

EFL Teachers' Perspectives on the Role of English in Two Mexican Private Universities

Perspectivas de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre el papel del inglés en dos universidades privadas mexicanas

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In Mexican higher education, the spread of English has become a tool in the internationalization process of universities. However, language has been sidelined in the discourses of globalization and internationalization. Hence, this ethnographic case study aims to look at the spread of English in Mexican higher education through two private universities. It focuses on the universities' internationalization process, and how English as a foreign language teachers perceive the role of English in this process. Findings show that while English as a foreign language teachers support linguistic ideologies that promote the spread of English as a natural and apolitical phenomenon, at the same time they also warn of ideological implications such as language hierarchies, cultural homogenization, and English linguistic discrimination.

Key words: English as a foreign language, English language dominance, internationalization, linguistic ideologies, teaching English in Mexico.

La difusión del inglés en la educación superior mexicana se ha desarrollado como una herramienta para la internacionalización de las universidades. Este estudio de caso etnográfico busca analizar la difusión de esta lengua en dos universidades privadas. El estudio se enfoca, por una parte, en el proceso de internacionalización de ambas universidades, y por otra, en cómo los maestros de inglés de dichas instituciones perciben el papel que juega el inglés en este proceso. Los resultados muestran que, aunque los maestros apoyan ideologías lingüísticas que defienden la difusión del inglés como un fenómeno natural y apolítico, también advierten sobre las implicaciones ideológicas tales como las jerarquías lingüísticas, la homogenización cultural y la discriminación lingüística.

Palabras clave: dominación lingüística, enseñanza del inglés en México, ideologías lingüísticas, inglés como lengua extranjera, internacionalización.

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Introduction

Internationalization has become a buzzword for globalization in higher education (HE) worldwide. In this context, the spread of English as the language of global communication has also become a tool in the internationalization process of universities, as it is a tool for world business and commerce. Discussions about internationalization in HE worldwide generally focus on the political, economic, socio-cultural, and academic dimensions. However, very few researchers focus on the linguistic aspects of internationalization (Pratt, 2010). This is also the case of Mexico. To this point in time, there has been no attempt to focus on the linguistic aspects of language teaching linked to processes of internationalization. Hence, this work aims to illustrate the large and complex role that English plays in the process of internationalization in Mexican universities.

This paper specifically looks at the spread of English in Mexican HE through an ethnographic case study of two private universities which will be called *Universidad Autónoma* (UA) and *Universidad Benemérita* (UB) for the purpose of this paper. The research focuses on the universities' internationalization process, and how English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers perceive the role of English in this process. The paper intends to analyze the complexity of EFL teachers' perspectives towards English. In other words, where they situate themselves on the ideological continuum towards the spread of English. In sum, this work asks the following main research question: "How do EFL teachers perceive the role of English in the internationalization process of their universities?" To answer this question, the paper first draws on understanding internationalization in HE and how it relates to existing linguistic ideologies towards English. Second, the role of English in Mexico's macro context, and its role in both micro contexts of the study, is analyzed. Third, methodology is described, and finally, findings are presented and discussed.

Literature Review

Globalization, Internationalization, and Language Teaching

Globalization focuses on homogenization processes of social, cultural, technological, political, and ideological aspects of life facilitated by global communication industries, mostly controlled by American free-market interests and on global economic interdependence (Maringe & Foskett, 2010). After WWII, "a new mantra" had emerged in the United States and in the UK which would modernize former colonies: "Western values, Western institutions, Western capital and Western technology. Only by westernizing could former colonies hope to achieve a modern future" (Robertson, 2003, p. 182). English would be an important tool in this homogenization and modernization mission. And for universities, to modernize is to internationalize. Internationalization refers to the strategy used by universities to respond to the influence of globalization in their educational areas. The process of internationalization of Mexican HE mainly aims to prepare global citizens, "a type of graduate required in the global world" (Maringe & Foskett, 2010, p. 27), who meet the requirements of the "new work order" developed in the 90's, that is, deregulated, hyper-competitive, post-industrial, and globalized new economy (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996). One of the key requirements for global citizens is to bring with them transferable "key" skills, "among which oral communication skills are ranked as particularly important" (Cameron, 2002, p. 73).

