a need to decolonize the school systems, in particular, where the very medium of education is a foreign language" (p. 12). On the other hand, Moeller and Catalano (2015) note that English language use worldwide is moving in a more inclusive direction, and they say the term 'global English' "promotes the idea that English belongs to all who use it" (p. 331). Another term that has been used to describe the English varieties that have emerged in postcolonial countries is 'world Englishes' (see Jenkins, 2012; Kachru, 1992). World Englishes around the world have developed characteristics that reflect the identities of their speakers, such as Indian English, Malaysian English, Singapore English, etc. Despite these debates, English has become a world language, and it is used by different types of speakers; thus, English ownership is shared by monolingual and multilingual speakers worldwide. Recognizing the diversity of English speakers around the world can be a form to decolonize the language.

In some contexts, where English is taught mainly in school settings, learners expect to be proficient in the language to continue their studies or to have access to

better job opportunities. The British Council (2013) notes that the global demand for English learning has increased outside of the traditional markets, and countries like India and China have experienced growing demand in the last decades. Additionally, the British Council (2015) predicts that in countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, and Mexico, the demand for English programs/learning will grow up to 40%. In Mexico alone, the English learning market is expected to target around 23.9 million people. This potential market represents around 20% of the Mexican population and includes students from both public and private institutions (British Council, 2015).

In Mexico, English learning has been associated mainly with private schools; consequently, access to public and private education has an impact on the students' English language acquisition. The British Council (2015) remarks on the financial differences to access private education. The report found that the average cost of attending a private high school in Mexico represents roughly 23% of the household income. According to Garcia (2018), 67% of the workforce in Mexico receives a monthly salary that is less than 15,429 Mexican pesos (760 USD) and 29% obtain less than 3,080 Mexican pesos (152 USD). Garcia adds that Mexican families spend an average of 55% of their salaries on food and transportation. These numbers show how challenging it could be for an average family to pay for private education. Therefore, private schooling is something that many Mexican families cannot afford.

English language learning and teaching in Mexico have been influenced by different ideologies throughout history. The split between public and private educational systems is one example of the influence of those ideologies. This study is focused on the presence of English language ideologies in English language teaching (ELT) at

three Universities in Oaxaca, Mexico. Using qualitative methods, namely phenomenology, the study explores the English language ideologies that may be held by three English teachers and one English language program coordinator. For the data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted among the participants.

Context

English Language Teaching in Mexico

At the beginning of the 20th century, French was the language preferred in bilingual programs in Mexico. However, English teaching demand increased later, due to the proximity to the U.S, the trade exchange between both countries, and the diffusion of the American culture (Hidalgo et al., 1993). As a result, Mexico and other countries in Latin America have been expanding English language programs in their public educational systems in the last decades (Sayer, 2018). Those changes have increased English language instructional hours in the schools, but they have not been successful in reducing the gap in access between the private and public educational systems. Historically, foreign language teaching in Mexico has been associated with private institutions that educate the Mexican upper class, resulting in a 'bilingual elitism' (Lethaby, 2013, Lopez-Gopar & Sughrua, 2014;). Even though English language instruction has been expanded to public schools, the idea associated with English learning and social class is still present in some sectors of Mexican society.

This asymmetrical relationship between public and private institutions has had a profound impact on English teaching and learning. In some contexts, ELT's influence maintains the structures of power and privileges of certain groups in Mexican society.

Lopez-Gopar and Sughrua (2014) explain, "English graduates must toil as teachers with low pay to help the high-middle and upper-class people maintain their comfortable social status through the acquisition of English" (p.108). In some cases, ELT has been used as an instrument to increase inequality in Mexico. One of the forms that inequality is perpetuated through English teaching is the ultimate English proficiency that students attain in their contexts. It is common that the English proficiency that students acquire in private schools is higher compared to the students who attend public schools (Davies, 2020; Eccious & Santana, 2020; Romero & Sayer, 2016; Sayer, 2012). In Mexico, access to private education is not something that most of the population could afford due to the cost. As a result, English education in Mexico sometimes depends on social class and economic factors rather than students' desires or motivations to increase their language proficiency (Lopez-Gopar and Sughrua, 2014).

Therefore, the development of ELT in Mexico reflects what are known as language ideologies that are prevalent in all corners of the English-speaking, teaching, and learning world. Silverstein (1979) defines language ideologies as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (p.193). However, language ideologies are not uniform; they can take different forms depending on the context, or the historical moment. For example, some groups of the Mexican society perceive English language education as an academic tool reserved for the elites. Lethaby (2003) comments, "another criticism of bilingual English-Spanish schools in Mexico is that they are seen as elitists, and this is clearly something used by school owners and parents for mutual benefit" (p.68). In addition, the cost of bilingual education offered by private schools limits access to only

certain groups of Mexican society. Sayer (2012) notes, "English in Mexico is largely a phenomenon of 'elite bilingualism' restricted to those who can access and accumulate linguistic capital" (p.15). As a result, English language education in Mexico is perceived as a form of high status and prestige. This model of elite bilingualism maintains a close relationship with English proficiency, and consequently, students in private schools achieve higher levels of English proficiency (Sayer, 2012).

English language ideologies maintain a relationship with economic ideologies as well. English language proficiency in Mexico has become a form of currency that is used to add "cultural capital and symbolic power" to their proficient users (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 61-72). Nino-Murcia (2003) emphasizes that "English has become a valued linguistic currency… as a requirement imposed by globalization and a global market… like the dollar" (p.121). In Mexico, English language proficiency is perceived as a required skill for those who want to access well-paid jobs or pursue studies in a foreign country where English is the dominant language or used as a lingua franca. Therefore, English proficiency is perceived in society as the linguistic currency that could open the doors to new opportunities or the lack of it as restricting the chances for social mobility. Therefore, in some respects, ELT in Mexico reflects the economic disparities that exist among Mexican society.

Language Teaching in Oaxaca, Mexico

Historically, ELT in Oaxaca has been limited mainly to private institutions that provide English language programs to members of the upper class of the Oaxacan society. According to Lopez-Gopar and Sughrua (2014) "only 5% of the Oaxacan

population can afford private schooling" (p.107). Moreover, access to English language

programs has an impact on gaining access to better education and job opportunities.

These differences have created conditions of economic, social, and political inequality in

Oaxaca, and in some cases, supported by the relation of power and ideologies held by

those in power and/or society at large.

Oaxaca, like many other states of Mexico, has its higher education institutions

located in its capital. Oaxaca's capital is called 'Oaxaca de Juarez' and it is home to the

largest public and private universities of the state. The first ELT program was offered by

a public university and some years later other private universities started to offer similar

programs.

Statement of Problem

The economic disparities in Oaxaca reflect the ideological structures that

maintain the privileges of certain groups over others, and ELT programs are not

exempt, as access is predominantly limited to privileged sectors of society. In Oaxaca,

the geographic, linguistic, and cultural diversity contrast with the conditions of economic

inequality. According to Székely (2013), in Oaxaca "only 20% of the students that start

elementary school enroll in university, and just 12% finish their degree" (p.9). The lack

of access to equal educational opportunities for everyone is one of the reasons that

prevent an improvement in the economic conditions for the whole society.

As it was mentioned before, only a small percentage of the Oaxacan population

has access to college education. If some of those students decide to study ELT, there

are only a few seats available at the public university. Another option for them is to

choose a private university, that in many cases, the tuition fees may not be affordable for their families. Consequently, access to ELT programs in Oaxaca is the first difficulty that prospective English teachers face.

The availability of ELT programs is not the only challenge that future English language teachers could face. English language proficiency is another area that students should develop to be effective English teachers. For some students, that are accepted in one of the English programs available, English proficiency is a challenge; especially for those students, who only have studied in the public system. As it was mentioned earlier, there is a sizable gap in English language proficiency between public and private schools. Therefore, some students enrolled in ELT programs will acquire the language while they are being trained to teach English as a foreign/additional language.