Central to the internationalization processes of HE, specifically in Mexico, is student mobility which focuses on the creation of double degrees and exchange programs, mainly with the Western world, and on increasing foreign language learning, mainly English. As a result, the teaching of English as an international language for all Mexican universities who aim to prepare "global citizens" for the global world becomes the norm. As most international programs now offer content teaching in

English, even in non-Anglophone universities, such as programs in France, Turkey, or Mexico (Jenkins, 2014), Mexican students need to acquire a high competency level in English to be able to participate in international student mobility programs, or even to attend classes in their home institutions. According to Le Ha (2013), this is also the case in Japanese universities where the over-promotion of English “has been driven by the nation building agenda that tends to undermine local languages” (p. 160). Learning languages other than English does not seem so important anymore.

Because of the internationalization of Mexican HE and the increasing influence of English in Mexico, language departments in Mexican universities seem to grow into mostly English language departments where English is becoming the only important language to be taught. It is therefore specifically important to understand EFL teachers' ideologies towards English, first, because ideologies represent cultural systems of ideas about social and linguistic relationships linked to moral and political interests (Irvine, 2012), and second, because teachers' ideologies may influence students' perceptions.

English Language Ideologies

Language ideologies are generally defined as sets of beliefs about languages. They help to explain why certain languages play the role they do “in the production and reproduction of the social order and of the moral order that legitimates it” (Heller, 2010, p. 102). Hence, these beliefs can be perceived as neutral or as critical, depending on the authors' affiliation.

Beliefs about the spread of English vary in the academic realm, moving on a continuum from (1) the adoption of English as a natural phenomenon driven by economic, political, and cultural forces outside the control of a single group to (2) “a critical and political analysis” of its effects (Pennycook, 2000, p. 108). (3) A third in-between position is expressed by scholars who analyze the spread of English in relation with other languages.

(1) Researchers who adhere to the first ideology generally view the spread of English as inherently good for the world, and that both nature and function of the language lead English to be superior to other languages. This liberalistic approach perceives English as a medium of international communication which is due to the number of non-native speakers, and is the result of two periods of world domination by English speaking nations, that is, British imperialism and the economic influence of the United States. De Swaan (2002) and Van Parijs (2011) may best endorse this liberal ideology. They perceive English as a lingua franca and as an instrument for fostering democracy and progress. De Swaan argues that it is only rational and natural that people want to learn English because it allows small linguistic communities to communicate with the rest of the world and to increase labor opportunities. Van Parijs regards English as a tool for the European integration. It allows everybody to communicate in a fair and egalitarian way. It is a lingua franca which lies over and above existing national and regional languages. Both De Swaan and Van Parijs reject the existence of a link between language and culture. According to them, culture can be expressed through any language. Adopting English as an intercultural communication language does not mean adopting the values and world perspectives originally expressed through this language.

(2) The second ideology emphasizes the risks of adopting a single language, specifically English, by focusing on its political implications in relation to linguistic ecology, linguistic imperialism, language rights, and the role of English in postcolonial contexts. Grin (2005), Ives (2006) and Phillipson (2009) may best endorse the critical end of the continuum. Grin analyzes the negative economic repercussions of the global adoption of English on non-English speakers whereas Ives highlights the need to take into consideration the cultural and symbolic values conveyed through languages, and specifically through English. All three, Grin, Ives, and Phillipson think that the adoption of English is not a

free choice based exclusively on rational considerations. It is, according to them, the consequence of a political and military power of the people who speak it as a first language. This critical approach shows “the importance of language as an essential component of the culture using it, and that culture and language are inextricably intertwined” (European Commission, 2011, p. 40). They advocate for multilingualism as the only viable way to prevent Anglo-American values and culture from being imposed together with the use of English. Hence, they call for the development of multilingual competence, English being desirable for specific purposes.

(3) An in-between ideology in relation to the spread of English is supported by Crystal (1997, 2000) and Graddol (1997, 2006). Their approach is diametrically opposed to De Swaan’s as they also develop an ecological approach of languages. This in-between ideology is in keeping with the second ideology because both favor multilingualism and believe that languages define a specific world view and a unique system of knowledge that should be maintained. The disappearance of a language is an irremediable loss for humanity because with it, a whole culture and a whole system of values are lost. However, in opposition to the third ideology, the second ideology is rooted in critical theories which analyze the power relationships and cultural and symbolic effects of language. Crystal and Graddol recognize that the supremacy of English is the consequence of power and prestige enjoyed by the nations speaking it, even though Crystal (1997) thinks that it is an “evident reality” (p. 28) which is now independent from any social control. This perspective also believes that English does not only “belong” to Western powers anymore. Many other nations express their cultural identities through English which can be observed in the writings of postcolonial and refugee narratives (Shemak, 2013). The voices in these narratives express their own specific worldview through the use of the English language. English has therefore to be accepted and language diversity has to be safeguarded.

In sum, the spread of English has been positioned on a continuum from a conservative perspective on one side, to a critical perspective on the other. Those who favor the spread of English as a lingua franca and detach it from any cultural aspects warn against the risks of multilingualism. On the contrary, those who analyze its spread from a critical perspective call attention of the homogenization of the world through the use of a single language, and therefore favor multilingualism. It is important to mention at this point that people’s beliefs and ideologies are fluid. Depending on the context and the circumstances, they can easily move in-between the continuum. Language ideologies, like any other kind of ideologies, are social beliefs shaped in cultural settings which can change in time and space (Irvine, 2012). Hence, to understand EFL teachers’ beliefs about the role of English, we also need to understand the role of English in Mexico’s macro context and its role in both university settings as shown next.

Context

English in Mexico

Officially, Mexico is a pluricultural country with approximately 68 indigenous languages spoken by 7.1% of the population (INEGI, 2000), even though 27% of the indigenous languages are endangered (Flores, 2008). Spanish is the nation’s *de facto* language used in all official domains. Mexico is also home to several European languages, mainly because of European immigration. However, English is the main foreign language which has been inserted in Mexico’s linguistic ecology with great success. It is very difficult to find private institutions that offer indigenous language classes whereas English language classes are found on nearly every street corner (Despaigne, 2010). Only a few public institutions offer the teaching of Mexican indigenous languages as a second language such as the Universidad Autónoma de México, the Universidad Politécnica Nacional, the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, or the Univer-

sidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca. The research and the teaching of indigenous languages in Mexico are mainly focused on indigenous people, through the creation of bilingual intercultural education programs, and are totally disassociated from the research and teaching of foreign languages. This may be due to the power relations between languages and cultures in the Mexican context (Despaigne, 2015).

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. English has been inserting itself in the Mexican sociolinguistic context with an increasing potency since December 1994 when the government signed NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement (Pellicer, 1995). Even though the NAFTA agreement is being renegotiated at this time, one of the aims of the Ministry of Education is to make Mexico bilingual in Spanish and English in 10 years (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Hence, every day English becomes more powerful in Mexico, specifically in the system of Education. In Mexican education, priority is given to English, both in the private as well as in the public sector. No other foreign language is imposed as mandatory. On a university level, English is mainly associated with the internationalization of higher education which became a key catchphrase and strategy in universities' marketing strategies. Such is the case in the two universities analyzed in this work.

English in Both Universities

The UA is a private university with about 16,000 students. It offers 43 different undergraduate programs and more than 50 graduate programs. As for today, the internationalization department of the university offers many different exchange programs to 16 different countries, 21 faculty led programs, one double degree at the BA level, and six double degrees at the postgraduate level, most of them in Anglophone countries. Since the creation of the university in 1970,

English is mandatory, and today, all students must obtain 550 TOEFL points in order to graduate. English is taught as a foreign language from A1 to B2 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) scales. The language department uses course books edited in the United States by McGraw Hill such as *Interactions* (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007) and adopts the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as a reference framework, which does follow a clear monolingual perspective. Since 1996, students can also study French, German, Italian, Portuguese, or Chinese as a second choice. No indigenous language is offered. Moreover, since 2011, to increase students' EFL levels to attract foreign students and therefore to support the internationalization process of the university, several content classes are also given through the medium of English. UA professors who give their class in English instead of Spanish obtain a pay raise and other related benefits. However, the university does not support them to give scaffolded instruction through the medium of English, that is, a variety of instructional techniques which move students progressively towards learning in Spanish to learning in English. In 2014, 56 content courses were given in English. According to the study abroad coordinator, the university reached a peak in 2013 with 73 courses given in English, but the process seems to increase very slowly as content teachers are not prepared to teach their courses in English, and students are not prepared to learn academic content in English instead of Spanish.