Another issue that future English teachers could face in Oaxaca is the difficulty to obtain a well-paid job. After graduation, they will face the decision to choose between a job in a private or a public school. If they choose to work in a private school, they will find that the salaries offered by most of the private institutions in Oaxaca are very low. Furthermore, some institutions only offer a contract with a few hours to avoid paying benefits for full-time teachers. On the other hand, the public sector can provide more benefits, but the new teachers must get first the approval of the teachers' union that controls teacher positions in Oaxaca (see Paz Tellez, 2015).

The question that emerges is: why is it so challenging to become an English teacher in a state that needs a lot of English teachers in both the public and private systems? It is clear that Oaxaca needs better access to educational opportunities in

general. However, it seems that the education access in Oaxaca goes beyond economic factors. Some institutions like the World Bank have focused their analysis on the economic problems that prevent equal education opportunities for the whole Oaxacan population (Székely, 2013). Nevertheless, the causes appear to be more deeply rooted and the analysis cannot be reduced solely to the economic field. Therefore, it is also important to investigate if some underlying ideologies prevent access to English education as well.

Moreover, it is important to explore how the English language ideologies influence ELT in Oaxaca. This study aims to investigate if there is a connection between English language ideologies and English teaching at the universities of Oaxaca that offer ELT programs. For this purpose, it is important to gain knowledge of the English language ideologies that teachers and language coordinators may hold and how these ideologies influence teaching practices and the ELT programs' policies in Oaxaca.

The research questions, therefore, that guide the study are:

1. What are the English teachers and coordinator' ideologies regarding the status and roles of English and other languages in Oaxaca?
2. How do these perceived status and roles affect its access and users, the university's policies, and their teaching practices?

Significance of the Research

This study provides insight into the ELT context in Oaxaca, Mexico, and how English language ideologies may influence English teaching in some institutions of the state capital. To date, there are few studies about the impact of English language

ideologies in the ELT programs offered in universities of Oaxaca. The study not only informs the teachers' perceptions about the phenomena, but also the ideological perspectives of the school officials in charge of the ELT programs in Oaxaca. Participants' responses provide insight into the teaching practices and the ELT programs' policies at three universities in Oaxaca, Mexico.

The study is pertinent because, for many years, Oaxaca has been left behind economically and educationally. "Oaxaca has one of the lowest coverage rates of higher education in Mexico, only 18%, compared to the 33% national average" (Székely, 2013, p.7). In addition, Oaxaca has one of the lowest spending per student in Mexico. It is important to understand how these numbers affect the ELT field and if there is a correlation between English education access and English language ideologies.

Moreover, English language education can be an important tool to give voice to those who have been marginalized historically. This study provides information that would help to evaluate the ELT field in Oaxaca and look for ways to make it more inclusive.

Finally, the study could help to understand the impact of ELT programs to promote equality and access to educational and job opportunities. In Oaxaca, access to education in a foreign country is mainly limited to members of the political and upper classes. The study will provide insight into if English learning has been used as a tool to favor members of privileged groups over other sectors of the Oaxacan society.

Literature Review

Language Ideologies

There have been different approaches to define the concept and scholars have used different terms to address it: 'linguistic ideologies' (Mertz, 1988; Silverstein, 1979); 'Ideologies of language' (Haviland, 2003; Warriner, 2016); and 'language ideologies' (Blackledge, 2008; Irvine, 1989; Rumsey, 1990; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard, 1992;). The term 'language ideology' has been used in anthropology research and sociolinguistics studies. It emphasizes cultural conceptions of language, a language's relation with power and politics, and the speakers' position in relation to the language they use (Irving, 1989; Sayer, 2012; Silverstein, 1979;). The term used for this study is 'language ideologies' because it encompasses linguistic practices, language beliefs, and the speakers' position as a part of a social system.

Some authors have defined language ideologies depending on the aspect they want to emphasize. Language ideologies can represent speakers' beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language (Kroskrity, 2004; Silverstein, 1979). In addition, language ideologies manifest values and practices through the discourse at state, institutional, and global levels (Blackledge, 2008). Therefore, language ideologies are not neutral, they are "politically loaded representations of the nature, structure, and use of the language" (Woolard, 2020, p.1).

Language ideologies also reflect certain ideas or objectives that a social group maintains regarding the roles of its members (Heath, 1989). In some cases, language ideologies are aligned with political interests (Irvine,1989), and they can be "less liberatory or oppressive, depending on the social practice and historical background of the community" (Canagarajah, 2000, p.123). Those practices may not be explicit, but they do have an impact on the economic practices of a society (Gal, 1989). Although

there are different perspectives in the definition of the concept of language ideologies, most authors agree that language ideologies have an impact on the culture, economy, and the distribution of political power.

There are some cases around the world that show the impact of language ideologies. One such impact of language ideology is referred to as 'linguistic imperialism' which, during colonial times, was a powerful force to impose the use of some European languages over local languages in different continents. For example, in Cameroon, Nana (2019) explains that the country's name reflects the linguistic changes of colonial and postcolonial administrations, Kamerun (German), Cameroon (British) and Cameroun (French). In the colonies of the British Empire, the English language continued its spreading for many years. Pennycook (2007) says "English expanded from a language spoken by about 6 million people in 1600… to about 120 million in 1900" (p.13). However, language ideologies did not end with colonialism, they are still present in postcolonial nations. Bhattacharya (2017) remarks that "English's colonial past continues to frame, inform, and regulate notions about the English language in India" (p.3). In some cases, speakers use the English language to negotiate the discourses and ideologies and continue using their local languages in other spaces (Canagarajah, 2000). The English language expansion continues worldwide, and the ideologies associated with it take different forms. Nino-Murcia (2003) notes that in Peru "English is seen as a requirement imposed by globalization and a global market" (p. 21). In Colombia, Viafara (2016) explains the effects of the native speaker ideologies in English language teaching. Therefore, if English language ideologies have had an

impact on English learning and ELT around the world, they may also have the potential to influence teaching practices and ELT programs' policies in Oaxaca, Mexico.

As it was discussed before, Mexican society has had different perceptions or ideologies regarding English learning and teaching through time. Those views have been influenced by socio-political and historical processes as well. Some of these ideologies, such as 'elite bilingualism', have their origins in the colonial period, but their influence is still present in contemporary society. Lopez- Gopar and Sughrua (2014) use the term 'coloniality' to explain the impact of ideological positions in other people's lives. Coloniality "refers to how colonial power controls or dominates a community by imposing on that community certain western or Eurocentric models of subjectivity, authority, economy, and knowledge" (Mignolo, 2019 as cited in Lopez-Gopar & Sughrua, 2014, p.104). In Oaxaca, elite bilingualism is still prevalent in society. In colonial times, the language associated with the elite was Spanish, and in the present this language is English. In many cases, bilingual education is provided mostly in private schools. Consequently, there is an asymmetry between private and public education regarding English language proficiency. Sayer (2015) notes that "the disparity between the quality and nominal English taught in public schools and the great emphasis placed on English in private schools has contributed to a division along socioeconomic lines in access to English acquisition" (p. 43).

Other economic ideologies, like neoliberalism, have also influenced English language education. (Holborow, 2018; Piller & Cho, 2013; Price, 2014; Sayer, 2015). The role of English in the global market has created a shift in the governmental policies in different countries. Unlike the elite bilingualism that limits English instruction to a

select group of the society, neoliberalism promotes English education as a medium for internationalization. Therefore, language ideologies are beliefs, feelings, and conceptions that can be an indicator of the political and economic interests of individuals, groups, or nations (Kroskrity, 2010). The influence of neoliberalism in ELT is a clear example of the connection between economic interests and language education.