The second university in this research is UB, specifically the campus UB-Puebla, which is accredited by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), a U.S. association which supports international recognition of graduate studies. UB's vision is to form human leaders who are internationally competitive. It is one of Mexico's biggest private and most expensive universities with 31 campuses in Mexico, 13 headquarters and nine additional offices worldwide. English is taught from A1 to B2 levels as well. UB uses course books which are generally edited

in the UK such as the book series *Global* (Clandfield & Benne, 2011). All students at UB must obtain a B2 level in the BULATS (Business Language Testing Service) exam developed by Cambridge, a business English exam which aims to prepare students to use English language skills for success in business and industry. Students at UB can study only French, German, or Italian if they can prove having obtained a B2 level in English. Studying any other foreign language at UB is a right a student has to acquire through a high English proficiency level, and not a human right to universal knowledge, or a right to multilingual competence. To support processes of internationalization, UB also offers content teaching in English, instead of Spanish. Like at UA, the linguistic shift at UB from Spanish to English as a medium of instruction is not clearly guided by scaffolded instruction.

Both universities, UA and UB-Puebla, follow the guidelines of internationalization by favoring student mobility, content classes in English, and a high level of English competency, generally at the expenses of other languages. English teachers and students at UA and UB-Puebla largely outweigh teachers and students in other international languages. Language departments at both universities are mainly English language departments which seek to develop global citizens with global English communication skills as referred to in the theoretical part of the paper.

Method

Like culture, language is an open, dynamic system closely connected to human social life (Hymes, 1980). As a result, ethnographic studies of language in education, like this one, must “be deeply contextualized and conducted *in situ* over an expanded period of time” (McCarty, 2014, p. 24). I therefore used an ethnographic case study as the preferred strategy because the case focuses on a particular situation, represented by EFL teachers’ perspectives towards English which is then linked to a wider contemporary event, that is, the

internationalization phenomenon of HE. In addition, the approach is ethnographic because I not only observed EFL teachers, but also engaged actively in both settings by observing everyday social life (Reeves, Peller, Goldman, & Kitto, 2013). At the UA, I worked as the director of the language department from 2004 to 2010, and at the UB as an EFL teacher from 2014 to 2017. Ethnographic methods are often described as experiencing (participant observation), enquiring (interviewing), and examining (analyzing documents and artifacts) (Wolcott, 2008, pp. 48-50). Participant observation allowed me to learn through the involvement in the day-to-day activities of participants in the research settings which is, according to McCarty (2014), the starting point of ethnographic research. Through participant observation, I also engaged in the social situation, observed the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation, and recorded these observations in field notes from 2004 to 2017. As a result, I used multiple data collection tools to triangulate data which included the examination and analysis of universities’ linguistic policies, the experiencing of the context and the enquiring and formal and informal interviewing of university EFL teachers and administrators. The formal interviews with EFL teachers at both universities were based on a prepared theoretical structured framework and lasted one month in 2014. Interviews with administrators, and additional teachers, were informal and occurred between 2004 and 2017, which I recorded as field notes. Both sets of interviews allowed me to focus on the participants’ points of view (McCarty, 2014). Working in both universities gave me the opportunity to experience the context and observe it from the inside. Hence, my analysis is based on both emic and etic perspectives which are essential in ethnographic accounts (Patton, 2002). The emic perspective allowed me to understand the language policies and how EFL teachers and administrators perceive and categorize the world in both contexts. The etic perspective allowed me to shift the

focus from local observations and interpretations to theoretical ones referred to in the literature review. I selected formal interview participants based on their willingness to participate. Therefore, three teachers in each university (five women and one man) participated in semi-structured interviews which took place in November 2014 and lasted approximately two hours (see interview guide in Appendix). Female language teachers outweigh men language teachers in both university settings. All of them have worked as EFL teachers in these institutions for more than ten years. The names used in this paper are all pseudonyms.

To analyze the interviews, I used a two steps inductive approach (Patton, 2002). First, I did “in vivo coding” and looked for typologies, themes, or categories defined by the participants themselves, such as access, richness, or hierarchies. Inductive constructed knowledge is fundamental in ethnographic approaches because it allows working from empirical evidence to theory (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). Second, I introduced analyst-constructed typologies (Patton, 2002), that is, I tried to make explicit patterns that appear to exist but which are not perceived by the participants themselves by linking their themes and categories with the ideologies surrounding the spread of English. However, findings of this work cannot be generalized. To do so, multiple case studies should be organized in private and public universities all over the country. The above mentioned design led to the following findings.

Findings

Findings show that EFL teachers' beliefs in relation to the role of English in the internationalization process of their universities are convoluted. Their beliefs are involved on different levels of the English language ideology continuum at the same time. On one side, they develop a liberal approach which advocates that English is a rational choice, and at the same time, they question some negative consequences of the spread of English in their context.

Teachers' Liberal Approach: English as a Rational Choice

The Easiness of English

According to Victoria, it is rational to learn English because it is easy to learn.¹

Yes, I love the language, I love teaching it because I feel that it is a necessity and we are offering students a tool with which they can develop themselves . . . I got totally immersed in it. I feel that it is an easy language, it is very easy to learn it.

Her statement is confirmed by Luisa who added:

So, a lot of people here in Mexico want to learn English, and in other countries, to be able to work in the us. They feel it offers some more opportunities, and a better future. And it is a relatively easy language to learn compared to Spanish, to French, to other languages, I think English is pretty easy.

Ruth also confirmed the idea of English being an easy language:

I think [English] is an easy language. The grammar is very easy. It's easier than the Spanish or French grammar. It's less complicated than the Spanish one where there are many different tenses. In addition, English is a very clear language. It's not like in Spanish where we dress everything up. In English, you go straight to the point.

This feature is further confirmed by Natalia who stated that “I feel that the structure [of English] is perfect. It's like everything fits perfectly together”.

English is seen as an easy and a perfect language which reflects the discourse of global communication based on Western norms, and a Western system which is perceived as logical, good, and effective (Cameron, 2002). As a result, it seems that for EFL teachers English is superior compared to other languages because of its linguistic norms. In addition, for some EFL teachers like Irwin, English represents almost everything. According

¹ All quotes are originally in Spanish, except Luisa's and Jorge's, and were translated into English for publication purposes.

to him, English is “extremely basic now. It’s like to know how to use a computer”. Those who do not speak English are deprived of something important in their lives. It’s a “requisite for life” as expressed by Lupita who states that those who do not manage to use computers and do not speak English are “global illiterates”:

They can be global illiterates even though they can read in their home language. If you can’t read in English and can’t use new technologies, globally, you are illiterate because you will not be able to communicate with the world.

Consequently, since the language is easy to learn, perfect, clear, direct, and basic, interviewed EFL teachers perceive English as “an official language, an international language, or a lingua franca” as stated by Victoria who focuses on the fact that English is the language of global unity (Cameron, 2002). In other words, English is the language that unifies international diversity because, as expressed by Lupita, “it is the language that all foreigners have in common”. English is viewed as a unifying force.

The Superiority of English

EFL teachers also claimed the superiority of English by referring to what the language consists of compared to other languages. The six teachers interviewed mainly point out knowledge, pedagogical resources, technology, research in language teaching, and internationally recognized editors in relation to EFL textbooks. Irwin said “tons of information has [*sic*] been written in English. Many books our students have to read are written in English”. Victoria added that “the most important papers, technological, research papers are mostly written in English”. Hence, English represents knowledge and technology. This “having power” (Phillipson, 2009) is translated by better teaching methodologies, more pedagogical resources, and experienced editors who guarantee EFL teaching materials.

Victoria mentioned that: “EFL teaching needs experienced people with teaching methodology. They need the Cambridge teachers’ certificate”. She also mentioned

that “here [in Mexico], we are new in this, and Cambridge works on this since many, many years [*sic*] and is well experienced. We need to acquire their knowledge”. Ruth added that “all the big universities [like Cambridge] who are creating teaching materials can help the entire world to speak English. They specialized in this”. According to Ruth, EFL teaching, in opposition to the teaching of other languages,

is much more organized. In language departments, English faculties are generally much more organized; their processes are clearer because teaching English as a second language is bigger than French for example. I am not sure if there is research in teaching French or German.