Therefore, the English language expansion in places like Mexico does not seek to close the gap in English language proficiency among private and public schools; it is driven by economic interests that need a workforce that can function in the global market. Despagne (2019) writes, "in Mexico, English is the language of commodity because through English, Mexicans hope to get better paying jobs, a higher social status, and the chance to travel, study or live abroad" (p.47). In theory, the discourses of neoliberalism promise an improvement in the economic conditions of the people; in practice, it offers low pay jobs that only cover the basic needs to survive. Holborow (2007) adds, "its premise is that the market works according to its own rules and operates 'free' market whose only limits are those of supply and demand" (p. 65). The neoliberalism goal in ELT does not aim to prepare fully proficient English speakers that can continue their studies abroad, but just an effective workforce that uses English to accomplish the production demands.

Finally, there is another ideology that may have an impact on the ELT development: the English native speaker vs non-native speaker perception or 'native-speakerism'. The belief that English teaching is more beneficial if the instruction is provided by native speakers of English has been internalized in different ELT contexts worldwide. The term 'native speaker fallacy' formulated by Philipson (1992) refers to the

idea that a native English speaker is the ideal English teacher. However, foreign language instruction has been present since 1570 in the ESL field. (Howatt, 2004). In addition, Canagarajah (1999) says that non-native English teachers face "the absurdity of an educational system that prepares one for a profession for which it disqualifies the person at the same time" (p.77). Every year, many non-native English speakers around the world are trained to become English teachers. Even though they have learned the strategies to teach the English language and have acquired a deep understanding of the English grammar, they find different obstacles to find a job in the ESL field because they are non-native English speakers.

Even though the appropriateness of the terms native speaker and non-native speaker has been discussed and challenged in recent years in the TESOL field (Canagarajah, 1999; Davies, 2003; Liu, 1999; Mahboob, 2005; Philipson, 1992; Tsuchiya, 2020), the concept is still used in some contexts "in the absence of alternatives" (Rampton, 1990, p. 97). In the Oaxacan ELT context, both terms are used to make a differentiation among the position of the English teachers.

In some cases, ELT graduates may face some barriers to get a job because of their non-native position. Some private schools in Oaxaca prefer to hire native English speakers or ELT graduates that have had experience studying abroad to add prestige to their English programs. Garcia Ponce et al. (2017) expresses, "despite all the efforts, there is still discrimination all over the world for TESOL professionals…it is evident that teachers, more specifically non-native speaking teachers, often face discrimination in the labor market since English is not their native language" (p. 56).

The hiring policies in public institutions are not very different. In 1990, the Oaxacan government created the 'System of State Universities of Oaxaca' (SUNEO). This group of public universities helped to expand access to undergraduate and graduate programs in the state. At present, the system encompasses a total of 18 universities spread in different regions of the state, most of them have English language institutes that offer English instruction to their students. One of the Universities that is part of the system states the objective of its language institute in this way: "Teaching the English language to students of all majors and levels at the Puerto Escondido campus of the Universidad del Mar in preparation for obtaining a 550 score on the TOEFL test and support all their studies of other languages" (UMAR, 2021). Another University from the same system is more explicit in its policies regarding ELT: "The language center at the Universidad de la Sierra Sur has a staff of 'English-speaking teachers' who give classes and advice to all students at the university" (UNSIS, 2021). In both cases, their language institutes staff listed on their websites is formed predominantly by foreign teachers, which seems to be a current pattern in this group of public universities. The other language institutes that are part of the system (Nova Universitas, UNCA, UNCOS, UNISTMO, UNPA, UNSIJ, UTM) also show a staff composed mostly of foreign English language teachers in their websites (see Sayer, 2012).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the English teachers' and one English language coordinator's perspectives regarding the status and roles of the English language, and the impact of these ideologies on university policies and teaching practices at three universities in Oaxaca, Mexico. The method selected to conduct the

study was the phenomenological method that provided a better understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' perspective; as Groenewald (2004) remarks, "the aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts" (p. 44). Consequently, the phenomenology method helped this study to limit the research bias allowing the participants to speak on their own behalf.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy, with the work of Husserl, who wanted to study the 'essence' of the phenomenon (Husserl, 2012, p.10). Then, Dahlberg (2006) says that 'the essence' are the aspects or qualities that allow us to understand the phenomenon. Therefore, phenomenology aims to approach the phenomenon through the experiences of the people involved in it; its goals are to explore and let the participants describe those experiences instead of explaining. As Pivčević (2013) states, "the aim of phenomenology is described as the study of the experiences with a view to bringing out their essences" (p. 11).

The flexibility of the phenomenological method to explore different phenomena has been applied to other fields, such as social sciences, health, etc. According to Moran (2000, as cited in Norlyk & Harder, 2010), "there are a number of schools of phenomenology… they also have distinct features such as different purposes and different approaches to data analysis" (p. 420).

Phenomenology and Language Ideologies

The concept of language ideologies has been investigated using different qualitative research methods. Seo (2021) used semi-structured interviews and ethnography to investigate parental language ideologies in Korea. McEntee-Atalianis and Vessey (2020) studied the language ideologies of the UN organizational members using the UN General Debates Corpus (UNGDC). Yazan (2019) utilized an autoethnography to examine language ideologies and identity, in his role as an English teacher in his home country, Turkey. Perez Andrade (2019) says that "a direct exploration of teachers' beliefs can provide evidence of dominant language ideologies that guide teachers' orientations towards specific models and norms of the English language" (p.68-69). Therefore, precedent studies in language ideologies have established a qualitative approach as a form to explore their influence on social practices. In line with precedent research, this study used the phenomenological method to explore the participants' perspectives on English language ideologies.

Research Setting: Oaxaca, Mexico

The study was conducted in three universities that offer ELT programs in Oaxaca, Mexico. The state of Oaxaca is located in the southern part of Mexico, it shares borders with the states of Veracruz and Puebla to the north, Guerrero to the west, Chiapas to the east, and with the Pacific Ocean to the south. Oaxaca is a land of contrasts: the state is rich in natural resources and biodiversity, but it also has a large part of its population living in conditions of poverty. For example, the Mexican Geological Service (2020) reports that in 2019 the mining industry market share in Oaxaca was estimated at more than 800 million dollars; however, Oaxaca remained the second poorest state in Mexico (Rivera Sánchez et al., 2018).

Another characteristic of Oaxaca is its linguistic and cultural diversity. In Oaxaca, sixteen indigenous languages are spoken besides Spanish (Bautista Monroy, n/d). Garcia Vargas (2018) estimates that 1.2 million people in Oaxaca speak or understand an indigenous language, that number represents almost 25% of the total state population. This linguistic diversity also reflects the cultural diversity of the state. Oaxaca is divided into eight regions and 570 municipalities, some of them with their own forms of government.

Participants

The selection of the participants was made using the purposive sampling technique, in which, the participant selection was a deliberate choice due to the qualities the participants possess (Etikan, et al., 2016). Guarte and Barrios (2006) add that purposive sampling address the "segment of the population with the most information on the characteristic of interest" (p. 277). Based on the purposes of this study, the participants selected were English teachers, who work in the universities selected for this study and one English language coordinator that oversees the implementation of the ELT programs at one of those universities.

Since this study's goal was to explore the teachers' and language coordinators' perspectives on English language ideologies and the impact that those ideologies have on university policies and teaching practices, participants received an invitation to participate in the research. They were contacted by email explaining the purpose of the study and to request an interview via zoom. They were told that the interviews would

take approximately one hour and would be recorded for further analysis. Participants were selected considering the following criteria:

English language teachers:

- Graduates from one of the ELT programs offered in Universities of Oaxaca.

- Working Experience as English teachers in Oaxaca.