Based on this quote, Ruth shows the superiority of English teaching over any other language. According to her, only the field of EFL carries out research on teaching methodologies; no other language possesses this knowledge. For Lupita, Mexican schools and universities import teaching material from English speaking core countries because they are the ones who know the language better and because they have more publishing houses. By the same token, as reported by Natalia, big publishing houses like Cambridge “are recognized in the United Kingdom, in the United States, and internationally”. As a result, EFL teachers pointed out the superiority of the English language compared to other languages, even international languages, based on better teaching methodologies, more and better research, and internationally recognized publishing houses who publish high qualitative resources.

The Richness of English

EFL teachers also identify English as a rich language because it is the language of access. First, it gives access to higher standards of living, mainly through more and better job opportunities; second, access to knowledge and its dissemination on an international level, and third, access to globalization and internationalization as mentioned in the following quotes.

First, according to Irwin, “English opens a lot of doors and jobs. They hire people just because of English” and “the biggest motivation to learn English is the immediate future of the person”. For Irwin, English gives access to the United States and offers families a better quality of life. In the same vein, Lupita added the higher the English level, the better job opportunities students will get: “If there are two candidates for the same position, companies will choose the candidate with a better English knowledge”. As a result, not only the language itself is important, but also the level of competency.

Second, English gives access to, and dissemination of, knowledge. As reported by Natalia, English gives access “to be able to study other materials written in English. Most of the bibliography students have to study is written in English. The class may not be in English, but the bibliography is”. Consequently, if students do not understand English, they will have a more limited access to knowledge. In addition, Ruth explains that knowledge in English is also related to dissemination “because as we said, all the information comes in English. So, if I want to publish my work on a global level, it has to be in English; there is no other way”. As a result, English not only seems to give access to knowledge, but also to the dissemination of Mexican knowledge on the international stage.

The third and last feature, English gives access to, according to the EFL teachers interviewed, is globalization and internationalization. For EFL teachers, English is the language of commodity which makes it a language of access to the new world economy (Heller, 2010). To access the “new world”, students have to get international mainly through student mobility and by attending content classes in English in Mexico and abroad. According to Lupita, English is neither a second nor a foreign language in Mexico. She created her own community of practice by calling it “a professional language”. It is utilitarian in nature (Baker, 2001) because it allows students to become global citizens who meet

the requirements of the new work order (Maringe & Foskett, 2010). Lupita also added that English is the basic requirement for participating in exchange programs:

The language students require for any exchange program is English. Based on their level of English, they get access (or not) to universities in other countries . . . They first ask them to have a certain English level because, once there, they will be able to socialize with others, and then they can learn French [or any other language].

Natalia confirms by stating:

The only foreign language students are required to master is English, even if they do not go to English speaking countries. They need to speak English because they will take their classes in English. If they go to Germany, they will attend classes in English, not in German.

As a result, English represents a crucial instrumental tool; in other words, a rational choice which allows students to become global citizens who communicate in a fair and egalitarian way. This rational choice seems to be based on liberal arguments which may partly follow De Swaan’s (2002) and Van Parij’s (2011) approach. However, in opposition to this liberal approach, it is interesting to observe that interviewed EFL teachers also perceive that the use of English leads to different power relationships, and that it may not be a neutral language at all, as analyzed next.

Teachers’ Critical Approach

EFL teachers’ critiques against the spread of English in Mexico revolve around the hierarchy of languages at universities, feelings of imposition of English, and finally discriminative practices in English content teaching classes.

Language Hierarchies

EFL teachers perceive a clear hierarchy of languages, not only in Mexico in general, but also at the university. Referring to indigenous languages, Ruth mentioned that:

Languages are not equal because people do not perceive indigenous people as equal. If we would see them as equal, their languages

would be more important. We don't even speak them. We perceive them as less valuable . . . And English, because it is global, people perceive it as more valuable. To speak a foreign language is more important than speaking an indigenous language.

The division seems clear. Indigenous languages are devalued because of the internal discrimination towards indigenous people while foreign languages are highly valued because of their cultural capital, that is, a cultural knowledge that confers power and status (Bourdieu, 1982). At the university, the hierarchy of languages seems even clearer. UB-Puebla and UA offer German, French, and Italian in addition to English. No indigenous language is offered. Irwin expressed that:

Other languages than English are important as we offer them, but the amount of students is different. We do have German and French students, but they would never reach the amount of English students we have. And this is historical.

Irwin's feeling is confirmed by the numbers mentioned in the contextual part. The drastic disproportion between English and other languages is intensified through the already quoted internal rules at UB. Hence, the possibility of studying other languages is a privilege that has had to be acquired since 2012. This rule decreased enrollments in French, German, and Italian which is confirmed by Natalia who stated that:

Yes, we had more groups of French, German, and Italian. Not much more, but they were clearly affected by the mandatory B2 level in English required to enroll in these languages. Many students do not reach that level and must study more English.

Languages are clearly hierarchized at both universities. English linguistic dominance is fueled by the requirements of high competency in order to study any other language. Language is not a choice anymore, but an imposition of the university. This imposition also follows other patterns as shown next.

Imposition

EFL teachers perceive two different kinds of imposition. First, they feel that English is imposed socially, and second culturally. EFL teachers like Luisa feel that English is imposed on students because it is mandatory; however, she feels that:

Students are definitively interested in what the United States has, the knowledge and the techniques they have and bring it back here. The university and different coordinators are really pushing the students to learn English, to get high scores so they can go [to the United States]. It looks that the end game is that, go to work a couple of years, learn the techniques, learn the technology, and bring it back.

According to Luisa, this social imposition of English seems to lead to ongoing colonial relationships where knowledge is imported from central countries and is used and copied in periphery countries like Mexico. In this way, the imposition of English in universities maintains the continuous reconstitution of structural inequalities between the US and Mexico (Phillipson, 2009). EFL teachers also perceive the imposition of English on a cultural level which leads to a homogenization of the world. For Ruth, the spread of English may:

not always be good because it not only aims everyone to learn English, but it also intends everyone to have the same ideas. I truly think it is good to get to know different points of view through the learning of languages, but I do not accept when they want us all to think in the same way, like in a globalized world.

In other words, what Ruth regrets is the cultural homogenization of the world through the learning of English which is confirmed by Natalia when she states that: "the negative part of English is that it invades too many cultures . . . We adopt too many models from other countries, festivities like Halloween for example". As a result, Luisa, Ruth, and Natalia criticize the imposition of English on a social and cultural level which not only maintains unequal relations between center and periphery countries, but also pervades the culture of

these periphery countries. As shown in the following lines, these unequal relations are also expressed through linguistic discrimination practices at the university.

Linguistic Discrimination

Internationalization in Mexican universities, as mentioned above, specifically aims to create global citizens ready to interact in the “new work order” defined by Gee et al. (1996) earlier. To develop universities’ internationalization and, as a result, the required communication skills for this new order, on the one hand, Mexican universities increasingly require their students to read academic papers in English, and on the other, develop content classes through the use of English. In other words, UB and UA teach part of their courses in English, as mentioned by Natalia and Lupita. In addition, both universities also use theoretical references written in English. However, teachers who require their students to read papers in English and who teach their classes in English, generally do so without any specific pedagogical preparation to scaffold their students’ learning in the new language which leads to discriminative practices as the one expressed by Ruth:

At the campus, some teachers ask students to read papers in English. That’s OK, but the problem is that it is not structured in any way. A student of mine, for example, who studies EFL on a basic level has to read very long papers in English . . . It shouldn’t be like that. It should be step by step. They should link English content classes to our language department. We should work together to scaffold learning. In addition, students who attend content classes in English have different EFL levels. Some are advanced, and others have very basic levels of English and do not understand anything. There’s one specific student I remember who failed a class because she had to answer the final exam in English. She was in her second semester! This is a very emblematic case because she failed just because of English. This is not fair!

Ruth also added that “the university requires teachers to become international, and they try to do so, but they do not know how to do it”. These excerpts show that the

lack of teacher training to prepare universities’ teachers to teach in English may lead to discriminative practices based on students’ EFL competency levels. In this case, students with high competency levels of English have more possibilities of understanding the lecture and passing the exam of a specific content class than those with lower levels. In both universities, content classes in English are not organized. Teachers who feel confident give classes in English, but the competency level of students in the foreign language is not taken into account, nor is the scaffolding of their learning.