English language program coordinator:

- Working experience as ELT program coordinators in universities of Oaxaca, Mexico.

This research involved human subjects; as such, it was necessary to obtain the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Salem State University before conducting the study. The participants were provided with information about the research to allow them to make an informed and voluntary decision before participating in the study. To protect the participants' privacy, their names and the institutions' names were kept confidential. Participants had the option of turning off their cameras during the interviews and were informed that no video recording would be used, only the audio transcriptions were analyzed for the purposes of this study.

Data Collection

The phenomenological method involves the use of long, in-depth interviews with the study participants to get a more detailed perspective of the constructs investigated. To address the research questions of this study, semi-structured interviews were used

to gather data from the research participants. The interviews were conducted remotely, lasted approximately one hour, and took place in July 2021. The interviews followed a protocol that included: participants' background information, English learning, teaching experiences, and English language ideologies (see Appendix 1). Figure 1 shows the topics proposed to be discussed during the interviews: participants' educational background, sociocultural ideologies, economic ideologies, and linguistic ideologies.
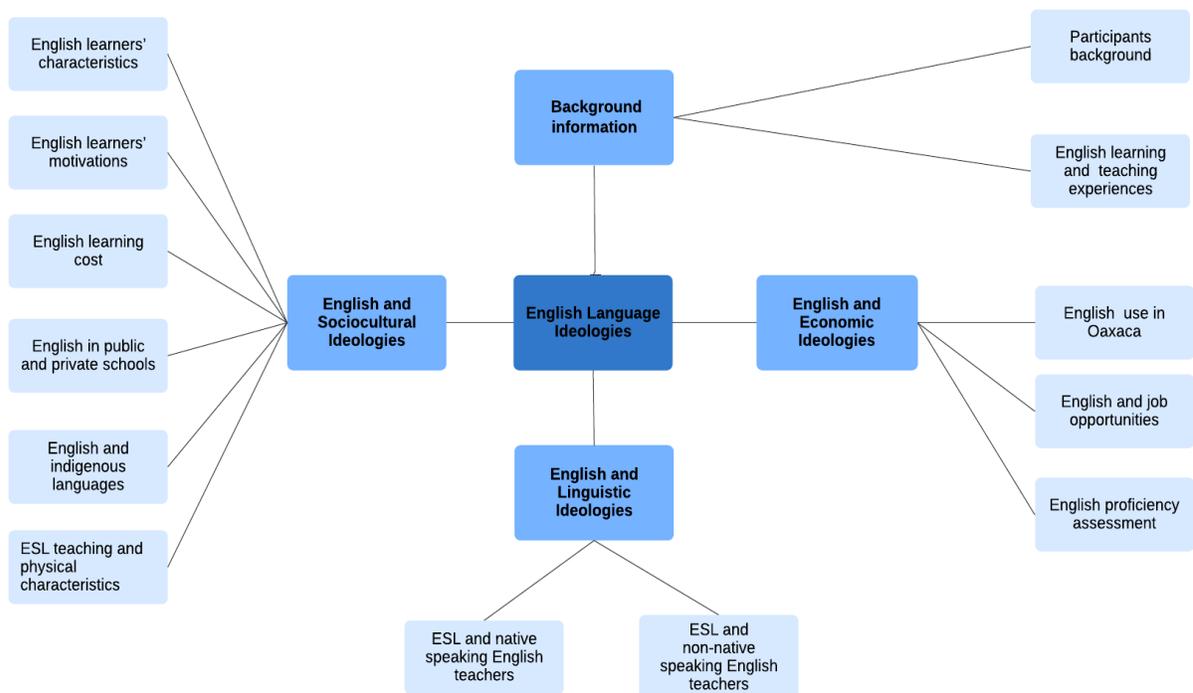
Figure 1

Interview Topics and Codes

Figure 1

Participants shared their experiences and how those ideologies have manifested in the Oaxacan ESL context and their careers as ESL teachers. Finally, they shared their views about the role that ELT programs have in Oaxaca, and how they perceive the

impact of English language learning in Oaxacan society. Participants had the choice to choose the language for the interview; three participants chose English and one participant chose Spanish. Then, the interviews were transcribed for further analysis.

Data Triangulation

The use of data triangulation in qualitative research helps to develop a broader understanding of the phenomena studied (Patton, 1999; Denzin, 2007). It can also add depth to data collection (Fusch & Ness, 2018) and increase the validity of the study (Stavros & Westberg, 2009). Because phenomenology grounds itself in the belief that each participant holds their own views and perceptions of social realities, participant triangulation was chosen as the method for triangulation (Healy & Perry, 2000). Therefore, the data collected from the English teachers' responses were triangulated with the answers provided by one of the English language coordinators. The coordinator was asked the same questions; however, her responses revealed different perspectives regarding some of the topics discussed in the interviews.

Positional Statement

As a person who was raised in Oaxaca, Mexico, I have seen and experienced the inequalities that prevail in Oaxacan society. My first language is Spanish, and I did all my education in public schools. I started to study English one year before I entered college. I began my career as an English teacher working in a private school in Oaxaca; then I worked for five years in different private institutions of the city. Those experiences had informed my perception of the ESL job market in Oaxaca.

However, my experience is not the norm for other English teachers in Oaxaca, and as such, this formed the main reason to conduct this study. I wanted to know other teachers' experiences and their perspectives about the impact of English language ideologies in Oaxaca. I wanted to investigate if those ideologies have an influence on the teaching practice of my colleagues and the implementation of the ELT programs offered by universities in Oaxaca.

Results

For this study, I conducted individual interviews with four participants that accepted the invitation to talk about their experiences as English teachers and ESL coordinator in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Table 1

Participant Interviews

*Name**	Date	*Duration*
Teacher 1 (Julia)	07/19/2021	56 minutes
Teacher 2 (Karla)	07/21/2021	53 minutes
Teacher 3 (Lucia)	07/23/2021	49 minutes
Coordinator (Ericka)	07/27/2021	45 minutes

*Names are pseudonyms to protect participant identities

Data Analysis

The first step with the data collected was to look for common themes or patterns that emerge to conceptualize or create categories. The second step was the

segmentation of the data, connecting the categories to find relationships among them. However, during the coding process, some themes were divided, and other subtopics emerged from the participants' responses (see Figure 2).

The data collected from the interviews were organized in four main themes to understand the identities, politics, and connections that participants made in their responses, as Boun (2014, p.78) explains:

1) Identities: People used language to be recognized as taking on a certain identity or role, that is, to build an identity here and now.

2) *Politics*: People use language to build and destroy social goods. "Social goods" can be anything that a social group or society considers as a good worth having, such as status, power, solidarity, and authority.

3) *Connections*: People use language to connect or disconnect things and to make different things relevant to each other or not.

Figure 2 shows the coding categories that emerged from the data analysis and the subcategories and relationships among the topics that emerged from the participants'' responses. In the background information code, English learning and English teaching were divided due to the differentiation that participants made in their responses. In English and economic ideologies, the two initial subtopics were coded in three new categories: English use, job opportunities, and English certifications. Another category that changed was English and linguistic ideologies with three subtopics. Finally, English and sociocultural ideologies substituted English learning cost for English learning access.
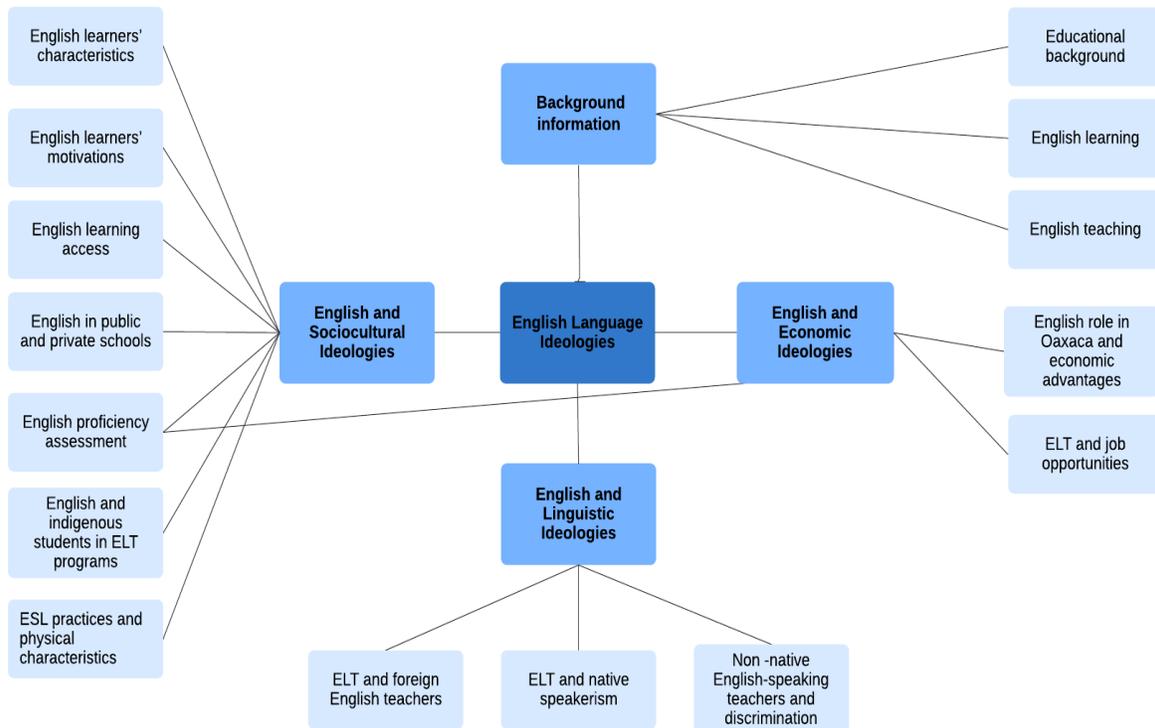
Figure 2

Data Codes

Figure 2

Participants' Educational Background

Three participants in the study were English teachers, who have worked in both the public and private systems, and one participant has worked as a coordinator at a private university in Oaxaca. The three teacher participants obtained their basic education in public schools. Julia and Karla continued their studies in public institutions to get their bachelor's degrees in English language teaching and graduate degrees in translation studies. Lucia obtained her bachelor's degree in English language teaching and her graduate degree in Education at private universities. Ericka, the English

coordinator, completed her basic education at public schools, and then she earned her bachelor's degree in English language teaching and her master's degree in education from private universities.

Participants' English Learning Experience

All the participants have worked as English teachers in different universities in Oaxaca. They have studied English in Mexico. Karla and Lucia started their English learning in high school; Julia started learning English at university while she was studying her bachelor's program. Ericka was the only participant who has studied English in Mexico and the United States.

Participants' English Teaching Experience

The teacher participants each have more than ten years of English teaching experience in different institutions in Oaxaca. Julia and Karla have worked in public and private schools; in contrast, Lucia has only worked for private institutions. Ericka has more than ten years of teaching experience working at private institutions.

English Learning and Sociocultural Ideologies

English Learners' Characteristics

Participants were asked to describe the English learners they have interacted with during their careers. Julia and Karla, who have worked in public and private systems, made the distinction among both types of schools. From Julia's perspective some English learners in public schools "do not see the significance of learning English" and they see the language as a requirement to complete their degree. Julia and Karla agreed that most learners in private schools see the English language simply as a medium for communication. All three teachers mentioned that some English learners at

advanced levels of English proficiency are people from the middle and upper classes, who have had the opportunity to live and study abroad.

English Learners' Motivations

Regarding the learners' motivations to study English, Julia, Karla, and Lucia mentioned job requirements and the possibility to study in a different country are their students' main goals. From the coordinator's perspective, Ericka, the English learners' motivations are rooted in their aspiration to continue their college education abroad or to be accepted into a prestigious university in Mexico.

English Learning Access

The access to English learning in Oaxaca was another category that emerged from the data. Julia, Karla, and Lucia agreed that the public university is the institution that offered the most affordable price for English courses. On the other hand, the three teachers mentioned that private schools are more expensive. Julia says, "it's expensive, you have to invest… it's a matter of time, effort, and money. [English] is just for part of the population." Karla added that other language schools in the city have a large share of the ESL market. For Lucia, online courses are expanding English learning access to other places in the state. Ericka also considered access to English learning in Oaxaca to be expensive and the cost varies depending on the type of course and the institution. She added that for some low-income families English learning access is challenging, especially if they have more than one child, similar to the perspectives the teacher participants shared.

English in Public and Private Schools

Teacher participants mentioned that one difference between English learning in public and private schools is the number of instructional hours. Julia said that English in public schools is limited to just a few hours of instruction. For Karla, the differences among both systems are the resources and the type of didactic materials. She said, "when you are in a public school, you have to look for certain materials that are not very expensive for the students, it takes more creativity from the teacher… in private schools, students have to buy a book." Lucia has not worked in public schools; however, she explained, "I have talked to the teachers that are working in public schools… they tend to be very frustrated with the system, not with the students or the institutions, but with how decisions are made."

Ericka, the coordinator, also emphasized the differences between private and public schools. She explained that public schools are more focused on grammar structures, and commonly, teachers use Spanish as the language of instruction. On the other hand, in private schools, class activities are focused on communication and teachers use English most of the time. She explained that some private schools in the city attract many English learners because of their successful marketing strategies. She considers that two private universities are in constant competition to attract prospective students for the ELT undergraduate programs they offer.

English Proficiency Assessment

In Oaxaca, public and private universities offer English language assessment exams to measure the learners' English proficiency. Participants explained that Cambridge exams are mostly administered in private universities. On the other hand, the TOEFL exam is the test of English language proficiency offered in public and private

universities. Regarding the learners' motivations for taking a proficiency test, they

expressed several reasons. Karla mentioned that some exams are mandatory for

students in private schools. Lucia said that some exams are requirements for applying

to graduate programs in Mexico and abroad. Julia added that English proficiency exams

are in some cases a requirement for English teaching positions. Ericka explained that

English proficiency exams are a requirement for undergraduate students in ELT

programs.

English and Indigenous Students in ELT Programs

The interaction between English learning and indigenous languages in Oaxaca

showed different responses from the participants. Julia expressed that indigenous

language speakers have access to English learning mainly through scholarships, many

times when they are in college. In terms of the representation of indigenous language

speakers in the ELT field, Karla mentioned that she only had one classmate, who was a

speaker of an indigenous language when she was studying her undergraduate program.

Later, in her experience as an English teacher in a public university, she had one

colleague who spoke Mixtec. Lucia reported she had some classmates who were

speakers of indigenous languages in the same ELT program. The three teachers

agreed that it is getting more common to have indigenous language speakers in the

English courses they teach at the institutions where they work respectively. Ericka

mentioned that she did not have classmates who speak indigenous languages during

her undergraduate studies. However, as a coordinator, Ericka has seen few speakers of

indigenous languages as students in the ELT programs at her university. She

considered that "speaking an indigenous language in the Oaxacan ESL field is not

something that can provide benefits for the speakers unless they work in an indigenous community where bilingual education is used."

ESL Practices and Physical Characteristics

Participants expressed their perspectives about the influence of physical features in the ELT field. Julia explained that she hasn't seen that physical characteristics influence institutions' hiring processes. For Karla, Oaxacan schools are more interested in the teacher's educational background. She said, "I wouldn't say that doesn't happen, but I haven't seen or experienced…what I have seen is that they care more about education, the degrees you have." Lucia explained that skin color may influence ESL hiring practices. She said, "definitely there is a difference, I have experienced that kind of discrimination, not only because of the color of my skin or my hair but because of my accent."