In summary, even though interviewed EFL teachers believe in the superiority of English based on liberal arguments, they do critique aspects of the language and of its use which shows the complexity of their linguistic ideologies. EFL teachers—and administrators—at both universities are aware of linguistic hierarchies which favor the rise of English and decrease other languages in university language departments. Teachers critique the social and cultural imposition of the language and perceive practices of discrimination in the process of English content teaching supporting internationalization. As a result, even though EFL teachers seem to believe that English is a rational choice, they also consider the cultural and symbolic values conveyed through the language.

Discussion and Conclusion

As shown in the findings, EFL teachers’ ideologies at both universities are indeed complex and intricate. EFL teachers possess liberal linguistic ideologies that support the idea that the spread of English is an evident reality, a position that perceives English as a functional tool for pragmatic purposes. At both universities, EFL teachers trumpet the benefits of English over other languages. They argue its superiority through arguments related to the nature of the English language (easy, clear, and straight); to better teaching methodologies, better research and internationally recognized publishing houses; and to arguments which show that English gives access to higher

standards of living, access to and dissemination of knowledge, and access to a globalized world. This shows that for EFL teachers interviewed, English is a language of commodity, a feature of late capitalism where language is characterized as an exchangeable material good which provides symbolic added-value (Heller, 2010). English, in this context, may be the major value-added symbol which gives access to global citizenship. It seems that it has become an almost invisible discourse of symbolic domination (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). By giving access to global citizenship, Mexican universities also seem to indirectly support linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2009) by maintaining and promoting the dominance of English through a system of material and institutional structures, such as processes of internationalization, and through ideological positions, such as the ones shown in the findings of this research. In other words, UA and UB-Puebla universities believe in “English as a lingua franca”.

However, teachers’ ideologies seem to be far more complicated than that because findings show that EFL teachers voice the critical side of the ideological continuum as well. They indeed perceive a link between language and culture which leads to political implications in the spread of English. They do not criticize internationalization as such, but rather warn about some of its negative effects, such as linguistic hierarchies, cultural homogenization, and linguistic discrimination based on English competency. In addition, they perceive that due to universities’ linguistic policies, and their internationalization processes, the hierarchy of languages causes some “international” languages to become increasingly less important in Mexican HE. Indigenous languages are non-existent mainly because of internal racism. The linguistic ecology at UA and UB-Puebla is dominated by English. This imposition of English in content classes may lead, according to EFL teachers, to linguistic discrimination. Students who do not reach high standards of English are failed because they do not understand the class in English.

To conclude, findings show that internationalization of both universities seem to favor English linguistic dominance and that its use in content classes needs to be better prepared. Content teachers who teach their topic in English need to receive specific teacher training on how to teach in a foreign language. In addition, universities should take advantage of the complexity of teachers’ ideologies whose beliefs travel all along the ideological continuum. Even though they support English as a global language, they also seem to be critically aware of some of the negative effects English and internationalization might have. Hence, Mexican HE should take advantage of EFL teachers’ critical awareness to beware of an “only English” internationalization process of HE and to support multilingual competence in universities. EFL teachers are the ones who can promote what Fairclough (2014) calls “critical language awareness”, that is, the understanding of social, political, and ideological aspects of language. It is insufficient to teach students to use “appropriate” language, in this case English, without considering why that language is preferred and who defines this decision. Mexican HE should foster teachers’ responsibility to analyze and make visible the hierarchy of values in which English enjoys superiority within Mexican HE, and look for alternative practices that may enhance linguistic ecology in Mexico.

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Appendix: Semi-Guided Interview

Teacher's name:

Institution:

Date:

1. What is English for you?
2. What do you feel when we talk about English?
3. Why do you teach English? What do you like about teaching English?
4. What do you think about the spread of English worldwide, and specifically in Mexico?
5. Why do you think English got so popular?
6. What available resources do you have to teach with?
 - a. What teaching materials do you use? Where does the material come from?
 - b. Would you use material edited in Mexico? Why and why not?
 - c. Do you get teacher training? Where does it come from?
7. To what does English give one access to?
8. Do you perceive English as a neutral language?
9. Do you allow other languages in your classroom to better understand English?