Ericka did not think that skin color or indigenous features have an impact on the Oaxacan ELT hiring practices. However, she mentioned, "I saw that some male teachers in high school, who had long hair, were asked to cut their hair… even though there is not a relationship with their qualifications [personal look] has an influence."

English and Economic Ideologies

Role of English in Oaxaca and Economic Advantages

Teacher participants acknowledged the importance of the English language in the tourism industry of Oaxaca. They considered that people, who speak English, have more opportunities to get a job. For example, Karla said, "I have seen some of my former students working in different stores in Oaxaca, and they said their English classes helped them to get the job," However, Julia had a different perspective

regarding the economic advantages of learning English in Oaxaca. She explained, "I am not sure that here, we can see a difference if you learn English in terms of salary." Lucia mentioned that the English language can be an asset to start a new business in the tourism industry. Ericka agrees that English fluency is an advantage to get a good job in the tourism industry. In the case of the ELT program graduates, she explained that they start working in some low-salary jobs to get "professional experience" and later apply for better or higher paying teacher positions.

ELT and Job Opportunities

When the teachers were asked about the specific job opportunities in the ELT job market in Oaxaca, they agreed that there are more opportunities to get a job in the private system. Lucia expressed, "You will always find a job as an English teacher in Oaxaca. You can work independently or with an institution, but you can always find a job." Conversely, Julia mentioned that "there are few opportunities to get a full-time job; [teachers] have to work in two or three different institutions to get a good salary." They explained that salaries in private schools could be higher but benefits in the public system are better in the long term. They also shared the perspective that getting a job in the Oaxacan public system is very difficult without the approval of the teachers' union.

Ericka explained that there are three universities in Oaxaca that offer ELT programs. However, there is less demand for new English teachers in the city. She explained that sometimes universities open those programs to maintain their credentials; however, according to her view as a coordinator, universities should offer a certain number of undergraduate programs to be certified or to open new graduate programs. She explained, "there are three universities in Oaxaca that offer a bachelor's

degree in ELT. However, it is not because there is a huge demand in the local job market; there are many graduates but fewer opening positions." She added that around 25 students graduated from the ELT programs in each private university every year. The coordinator shared the teachers' views regarding salaries in the public and the private system as well. "…in a public school, teachers have a base salary, but in a private school their salary is paid according to the hours they work; this salary also varies from one private institution to another."

English and Linguistic Ideologies

ELT and Foreign English Teachers

Participants expressed they had good experiences as English learners with foreign English teachers. For Julia, she stated that "foreign English teachers have other educational experiences that help them to innovate in the classroom." Karla mentioned that foreign English teachers are important to model pronunciation and add cultural knowledge to the class. Lucia said that she had a great experience as a student with foreign English teachers during her undergraduate studies. She said, "it was very nice to have insight from another culture to improve my learning." They also expressed that in a few cases, the institutions where they studied had hired foreign teachers who did not have ESL training. As Julia explained, "she [the teacher] was doing some practices in Mexico, I am not sure if she really was an English teacher."

Ericka shared that during her undergraduate studies there were several foreign English teachers in her bachelor's program, most of whom were ESL teachers, but she also had one teacher who did not have an ESL background. She explained, "I had a

foreign teacher who did not have the training as an English teacher; but because he was a native speaker, he was hired to teach English. He was [really] a physics teacher."

ELT and Native Speakerism

Participants shared their perspectives about native- and non-native-speaking English teachers in the Oaxacan ELT context. They agreed that non-native teachers usually work in basic and intermediate levels, but the advanced levels, in most cases, are reserved for native-speaking English teachers. All three teachers explained that sometimes the non-native accent could be a barrier to teach at advanced English levels. For example, Karla said, "I don't know if it's because of status, no? Like they don't want to have the accent." Lucia expressed, "I have a very strong accent, but that doesn't make me a bad teacher."

From Ericka's view as a coordinator, non-native English speaking teachers have experienced the challenges to learn the language, and they can use those experiences to help the students in their learning process. She thinks that students in a basic level prefer a non-native English speaking teacher, and learners in advanced levels prefer a native-English speaking teacher. She considered that the American accent is preferred by Oaxacan English learners because of the influence of American culture locally.

Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers and Discrimination

Teachers had different views and experiences regarding their heritage/first language background. Julia expressed, "I wasn't given any advanced [English] level when I was teaching in this private school, maybe that's discrimination", Karla mentioned, "I wouldn't say that I was discriminated, but I remember certain bad comments from other (Mexican) teachers, like, if you are going to teach English you

need to be an English speaker". Lucia also expressed that she had experienced

discrimination because of her non-native English-speaking accent. Ericka affirmed she

never experienced discrimination in the ESL field. However, she thinks that in some

cases speakers of indigenous languages face discrimination if/when they

mispronounced words in Spanish. She said, "Even though many Mexicans claimed that

there is no discrimination, sometimes they look different to people who made

pronunciation mistakes".

Discussion

In this study, I explored the English language ideologies that three English

teachers and one coordinator may hold. The findings show preliminary evidence that

some English language ideologies are present and influence the teaching policies of

ELT programs in universities of Oaxaca, Mexico.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the English teachers and coordinator' ideologies regarding the status

   and roles of English and other languages in Oaxaca?

2. How do these perceived status and roles affect its access and users, the

   university's policies, and their teaching practices?

The first research question was addressed by analyzing the participants' responses.

The data collected were classified into three main topics according to the participants'

responses: the first topic was: culture, diversity, and English language, the second topic:

neoliberalism and unequal opportunities in ELT, and the last topic: native-speakerism

and discrimination in ELT.

The second research question addressed the participants' perceptions regarding the way English language ideologies affect access and users, institutional policies, and ELT programs in Oaxaca, Mexico. Figure 3 shows the three main topics discussed and their relationship with English language ideologies.

Figure 3

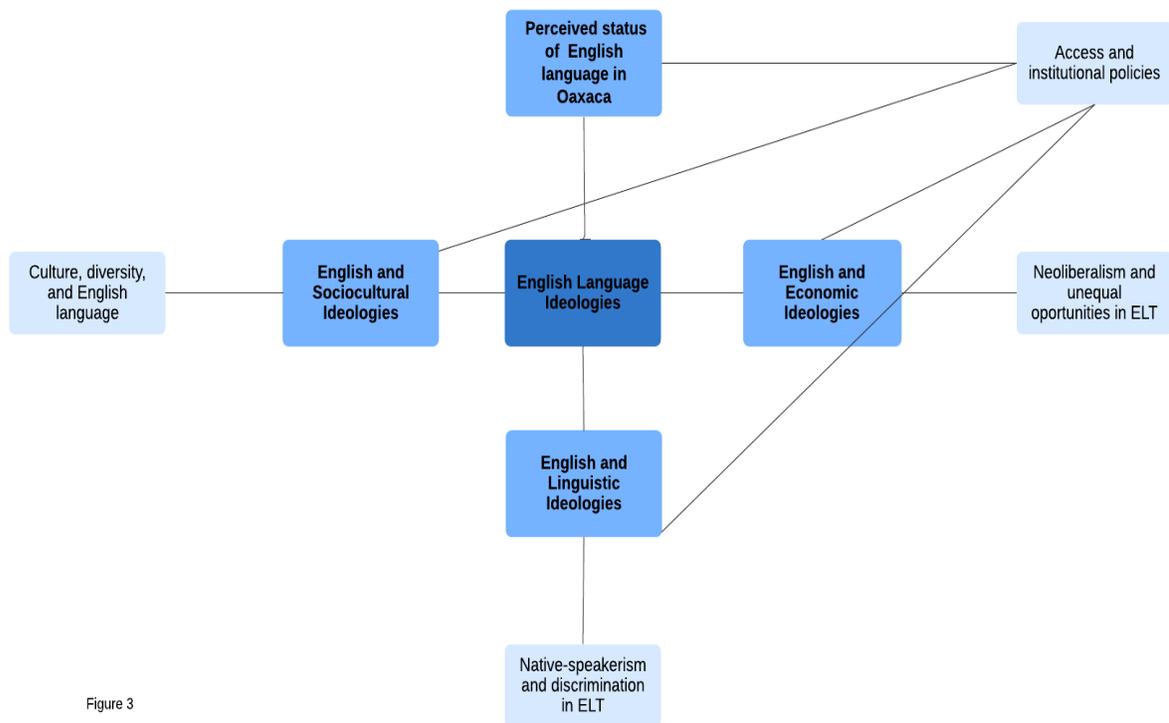*Presence of English Language Ideologies*

Figure 3

Culture, Diversity, and English Language

There are some disagreements in the way that cultural and linguistic diversity is perceived in Oaxaca, as one participant expressed:

"They (some indigenous people) don't like the way the government sells or

sees the culture, as an industry. They don't like… these events like the

'Guelaguetza[1]', for them it doesn't mean anything, it is like a fest, where

they only use it to get money, but why they don't go to the areas where

they come from?... at the end there are no job opportunities for them,

there are not school opportunities for them".

Even though Oaxaca is a multilingual state, there are some hierarchies among

the languages that people use. Spanish is widely used and allows access to education,

health services, legal system, entertainment, etc. The English language is perceived as

an asset in the tourism industry, and it is needed to pursue studies abroad. Indigenous

languages are part of Oaxaca's cultural identity, and they are used in different regions of

the state. However, they do not have the same position as other languages in society,

and their speakers are not represented in all sectors of society. As mentioned before,

some participants did not have indigenous language speakers as classmates during

their time as students in an ELT undergraduate program, and only one participant has

had a colleague, who was a speaker of an indigenous language. According to Sayer

(2012), some indigenous language speakers have been recruited for bilingual education

programs in the public system. However, they work mostly in communities that are far

away from the city. From the participants' responses, it can be noticed that access to an

English teaching position in the Oaxaca capital is something that is not very common for

speakers of indigenous languages.

The Oaxacan government promotes the state's cultural and linguistic diversity to

attract many tourists every year, but at the same time, indigenous people do not have

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[1] Guelaguetza is a word from the Zapotec language that means offering or present. It is used to name a festivity that takes place on July in Oaxaca. The celebration shows cultural representations of music and dances from the eight regions of the state of Oaxaca. The Guelaguetza attracts many tourists from around the world every year.

access to the same educational and job opportunities that other sectors of the

population have. In some regards, the current state of the ELT field in Oaxaca reflects

the lack of inclusion that certain linguistic communities face in some areas of Oaxacan

society. It is interesting to notice the lack of representation of indigenous languages

speakers as English teachers in the schools of the Oaxaca capital.

Neoliberalism and Unequal Opportunities in ELT

In Oaxaca, as in other parts of the world, the discourses of globalization and

neoliberalism promote the importance of English learning to improve the economic

conditions of the people. One participant shared a slogan that is used for a language

school in Oaxaca to attract students: "Hablar inglés te abre las puertas" (English opens

doors). However, the question is, what doors? The English language might be important

to get a job in the tourism industry; however, meaningful economic advantages appear

to be reserved for few people. It seems that the real economic improvement is not for

the people who speak English, but for the owners of the companies that benefit from

tourism, such as hotels networks, tour operators, airlines, etc. Their employees are paid

low salaries compared to the revenues that those companies benefit from the services

they offer.

The ELT market in Oaxaca is not very different from the tourism industry, and it

has its own challenges. There are more opportunities in the private system than in the

public system. However, English teachers face many obstacles to obtain a full-time

English teaching position. As Julia expressed, "They [teachers] really need many

working hours in two different schools, and maybe one more institution in the weekend,

so they can have a good salary". Even though some private schools in the city charge

very expensive fees to their students, they pay very low salaries to their teachers.

Therefore, the ESL job market in Oaxaca in some respects replicates the practices of

inequality that occur in other areas. Rivera Sanchez et al., (2018). say, "there is

significant variation in average monthly incomes within Oaxaca. A resident in the

Oaxacan Municipality with the highest salaries earns over 12 times more than someone

in the municipality with the lowest salary" (p. 6).

From the coordinator's perspective, the market is getting more competitive due to

the increasing number of graduates from ELT programs. She explained that in the city,

there are more English teachers than available job positions. She considered that

teachers with a master's degree, or teachers, who have studied abroad have more

opportunities to get a well-paid job. As a result, some of the ELT graduates are looking

for teaching opportunities outside of Oaxaca. The coordinator shared that some

students have found teaching positions in countries like China. It seems that the

competition in the internal ELT market has potentiated the expansion of the English

market abroad for graduates of ELT programs in Oaxaca.

Native-Speakerism and Discrimination In ELT

As discussed before, in the last decades, the TESOL field has become more

culturally and linguistically diverse worldwide, and English not only belongs to its native

speakers but also to the people who use it for communication in different contexts.

Nevertheless, the ideology that classifies English teachers between native and non-

native speakers is still present in many places around the world. In Oaxaca, there is still

the perception among some English learners and school officials that native speakers of

English are the cultural and language teaching models. Karla mentioned, "people, in

general, believe that an English native speaker is better than an English Mexican

teacher." Julia added, "I would say that we still have this perspective that a native

speaker is a better teacher than a non-native speaker." Their words revealed that those

perspectives are shared by some teachers as well, as Karla shared, "I remember

certain bad comments from other [Mexican] teachers, like, if you are going to teach

English you need to be an English native speaker."

Teacher participants in the study mentioned that one of the forms that schools

differentiate native and non-native speakers is by the courses they teach. Advanced

English levels are reserved for native teachers; sometimes because the students have

an advanced English proficiency level, in other cases is the accent, as Karla said, "I do

not know if it's because of status… like they do not want to have the (non-native)

accent."

However, there are also some ambiguities in the participants' responses. In some

cases, English teachers have internalized those views and have accepted the

differentiation between native and non-native teachers, as Julia expressed "they

[students] are more demanding, and maybe Mexican teachers or Oaxacan teachers do

not know enough language to meet those requirements, to meet those needs, so that is

why they give those levels to the native speakers." However, there is also a perception

of discrimination between English native and non-native speakers regarding teaching

opportunities. As Julia said, "I wasn't given any advanced level when I was teaching in

this private school, maybe that's discrimination. This differentiation among native and

non-native speakers is explained by Mahboob (2010, as cited in Selvi, 2014) who

claims that the terms 'native speaker and 'non-native speaker' represent a hidden

ideology that privileges some English speakers over others. In Oaxaca, this ideology is very much still present in different institutions.

Discrimination based on the native speaker fallacy is not exclusive to the English language. Sometimes discrimination can be manifested as intolerance to speakers of indigenous languages. As Karla mentioned, "in Oaxaca, we are 'malinchistas'[2]" to explain that some people in Oaxaca tend to be more tolerant with the pronunciation mistakes of foreign language speakers than those made by indigenous language speakers. There are some other cases in which discrimination is related to physical features, as Lucia expressed, "I have experienced that kind of discrimination, not only because of the color of my skin but because of my accent."

From the participants' responses, it is possible to infer that some discriminatory practices emerge in certain situations and at some institutions. Sometimes it can be subtle or even unnoticed, but it is still there. Systemic inequalities in Oaxacan society are manifested in those practices, and at a certain level, the ELT field reproduces them.

Perceived Status of English Language in Oaxaca Regarding Access and Institutional Policies

The English language has an important status in Oaxacan society. Participants in the study expressed different perceptions regarding the status that the English language has in Oaxaca. Those perceptions or ideologies show the complexity that involves identity and culture in English teaching. The data collected suggest that ideologies among the participants vary depending on their personal, educational, and cultural

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[2] The term 'malinchismo' is a Mexican construct that is used to refer to a person who betrays his own culture or country, a 'malinchista' prefer the foreign and disdain the national. Octavio Paz in "The Labyrinth of the Solitude writes an essay to explain the implications of the construct in the Mexican identity.

backgrounds. Those findings are consistent with Sayer (2012) where he concluded that "Oaxacan English teachers negotiate and renegotiate their relationship with English, and this relationship is framed by language ideologies" (p.183).

In terms of access and English learning programs, the cost is another difficulty that students in Oaxaca face. Participants agreed that private language schools are not affordable for many people in Oaxacan society. According to Rivera Sanchez et al. (2018), "Oaxaca is the second poorest state in Mexico with a GDP around a fifth of Mexico city's". Thus, the economic conditions of most of the state population restrict the opportunities to access English language education.

Participants classified English learners in Oaxaca into two categories: students from public schools, and students from private schools. Again, it is possible to see that public and private systems have established ideological barriers among society. Participants' educational experiences reveal this differentiation. They shared a similar educational background in basic education; however, their English acquisition experiences show the differences in cost between public and private institutions. Their responses indicate that English learning in Oaxacan public institutions involves extra expenses to pay for private tutors or institutions outside the public system to study the language. Students, who only have access to public schools, sometimes start their English learning when they are in college. As Julia explained, "I had some [English] classes in high school but I can't say I learned there… I always consider I started learning at university".

Participants' educational background shows the asymmetry between the public and the private systems in Oaxaca. This finding corroborates Sayer's (2015) findings in

his study of neoliberalism and primary English education in Mexico. He describes this phenomenon, stating, "the disparity between the quality and nominal English taught in public schools and the great emphasis placed on English in private schools has contributed to a division along socioeconomic lines in access to English acquisition" (p. 43). In theory, English learning occurs in both, public and private schools; however, in practice, English acquisition seems to happen mostly in private institutions.

All participants shared their experiences and perspectives between public and private systems, and they agree that in public schools English is just another subject in the program. They perceived that English teaching in public schools is more focused on grammar structures rather than on communicative purposes. These findings are in line with Sayer (2012) who noticed, "although the textbooks may be 'communicative', some teachers continue to assign students to translate pages from the book" (p.14).

Regarding the ELT policies, participants explained that English proficiency assessments have an important role in public and private universities. The importance of English proficiency exams in Oaxaca varies depending on the educational context and the learners' goals. Participants shared that some private schools required proficiency exams to their students since the high school level. Conversely, in the public educational system, English proficiency exams are required only at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In some cases, English learners see the value of those exams in terms of academic achievement and to access certain universities in Mexico or abroad. In addition, English proficiency exams are not limited to English learners; teacher participants also expressed that an English proficiency assessment is required when they apply for certain teacher positions.

Hiring policies affect working opportunities for ELT graduates. Most English

language teachers in Oaxaca start their professional careers in private institutions due

to the obstacles in access that the public system represents. Only two participants had

the opportunity to work in public institutions supported by the federal government. Karla

got only a temporary contract through an outsourcing company, and Julia has a

teaching position on the campus of a national institution. Lucia has not had the

opportunity to work in public schools yet. From the teacher's experiences, it seems that

access to an English teaching job is not only limited by economic factors, but also by

political elements. Teacher unions control the hiring process and reduce the possibility

of ELT graduates to work in public schools.

Conclusion and Further Research

It is important to mention that in Oaxaca English language ideologies occur in a

flexible manner and they emerge differently depending on the context. Sometimes

language ideologies are associated with practices that benefit one sector of the

population among others, like elite bilingualism. In addition, language ideologies are

also influenced by economic ideologies that are implemented to maintain the economic

privileges of the groups in power as it occurs with neoliberalism. Finally, language

ideologies show social practices that sectors of society use to differentiate groups of

speakers between native and non-native speakers. These beliefs establish invisible

boundaries that have an impact on the way members of society interact among them.

Some new lines of research can follow the present study. The first one is to

conduct the same study in a different context to see if the results are consistent. There

is also more research needed in the native speaker ideology to understand some

institutional practices that occur in Oaxaca's ELT field. Finally, a closer examination of

the ELT job market and hiring practices in public schools may shed light on the

difficulties that ELT graduates face to obtain an English teaching position.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions (Based on Boun, 2014)

Background Information and English Learning Experiences

1. Where are you from?

2. Where did you study your basic education? What city?

3. When did you start your English learning? How old were you at that time?

4. Why did you decide to study English? Where did you study English?

5. Have you ever studied English abroad?

6. How was your experience as an English learner in Oaxaca?

Teaching English Experiences

1. Why did you decide to become an English teacher?

2. Where did you study to become an English teacher? Why did you choose this institution?

3. Have you ever taught in public or private schools? How was your experience?

4. How long have you been working as an English teacher?

English Language Ideologies

1. What is the role of the English language in Oaxaca? Why do you think people want to learn English in Oaxaca?

2. Can you describe the people who study English in Oaxaca? What are their goals to learn English?

3. Are there some bilingual programs in basic education in Oaxaca? are they offered in public or private schools? What are their goals?

4. Are there some institutions in Oaxaca that offer International English certifications? If so, what are the students' motivations to get an English certification in Oaxaca? are those certifications expensive for the average Oaxacan student?

5. Why do you think are three different universities in Oaxaca offering ELT programs?

6. Is there a difference in salary between a private and a public school? What system offers more benefits for the teachers?

English and Social Ideologies

1. What are the schools in Oaxaca that people choose to study English?

2. What are the differences between the English taught in public and private schools in Oaxaca? is there a difference in the students' English proficiency between both systems?

3. How do you describe the English taught in public schools? And the English taught in private schools?

4. How expensive is it to study English in Oaxaca?

5. Did you have classmates during your ESL training who spoke an indigenous language?

6. How do ELT programs perceive speakers of an indigenous language as prospective English teachers in Oaxaca? are they seen as an asset or a problem?

7. Do you think speakers of indigenous languages in Oaxaca are represented in ESL teaching in Oaxaca? Why?

8. Do you think that facial features or skin color influence the ESL hiring practices in Oaxaca?

9. Do you think light-skinned teachers have an advantage over dark-skinned teachers to get an ESL job in Oaxaca?

10. How do students perceive Spanish mistakes when the person is an English speaker? Is there any difference if those mistakes are made by an indigenous language speaker?

English and Economic Ideologies

1. Are there some economic advantages of learning English in Oaxaca?

2. What job opportunities ELT graduates can access in Oaxaca?

3. Is it possible to get a good salary in Oaxaca as an English teacher? is it possible to cover the basic expenses working as an English teacher in one institution? What is the average salary per hour for an English teacher in Oaxaca?

4. Is it possible to get a full-time job as an English teacher in Oaxaca?

5. How important is it to speak English in Oaxaca?

6. Where did you start your career as an English teacher? Why?

English and Cultural Ideologies

1. Have you ever had a foreign English teacher? How was your experience with foreign English teachers?

2. Did you like learning from foreign teachers? Why?

3. What are some differences between Oaxacan English teachers and foreign teachers?

4. Do you think native and non-native teachers influence English learners? Why?

5. What qualities do foreign teachers have that Mexican teachers may not?

6. What English accent do you think students should learn better?

7. Do you think the students prefer foreign or national English teachers? Why?

8. Do you think language ideologies influence the ELT programs in Oaxaca? how?

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